OPEN EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS TO STAKEHOLDERS

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Circle U.
European University Alliance

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FOREWORD

This report is a result of the Working Group Open Science and Open Education in the Circle U. Erasmus+ project. The members of this Working Group are

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1 WHAT IS OPEN EDUCATION ?

Open Education is a movement to make education more open, inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible. On the one hand, it aims to reduce barriers to access and increase learning opportunities. On the other hand, it supports the production, use and sharing of Open Educational Resources and learning paths. These materials thus become a common heritage that can be circulated, shared, used, enriched and redistributed. But Open Education also concerns the evolution of teaching methods and learning modalities which are enriched, inspired by the approaches of other teachers, and hybridised thanks to the possibilities offered by digital tools, by distance learning environments and by online courses.

Open Education encompasses other dimensions such as Open Pedagogy referring to teaching methods and practices that leverage Open Educational Resources and technologies to facilitate collaborative and flexible learning experiences, Open Assessment including mechanisms like open peer review or open badges which aim at making the assessment process transparent and more participative, and collaborative learning emphasising the importance of learners working together to co-create knowledge, leveraging open tools and platforms.

Open Education is supported by UNESCO [1] as it believes that universal access to high-quality education is key to the building of peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue. In 2015, the framework for action for the Sustainable Development Goal focused on education (SDG 4) was adopted with a vision to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Open Education, and more specifically Open Educational Resources (OER) or MOOCs, are often presented as part of Open Science [5, 6]. It is part of UNESCO's broader vision of Open Science, where OER are integrated in Open scientific knowledge (see Figure below).

Open Education has already been integrated in the strategy of various universities [7, 8, 9, 11, 12]. This report will not further develop the definitions nor the benefits of Open Education, already well described by all the mentioned publications.
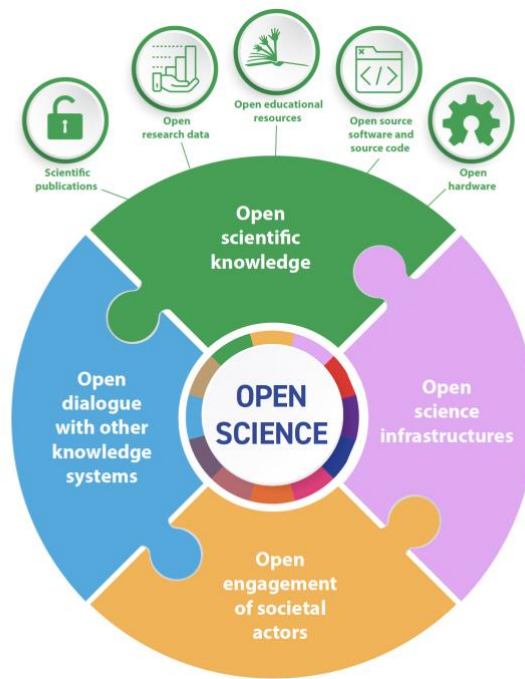
Open Education and Open Science [4]

2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Several documents propose guidelines and recommendations for Open Education [1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10]. They, however, mostly focus on Open Educational Resources while a broader view is taken in this document as after some global recommendations on Open Education, the following dimensions are addressed:

- Open Educational Resources and Coursewares
- Skills and training
- Hybrid and distance learning
- Digital tools

An orthogonal stakeholder point of view is also proposed as a final section.

3 OPEN EDUCATION

This section addresses global recommendations related to academic organisation aspects and high-level supports and initiatives that can support evolution with respect to Open Education.

- Deploy a culture of Open Education, at all levels of the institution. Develop a programme of cultural change, which is necessary to support the changes in principle and practice which Open Education brings
- Promote an inclusive pedagogy adapted to the variety of profiles and needs of the student community.
- Establish advocacy programmes, which should identify the benefits of Open Education whilst being realistic about the challenges

- Raise awareness at all levels of the institution, build capacity and create support for university initiatives among the main actors (including [early career] teachers, funders and policymakers)
- Foster culture change in the way stakeholders in the research, education and knowledge exchange communities create, store, share and deliver the outputs of their activity
- Draw up a communication strategy, which enables the whole university body to become familiar with Open Education principles and practices
- Encourage, incentivise, support and recognise staff and students with regard to Open Education skills development
- Integrate Open Education in career management and teaching evaluation
- Include Open Education and distance learning in the teaching mission of Circle U.

4 SKILLS AND TRAINING

Changing scholarship is complex. Advocacy and development of skills are key levers to develop new practices.

- Increasing knowledge and skills related to Open Education of the university community: PhD. students, researchers, academics and administrative supports
- Provide practical training to teachers and all the involved persons on the different aspects and tools supporting Open Education
- Develop the different levels of competencies on OER for teachers: become familiar with OER, searching for OER, using OER, creating OER, and sharing OER
- Promoting digital competence development in both formal education and professional development activities
- Explore innovative mechanisms and tools to provide Open Education skills training, and engage with others outside the university to exchange good practice

5 OER AND COURSEWARES

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are teaching, learning and research materials that make use of appropriate tools, such as open licensing, to permit their free reuse, continuous improvement and repurposing by others for educational purposes [1]. When a learning pathway is included, the result is Open Courseware: a part of an online course or an entire course that can be followed independently.

- Provide a technological environment that facilitates the creation and visibility of open educational resources of all types and formats.
- Propose platforms to host OERs and Open Coursewares (OCW)
- Support the production of new OER and Coursewares
- Develop a culture of reuse of existing Open Educational resources in the design of courses.
- Encourage students to use OER as a complement to course materials; invite them where relevant to participate in the curation and development of these open resources.
- Encourage the implementation of pedagogical transformations and Open Pedagogy linked to OERs
- Conduct workshops, webinars, and outreach programs to promote the benefits and uses of OER among teachers and institutions

- Foster a community of OER creators and users to share best practices, challenges, and solutions
- In addition to student mobility and the mobility of teaching staff, stimulate the circulation of teaching materials in the form of open educational resources (in particular Open Courseware) within Circle U.
- Promote recommendations for the development of accessible OERs
- As it is the case for FAIR Data Principles, offer a set of guidelines to ensure educational outputs are Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable
- Identify and review innovative publishing models and practices for Open Textbooks, in order to complement the strong persistence of traditional resources such as books and manuals
- Create a catalogue of available OERs and OCW, as is currently done with publications and with open data; provide a search and discovery service, enabling users to find what resources is available and where it is located, as it is key to the wider use of such resources

6 HYBRID AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Distance learning makes it possible to envisage modalities that are complementary to on-campus teaching and that exploit the organisational and pedagogical added value of e-learning.

- Develop a strategy and vision for hybrid and distance learning, integrated in the standard programmes
- Develop and support distance learning units
- Support individual teachers' initiatives to transform their practices towards hybrid or distance learning
- Promote recommendations for the development of accessible hybrid and distance learning
- Ensure educators are trained in online pedagogy, digital tools, and engagement techniques specific to distance learning
- Encourage varied and innovative assessment methods suitable for online environments, while ensuring academic integrity
- Engage in partnerships with other universities such as within Circle U. to share resources, best practices, and course content
- Use distance learning to set up a virtual exchange programme within Circle U.

7 DIGITAL TOOLS

Digital tools are instrumental in driving the success of Open Education and distance learning. Their adoption serves not merely as a goal, but as an enhancement to the teaching and learning experience.

- Support teachers' transversal needs with relevant, simple and effective digital tools and platforms.
- Prototype and propose innovative emerging technologies to teachers; evaluate the interest and the impact

- Ensure that the digital environment is at the service of teachers and students in both face-to-face, hybrid or distance learning courses
- Ensure faculty are trained not just to use digital tools, but also in the pedagogical methods best suited for their teaching (digital pedagogy)
- Support teachers, especially newly recruited teachers, and resource persons in their use of tools and technologies, including their impact on teaching practices. Create communities of practice.
- Develop solutions for the digital assessment of student learning. Propose a range of effective tools adapted to the different assessment methods, both formative and certificative
- Promote recommendations for the development of accessible digital tools

8 GUIDELINES TO STAKEHOLDERS

Earlier sections defined guidelines and recommendations, organised by topic. This section complements these guidelines from a stakeholder perspective, as outlined in [2]. We focus on three main stakeholders: institutions, academics and students, with a predominant emphasis on OER.

8.1 GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONS

- Develop institutional strategies for the integration of OER, coursewares, distance learning and digital tools
- Provide incentives to support investment in the development, acquisition and adaptation of high quality learning materials
- Recognise the important role of educational resources and coursewares within internal quality assurance processes
- Develop a network of Open Education ambassadors to support and foster the development of Open Education in the entities
- Ensure ICT access for staff and students
- Develop institutional policies and practices to store and access OER, coursewares and distance learning courses
- Provide accreditation and recognition of open education and open learning

8.2 GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMICS

- Consider publishing OER and coursewares
- Develop the habit of working in teams
- Seek institutional support for skills development of OER, courseware and distance learning
- Encourage student participation
- Provide feedback about, and data on the use of, existing OER
- Publish evidence-based research on Open Education

8.3 GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

- Understand the issues of OER and undertake advocacy of OER
- Encourage students to publish work as OER
- Encourage student participation in activities to support OER development
- Recognise that ICT are an increasingly important part of the higher education experience and are often crucial for students with special educational need

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