



Open Education Resources Policy at the University of Leeds

The University of Leeds Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy establishes provisions for the creation, use and open sharing of educational materials, ensuring all staff and students adhere to the highest standards for quality, inclusivity and accessibility.

The policy encourages voluntary publication of OER, mandates compliance with intellectual property laws, and promotes quality assurance through expert review, under the principle that resources be as open as possible while respecting ethical, legal, and commercial constraints. It aligns with institutional principles on knowledge equity and digital transformation.

Additionally, it outlines supervision requirements for student projects, licensing decisions, and attribution practices.

The Policy mandates the production of a Policy Supplement for the implementation of its provisions, supporting staff and students. This Policy should be considered alongside existing policies and regulations on relevant areas such as Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Intellectual Property, Digital Assets Reuse, Research Management and Publications and Accessibility.

1. The provisions of this policy set out the principles and expectations that apply to the creation, preservation, reuse, and sharing of educational resources that have an intended or potential educational use, whether created within education, scholarship, or research activities, as well as the practices that support that production and sharing. This policy applies to all staff and students at the University of Leeds, as well as those who collaborate with staff and students in OER creation and sharing.
2. It is recognised that for ethical, legal, pedagogical, technical or commercial reasons not all outputs can be made openly available, hence the principle that outputs should be 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary' applies.

3. The policy excludes those open resources that are classed as research outputs, which fall within the scope of our [University of Leeds Publication Policy](#) and our [Research Data Management Policy](#) and are subject to research funder and government policies and mandates.
4. The interpretation of this policy will always be guided by institutional principles and priorities on Research and Student Education, Digital Transformation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and by the policies and guidance on Intellectual Property and Digital Assets Reuse.
5. The University permits and encourages staff and students to use, create and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience and connect with informal and non-formal learners, with colleagues and the wider communities, provided that the resources used are fit-for-purpose, appropriately described and contextualised, up-to-date and relevant.
6. The use, creation and publication of OER must be consistent with the University's reputation and values: collaboration; compassion; inclusivity; and integrity.
7. Specific guidance and support for OER production and sharing will be provided to ensure compliance with Intellectual Property (IP) laws and institutional policies, including IP clearance.
8. Publishing OER is on a voluntary basis, but OER is considered an ethical and equitable vehicle for the sharing of educational resources of all types and scholarly outputs.
9. The University seeks to support and incentivise staff and students for contributing to high quality, open education practice at Leeds, and more widely.
10. Open Educational Resources created at the University of Leeds should maximise the opportunities for reuse, repurposing and adaptation. This allows materials to be updated, contextualised, and reformatted, catering also for a wide range of diverse learners with different preferences and needs.
11. Open Educational Resources created at Leeds must always comply with the latest regulations on equality and accessibility ([Digital Accessibility at Leeds](#)). They will be designed at the outset to maximise both their accessibility and their compatibility with assistive technologies. Recommendations on addressing existing and future barriers to access will be proactively considered. Guidance for colleagues on how to meet the diverse needs of learners will be provided and kept under review.
12. The Guidance on OER will include recommended channels and platforms for the sharing of staff and student OER.
13. Quality Assurance of OER published in channels and platforms operated by the University of Leeds will be required through the Digital Education Service and the Library. Quality Assurance on educational and content suitability on these supported channels and platforms will be carried out in liaison with learning designers and subject experts in relevant academic units.

14. Student-led OER production and co-production activities conducted as part of a course of the University of Leeds or extra-curricular activities supported by the University, will be supervised by a member of staff.
15. The staff members who produce the resource or supervise the production and co-production of resources by students will be able to decide how it is made available and what licence to use, typically a Creative Commons Licence, in accordance with the recommendations of the Policy Supplement.
16. In using, creating and publishing OER, members of the University should adhere to existing practices and recommendations which align with the University Intellectual Property Policy and University policies relating to audio or video for educational purposes and digital assets reuse. The University's Secretariat hosts all relevant policies on the staff intranet. OER use, creation, and publication must comply with Intellectual Property Law.
17. The OER should visibly display the copyright symbol (© University of Leeds) to identify the University of Leeds as licensor. Authors and colleagues participating in the production of the OER also need to include their names and essential metadata to promote accurate citation. In line with the Intellectual Property Policy of the University of Leeds, copyright for OER developed by staff will be retained by the University of Leeds.
18. It is expected that most OER used, created or published by individual staff and students will range from single units (eg a single video, a chapter in an open textbook) to small collections (eg several podcast episodes), whereas services and teams within schools will engage with the publication of larger collections and whole modules.
19. Unless stated to the contrary, it is assumed that the use, creation and publication of single units or small collections are permitted. In all cases, where use, creation and publication are to be restricted, Schools, Departments and Services are encouraged to identify and communicate a rationale for restriction. It is expected that justifications for restriction will normally be based on protection of commercial or reputational interests.
20. To maximise their discovery and use of OER by others, it is advised that OER are published in suitable repositories, platforms, and open websites, as per the Policy Supplement. When OER are produced because of external funding, the licencing guidelines and repository requirements stipulated by the funding source should be followed.

OER Policy Supplement

This document provides background guidance in line with the University's refreshed policy on the creation, use, and publication of Open Educational Resources (OER), updating the University's [OER position statement \(PDF\)](#) endorsed by TSEB on 3 May 2017.

Current [OER Guidance](#) can be found online and this will be updated with the guidance set out below offering a practical focus, up-to-date support to staff and students within the framework of University policies and regulations.

Definition of OER

1. "OER are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license that supports the protection of the intellectual property of the creator and at the same time, permits no cost access, reuse, repurpose, adaption and redistribution by others." (UNESCO online¹)
2. Open Educational Resources, whether they support formal, non-formal or informal learning, can include lesson plans, open lectures, assignments, teaching materials, presentations, videos, images such as diagrams and graphs, reading/reference lists, classroom and lab activities, quizzes, games, simulations, syllabi, module units, full courses – even complete degrees (often called Z degrees) – and resources contained in digital media collections, amongst others. A popular example of OER are open textbooks that are funded, published and licensed to be freely used, adapted and distributed. These books can be downloaded for no cost, or printed at low cost, offering significant savings to students and the institution. OER provides flexibility to customise, localise, translate and update as required.

Vision and Strategic Alignment

3. The University of Leeds is committed to delivering world-class research and providing an exceptional student experience with inspirational learning and teaching, and engaging meaningfully with the various communities it serves. As a values-driven institution, the University is dedicated to fostering education and research to advance knowledge, transform lives, and shape a better future for our region and the world. Embracing Open Educational Resources advances these ambitions.
4. This OER policy aligns with our academic strategy for 2020 to 2030 'Universal Values, Global Change', the University of Leeds Libraries Vision for 2030 'Knowledge for All', the Leeds Partnership, and our Student Education Strategy, and establishes provisions that directly support the institution's endeavours to realise the aspirations laid out therein.

¹ UNESCO (2019) Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER): Definition and Scope, 1 <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>

5. This Policy promotes a consistent and comprehensive approach to openness, collaboration, and the democratisation of knowledge across all academic activities, regardless of the types of outputs published, as it aligns Open Education with the University's commitments to Open Access, Open Research, and Open Science.
6. Embracing OER advances several of the University's core agendas:
 - Sustainable Development, Digital Transformation, and the Climate Plan, by democratising access to educational resources and educational impact on society
 - Research & Innovation, as OER fosters a culture of digital innovation that is vital for cutting-edge collaborative knowledge
 - International, by enhancing the institution's role as a force for change in education through cooperation, and by attracting talent and generating collaborations and equitable partnerships from around the world
 - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI), by reducing access barriers, promoting equitable representation of women, the global majority, traditionally underrepresented and minoritised groups, as well as contributing to the decolonial agenda and supporting EDI specific interventions.

Benefits of OER

7. Embracing OER demonstrates our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 relating to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, and SDG 17 on Global Partnerships. Similarly, it supports UNESCO's Recommendations on Open Education (endorsed by the UK Government in November 2019) to underscore our efforts towards open and participatory education.
8. Sharing OER enhances academic freedom and professional autonomy and allows educators to contribute more openly and effectively towards the wider good. It also raises the global and local visibility of staff, who can expand the variety of materials that they disseminate and receive recognition for.
9. The integration of OER significantly enriches the student experience at the University of Leeds by providing more accessible and diverse learning materials. This policy empowers students to not only access but also contribute to the creation and enhancement of OER, fostering essential skills in digital literacy and critical engagement.
10. OER serve as a bridge between the University and the wider community, supporting lifelong learning, facilitating the co-creation and dissemination of resources beyond the campus, and overcoming geographical, societal and economic barriers. This approach strengthens community ties and ensures that the fruits of academic endeavours are accessible to all, contributing to the University's mission of social responsibility and community development.

Operationalising OER Adoption

11. The Institution

For the University of Leeds, the adoption of OER symbolises a commitment to global leadership in education and innovation. By embracing OER, the institution can not only enhance its reputation but also foster an environment of collaboration and knowledge equity. OER also reinforces the University's strategic goals of digital transformation and sustainable development. In that vein, the institution provides the necessary policies for a cohesive and supportive OER ecosystem.

12. Our Communities

OER offers invaluable benefits to both local and global communities by providing free access to high-quality educational materials. This open access facilitates lifelong and life-wide learning and empowers individuals to overcome educational barriers. Communities, in turn, can contribute to the University's OER efforts by participating in co-creation processes, helping tailor materials to diverse contexts. Such engagement strengthens the University's social responsibility and our community development and knowledge democratisation agenda.

13. Students

For students, OER represents a gateway to diverse and customisable learning experiences. The use of OER enhances their educational journey by providing easy access to a wide array of learning materials, fostering critical thinking, and promoting digital literacy. Students can actively contribute by creating and refining OER, thereby enhancing their own learning while providing valuable resources for peers and educators. This collaborative effort not only enriches the student experience through ethically-driven, active and authentic learning, but also supports the broader educational objectives of the University.

14. Staff

15. Staff gain significant professional advantages through the integration of OER. It offers them opportunities for career development, visibility in their field, and a platform to share their pedagogical innovations. By engaging in OER creation, as part of open educational practices, staff can contribute to the University's mission of openness and educational excellence. They play a crucial role in mentoring students and collaborating with colleagues to produce high-quality resources that benefit the entire academic community. University Staff Networks also play a significant role in ensuring that OERs reflect a wide range of lived experiences, as well as prioritising the co-production of knowledge with underrepresented groups.

16. Schools and Faculties

17. For schools and faculties, OER is a vital resource that supports high admissions rates, inclusivity, and superior student outcomes. By leveraging OER, faculties can ensure a rich, diverse, and engaging educational experience. Schools and faculties can support other users by promoting and integrating OER into their curricula, fostering a culture of

collaboration, and ensuring that educational practices align with the University's strategic goals.

18. Organisational Development & Professional Learning (ODPL)

19. Professional development teams support continuous professional growth and can promote innovative teaching methods, ensuring that, through their comprehensive training programmes, our colleagues are well-versed in the best practices of open education, including OER creation and use.

20. Public Engagement with Research

21. For those involved in public engagement with research, OER offers a unique platform to enhance the visibility and impact of the work of our researchers. By sharing research outputs as OER, they can engage a broader audience and contribute to public understanding of complex topics and active engagement through co-creation and reuse. These colleagues can support others in the community by collaborating on research-based OER projects, providing expertise on public dissemination, and ensuring that educational resources are accessible and engaging for a diverse audience.

22. Digital Education Service

The Digital Education Service (DES) provides the learning design expertise and the technological backbone necessary for the success of OER initiatives. They manage our learning platforms (FutureLearn and Coursera as of the date of publication of this Policy Supplement) and ensure that the University has the tools needed to create digital resources efficiently. This service supports other users in the community by offering training in digital tools, supporting the integration of accessible OER into our virtual learning environment, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience. Access to external platforms is managed by DES to ensure platform design criteria are met and to report on impact.

23. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team

The Equality and Inclusion Unit and the Dean for EDI ('EDI team') play a critical role in ensuring that OER initiatives promote equitable access to knowledge production and educational resources. EDI help to ensure that all users, regardless of their needs and backgrounds, benefit from high-quality resources. The EDI team supports other staff by providing information, advice and guidance on mainstreaming EDI practice in the creation, use and publication of open educational resources.

24. The Library

The library stands at the heart of the OER initiative, offering expertise in resource curation, metadata management, and accessibility. By guiding staff and students through OER infrastructure and supporting resource creation, the library ensures that educational materials are available to all users. The library facilitates the discovery and use of OER, providing training and support for OER projects, and championing the benefits of open education, including open educational practices, across the University.