Benchmarking OER Use and Assessment in Higher Education

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Survey Background

Open Education: Resources to Practice

Successful implementation of open education approaches creates unprecedented possibilities for all countries to provide free learning opportunities for their students, especially those learners currently excluded from the formal sector (Mackintosh, 2012).

- The Open Educational Resources (OERs) movement and increasingly open educational practices seemed set to change the future landscape of higher education.

- The potential of OER to transform educational practice has not been realised and use in higher education has not yet reached critical threshold (Stacey, 2010) due to a lack of focus on policies and practices required to support the development and use of OERs in higher education (Ehlers, 2011).

- Open Educational Practices are the second wave of the OER movement aimed at supporting the creation, use and management of OER through institutional policies, which promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path (Andrade et a., 2011).

- The OER university (OERu) is one of these initiatives that aims to provide free learning to all students worldwide using courses based solely on OER, with pathways to gain credible qualifications from recognised education institutions (Mackintosh, 2012).

- The survey was created to explore the extent to which higher education institutions have embraced open education practices and enable benchmarking against the practices implemented by members of the OERu network (also known as the OERTen partner institutions).

The OER university

The OERu is based on a conceptual framework that provides a structure for enabling free learning opportunities for students who lack the means to access traditional higher education (Taylor, 2007).

- The OERu signifies a step towards developing a feasible framework for integrating available OERs into assessable online courses.

- The OER Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works internationally to support mainstream adoption of OER in the formal education sector (Mackintosh, 2012).

- The OER Foundation co-ordinates the OER Tertiary Education Network, an innovation partnership of accredited universities, colleges and polytechnics from around the world that are collaborating on the implementation of the OER university (Mackintosh, Taylor, & McGreal, 2011).

- The OERu network consists of 15 founding anchor partners, 13 education institutions and 2 public organisations). The 13 education institutions are as follows:

University of Southern Queensland	Australia	NorthTec	New Zealand
University of Wollongong	Australia	Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology	New Zealand
Athabasca University,	Canada		
Thompson Rivers University	Canada	The University of Canterbury	New Zealand
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University	India	University of South Africa	South Africa
Open Polytechnic	New Zealand	Southern New Hampshire University	USA
Otago Polytechnic	New Zealand	Empire State College (State University of New York)	USA

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study was to identify the extent to which open education practices are adopted and institutionalised by higher education institutions globally.

- This study had two objectives:
  1. To identify key institutional policies and practices that support the successful implementation of formal assessment and accreditation services for informal learning based solely on open educational resources (OER), with reference to recommendations provided by an "experts" group within the OER university network.
  2. To enable institutions that are not members of the OERu to determine their compatibility with the OERu concept, in other words, to identify aspects of current policies and practices at their institutions that would hinder or support the implementation of sustainable assessment and accreditation initiatives based on OERs, in collaboration with other institutions.

- The survey is targeted at two groups of participants:
  ➢ Higher education institutions that are officially members of the OERu network (also known as the OERTen partner institutions).
  ➢ Higher education institutions that are not members of the OERu.

- The research survey was jointly created with Gabi Witthaus from the Beyond Distance Research Alliance (University of Leicester) and Wayne Mackintosh from the OERu Foundation.
- The project was partially funded by a grant from USQ's Early Career Researcher Program

This presentation contains the results from the total sample. A capability index is under development using the results from the OER network participants and will be released shortly.

- The survey was programmed and hosted using an online survey tool.
- A link to the survey was disseminated using social media such as Twitter and Facebook and through newsletters and discussion forums, including the OERu (detail).
- A total of 110 responses were retained for analysis - these included complete responses as well as partial responses that had completed a significant component of the survey.
- Participants included 12 higher education institutions that are officially members of the OERu network and 98 that are not partner institutions.
- Many of the questions were derived from a series of interviews carried out by Gabi Witthaus with individuals from institutions participating in the OER university (OERu) network.
- Participants from the United Kingdom are overrepresented in the sample and UK institutions were excluded from a number of questions as a further aim of the survey was to contribute to the TOUCANS project completed by Gabi Witthaus to identify reasons for low participation in the OERu concept in England.
- The results from this research are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License.
- For more information on the project visit the ORION project page at http://adfi.usq.edu.au/projects/orion/
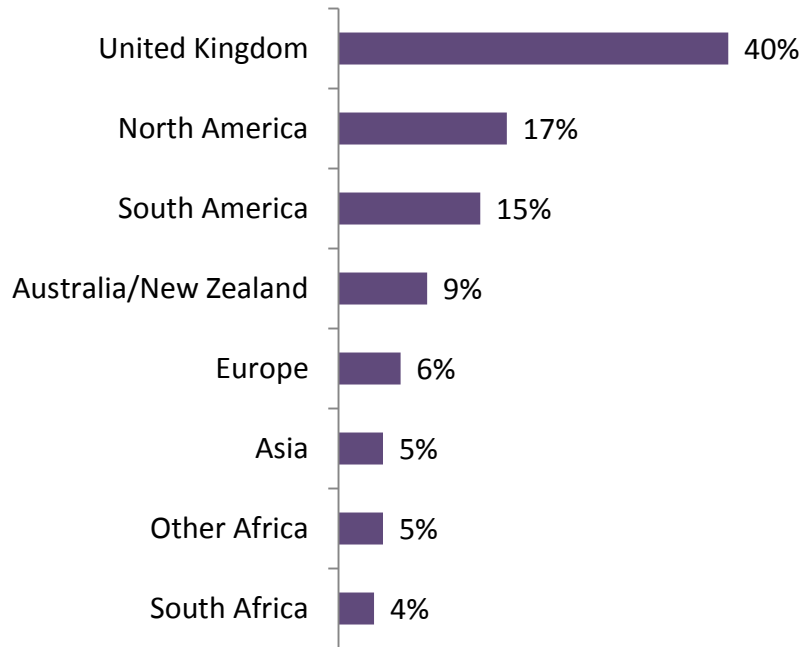
Sample Details

The majority of respondents were from the United Kingdom, followed by North and South America. The sample was mostly made up of practitioners, yet there was representation from management levels as well.

Continent

United Kingdom	40%
North America	17%
South America	15%
Australia/New Zealand	9%
Europe	6%
Asia	5%
Other Africa	5%
South Africa	4%

Level

Executive management	11%
Senior manager	14%
Manager	8%
Practitioner	48%
Researcher	13%
Other	6%

Continent (Aggregate) (n=110)
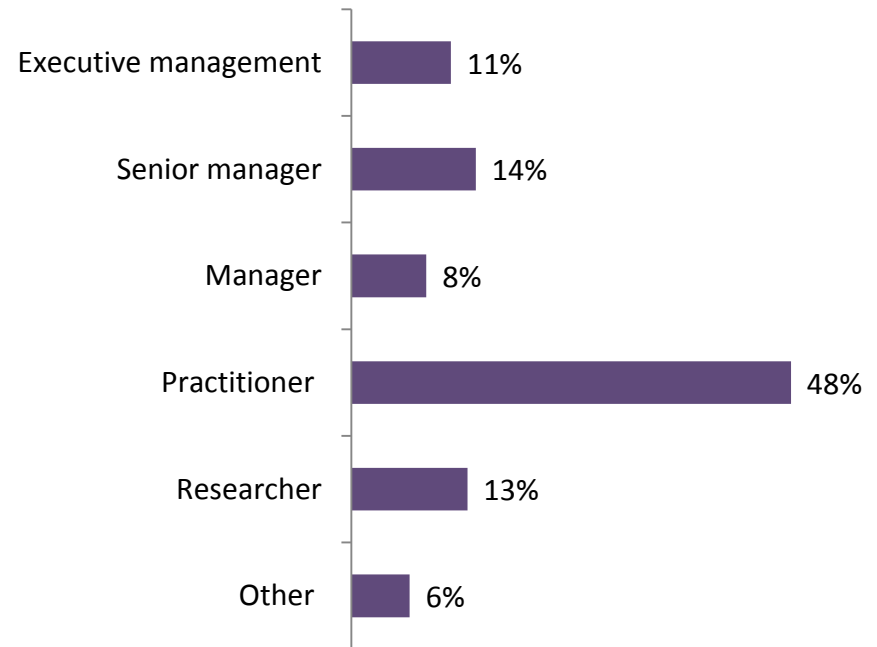
Which of the following categories best describes the capacity in which you are responding? (Select one) (n=184)

Institution / Organisation Information

Participants mostly represented universities or 4-year community colleges, yet public and not-for profit organisations were also represented due to the significant involvement of these organisations in the OER network.
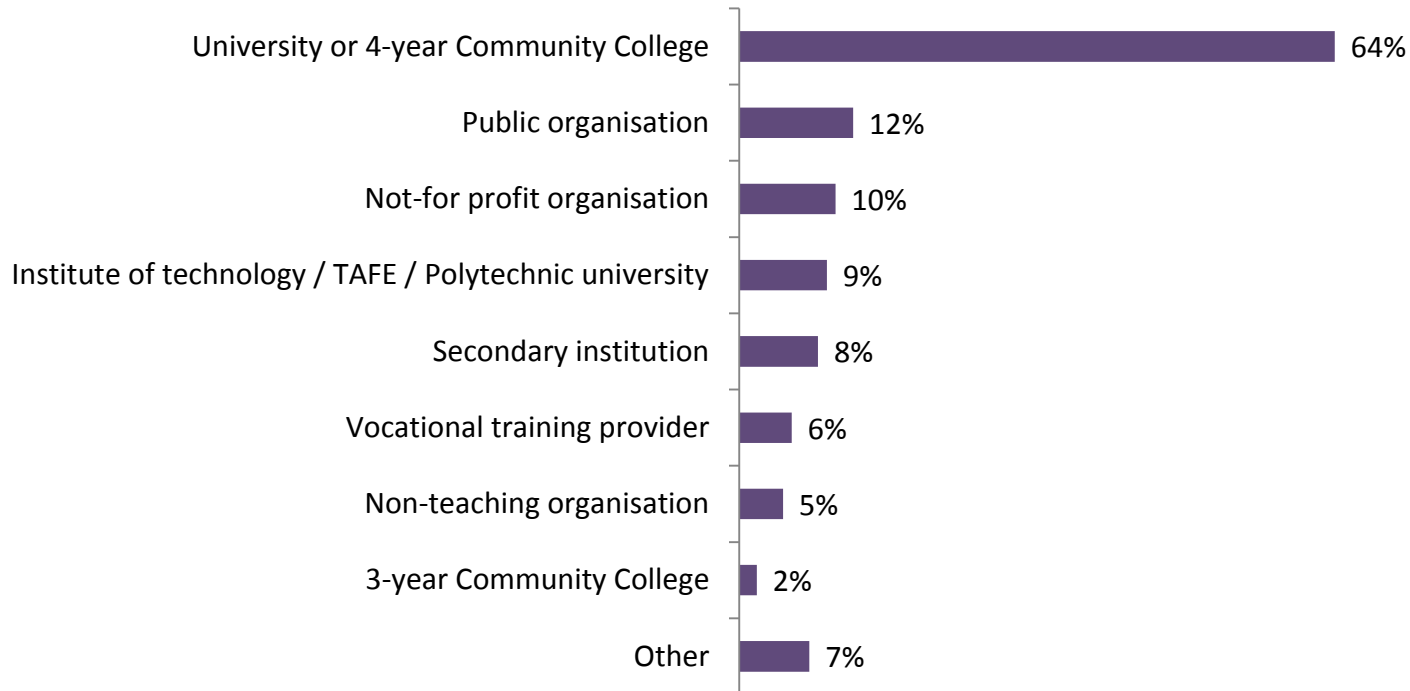
Type of organisation

University or 4-year Community College	64%
Public organisation	12%
Not-for profit organisation	10%
Institute of technology / TAFE / Polytechnic university	9%
Secondary institution	8%
Vocational training provider	6%
Non-teaching organisation	5%
3-year Community College	2%
Other	7%

How would you classify the organisation or institution that you work for? (Select all that apply) (n=107)
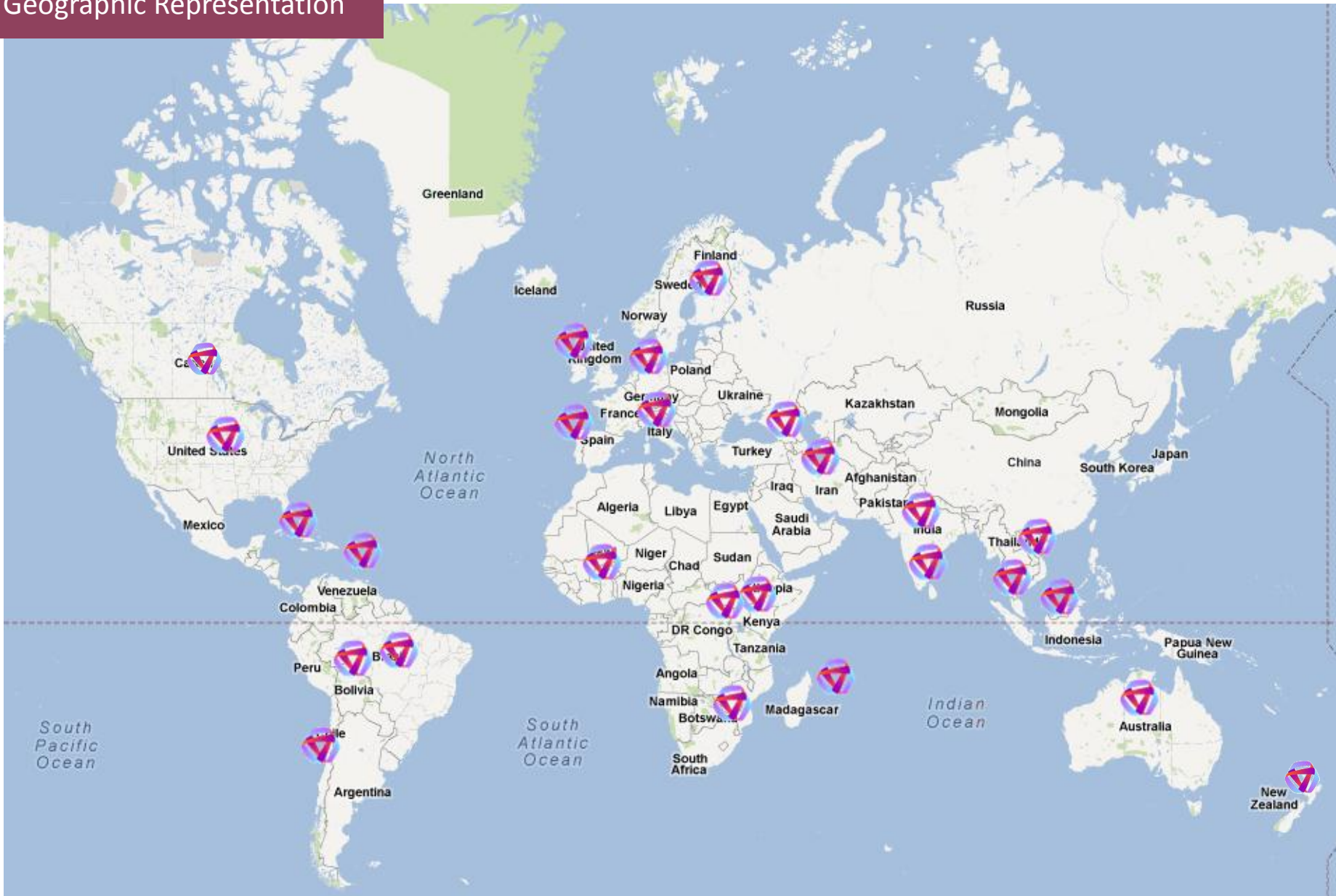
Higher education institutions who participated all offer a range of qualifications.

Type of institution

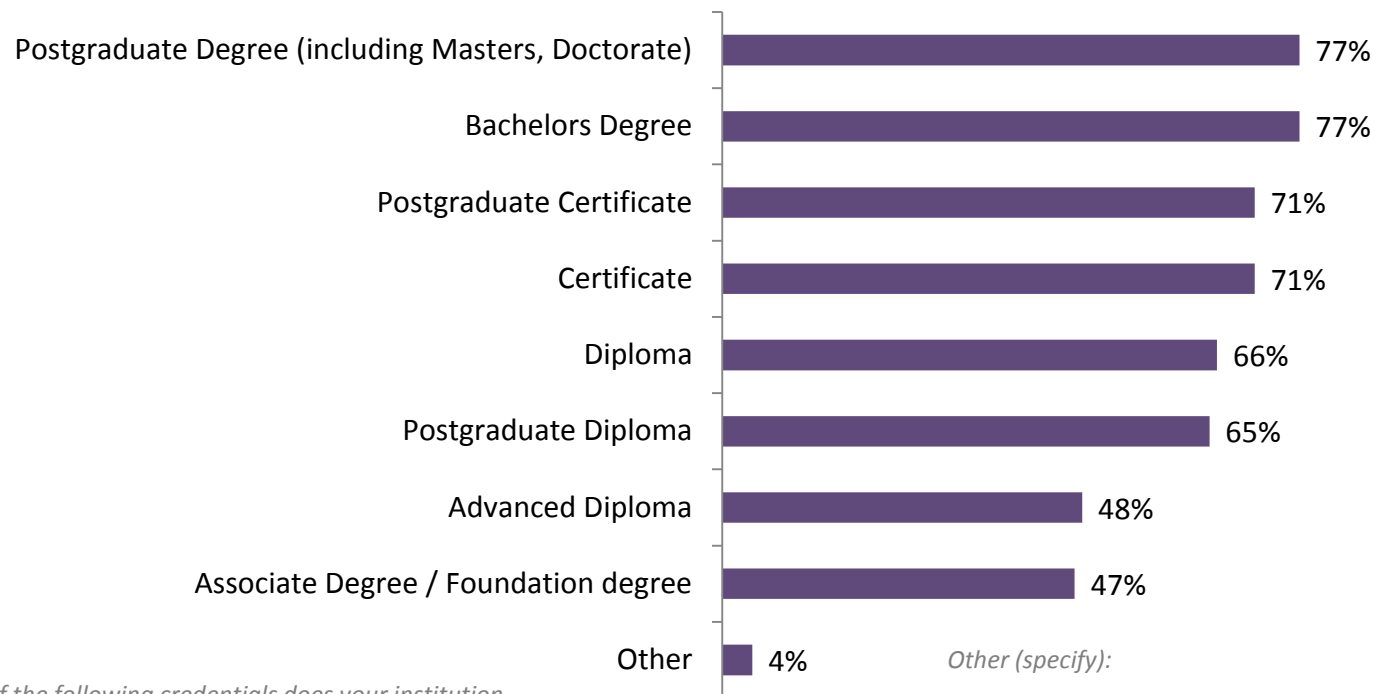| Qualification	Percentage
Postgraduate Degree (including Masters, Doctorate)	77%
Bachelors Degree	77%
Postgraduate Certificate	71%
Certificate	71%
Diploma	66%
Postgraduate Diploma	65%
Advanced Diploma	48%
Associate Degree / Foundation degree	47%
Other	4%

Which of the following credentials does your institution have the authority to confer in accordance with local accreditation requirements? (Select all that apply)

Sample : Teaching institutions only (n=95)

Other (specify):

- *PLA recommendations for college level learning gained outside of HE*

- *Professional accreditation in collaboration with external bodies e.g. CISCO, CPD for professions such as nursing and midwifery*

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Higher education institutions with on-campus students formed the majority of the sample, followed by distance learning institutions.

Category of institution

- On-campus institution — 62%
- Distance learning institution — 41%
- Open university (open entry policy) — 17%
- Not an open institution but have open entry policy for some courses — 14%
- Other — 18%
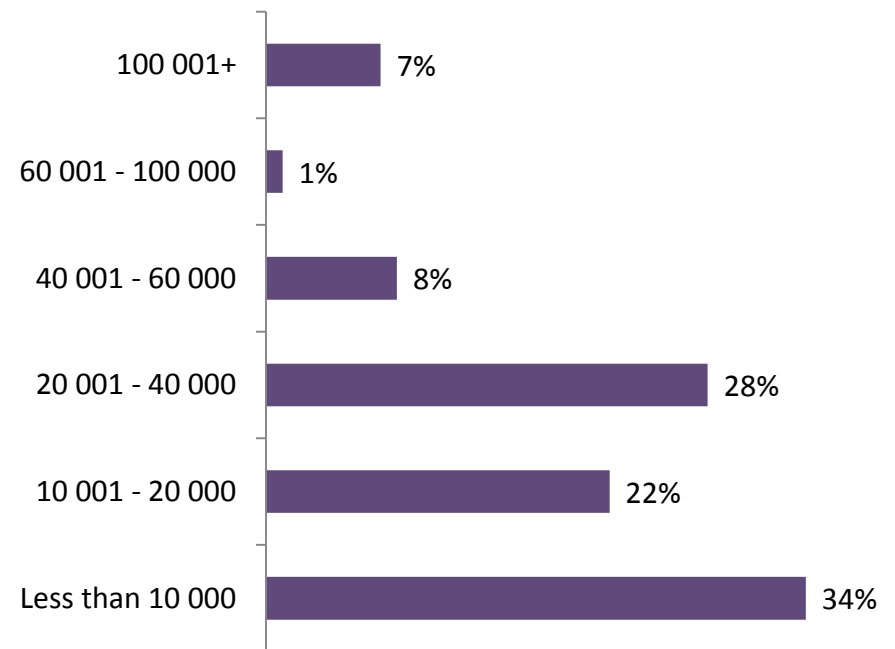
Which of the following apply to your institution?

Sample : Teaching institutions only (n=95)

Number of students

- 100 001+ — 7%
- 60 001 - 100 000 — 1%
- 40 001 - 60 000 — 8%
- 20 001 - 40 000 — 28%
- 10 001 - 20 000 — 22%
- Less than 10 000 — 34%

Approximately how many students are enrolled in your institution?

Institutional Landscape

One in two participants noted that their organisations had policies and procedures in place for recognition of prior learning, yet few participated in challenge exams.

How actively does your institution currently participate in the following accreditation activities?

Unsure

Policies and procedures in place for recognition of prior learning

| 20% | 13% | 18% | 32% | 17% |

21%

Collaborates with employers to provide workplace-based assessment for learners

| 19% | 22% | 22% | 22% | 14% |

14%

Challenge Exams

| 67% | 10% | 12% | 6% | 5% |

23%

No participation   1   2   3   4   5   Central to my institution
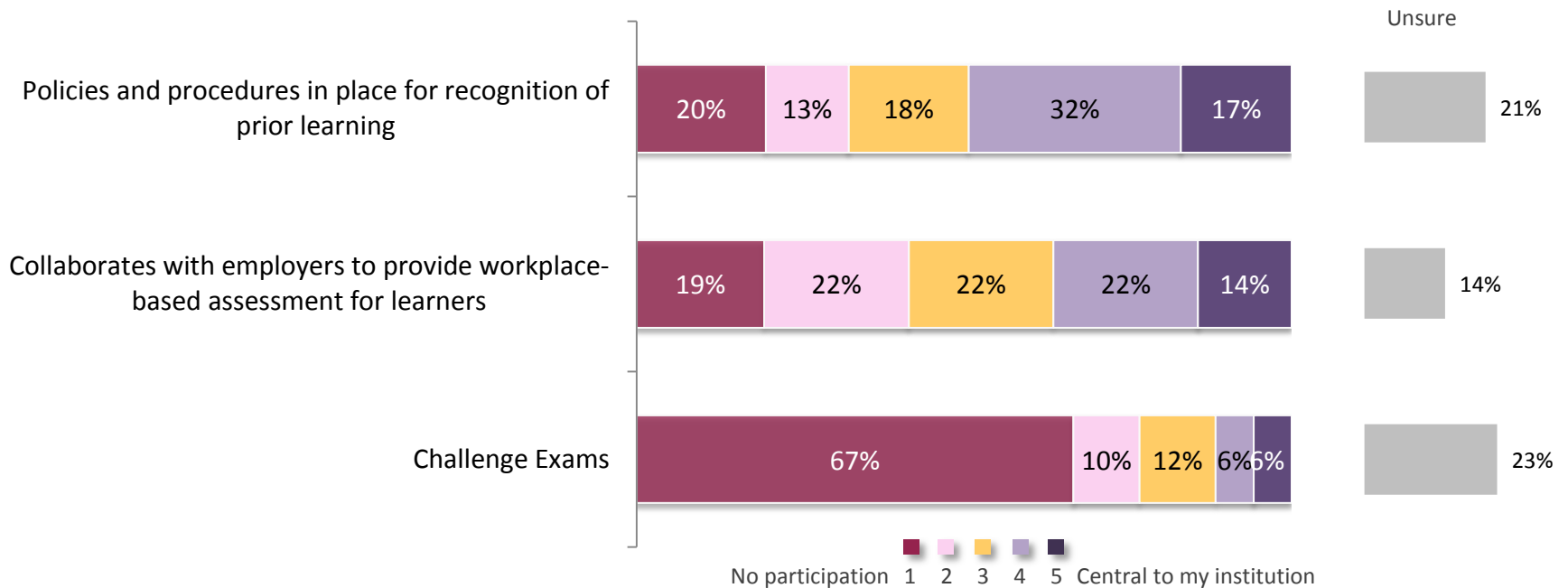
These next questions ask you to provide information on current policy. Please answer as best you can.

Total Sample (n=90)

Confidence

| 6% | 9% | 23% | 33% | 29% |
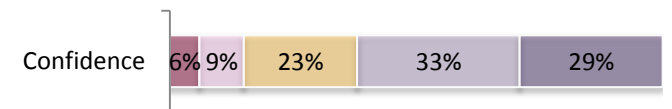
How confident are you that your answers to the previous questions reflect your organisation's policies and practices?

Not very confident   1   2   3   4   5   Very confident

Very few organisations utilised initiatives such as analytics, social network platforms and volunteers to provide support to students.

How actively does your institution currently participate in the following activities to support learners?

Unsure

Relationships with workplace or community organisations that support learners in their studies	5%	26%	26%	29%	13%	10%
Open access and externally hosted social networking platform(s) to enable peer learning support	14%	47%	18%	16%	4%	10%
Uses analytics to enable the provision of automated support to students	36%	36%	14%	10%	4%	17%
Uses volunteers to provide certain aspects of student support	42%	22%	27%	4%		13%

No participation   1   2   3   4   5   Central to my institution

These next questions ask you to provide information on current policy. Please answer as best you can.

Total Sample (n=84)

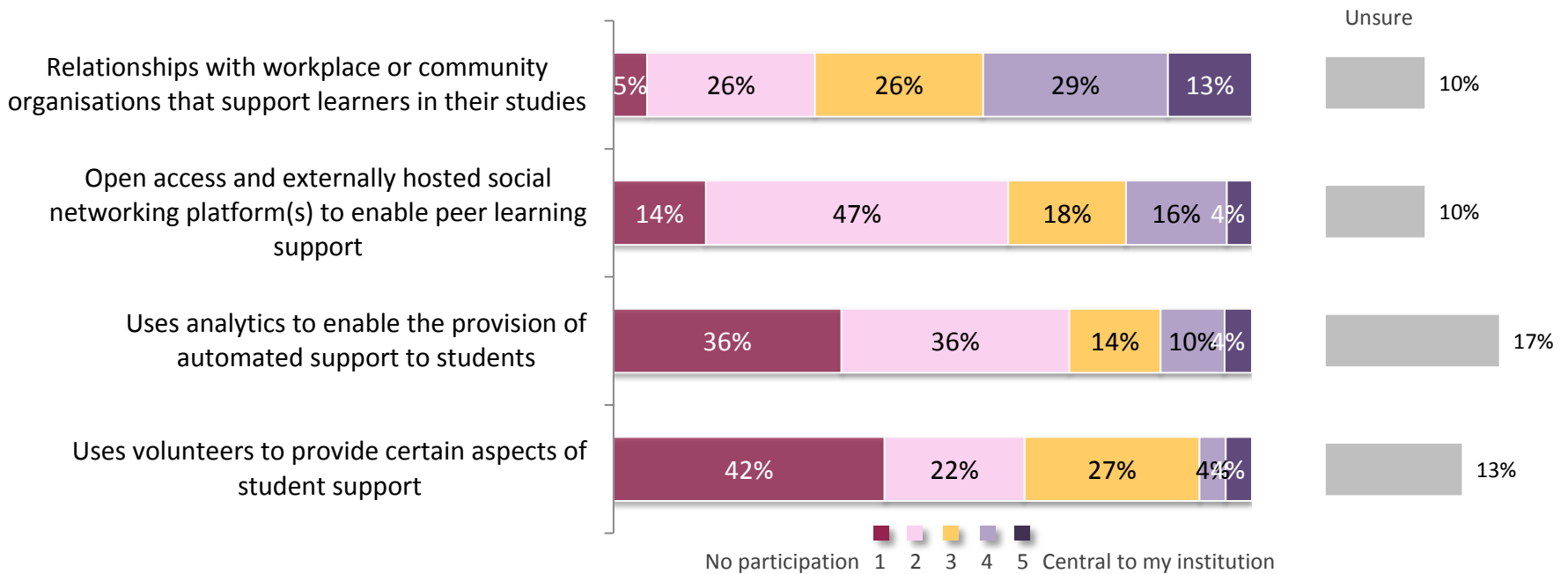Confidence   4% 7%   30%   40%   20%

How confident are you that your answers to the previous questions reflect your organisation's policies and practices?

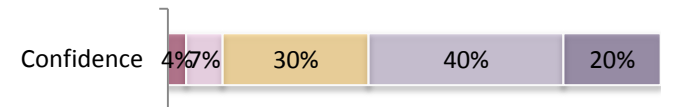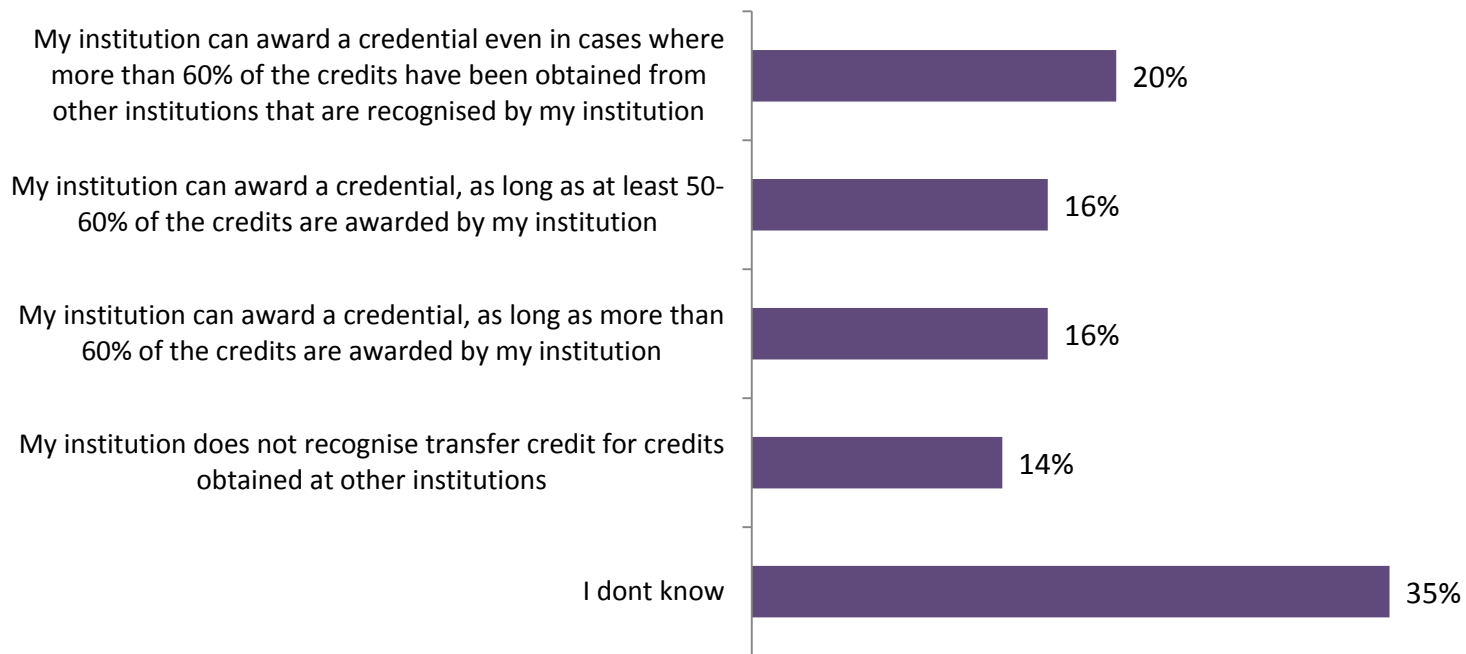Not very confident   1   2   3   4   5   Very confident

Credit Transfer

Awareness of policies with regard to credit transfer was low, yet only one in two participants maintain that their institution can award credentials to students who have obtained more than 60% of their credits at another institution.

Which of the following options best describe your institution's practice with regard to credit transfer?

Option	%
My institution can award a credential even in cases where more than 60% of the credits have been obtained from other institutions that are recognised by my institution	20%
My institution can award a credential, as long as at least 50-60% of the credits are awarded by my institution	16%
My institution can award a credential, as long as more than 60% of the credits are awarded by my institution	16%
My institution does not recognise transfer credit for credits obtained at other institutions	14%
I dont know	35%

These next questions ask you to provide information on current policy. Please answer as best you can. How actively does your institution currently participate in the following accreditation activities? (Select all that apply)

Total Sample (n=81)

Confidence: 9% | 10% | 19% | 22% | 40%

How confident are you that your answers to the previous questions reflect your organisation's policies and practices?
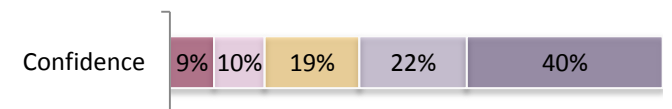
Not very confident 1   2   3   4   5 Very confident

Involvement in OER initiatives

Open Educational Resources (OER) are materials used to support education that may be freely accessed, reused, modified and shared by anyone (Downes 2011). For the purposes of this study, the concept of OER is inclusive of Open Educational Practices (OEP) associated with the design, development and delivery of courses based solely on OER.

The OER university or OERu is a global partnership in which several higher education institutions are collaborating to offer free learning using courses based solely on OERs and low-cost assessment and accreditation services towards formal academic credit on a mass scale.

Participants in the research study had a high level of awareness and knowledge about both open educational resources in general and the OERu.

Before today, how knowledgeable were you about Open Educational Resources (OERs)?

| 2% | 19% | 27% | 51% |

Before today, how knowledgeable were you about the OER university (OERu)?

| 8% | 13% | 12% | 36% | 31% |

Not very knowledgeable   1   2   3   4   5   Very knowledgeable
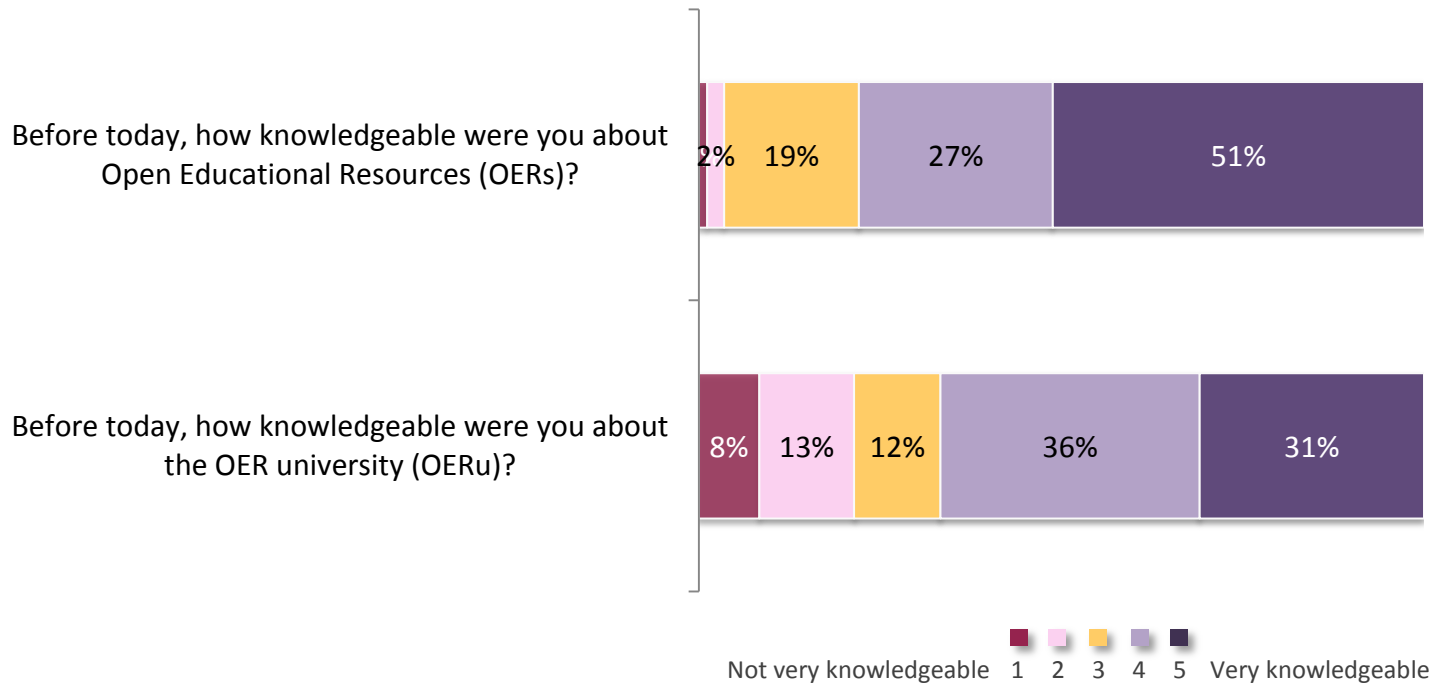
Before today, how knowledgeable were you about…Please rate your awareness on a scale from 1-5 where 1 = not at all (never heard of before today) to 5 = to a large extent (very knowledgeable)

Total Sample (n=90)

Although awareness of the OERu is high, participation in the OERu network is low with only 23% of institutions actively involved.

63%

14%

23%

Yes

No

DK
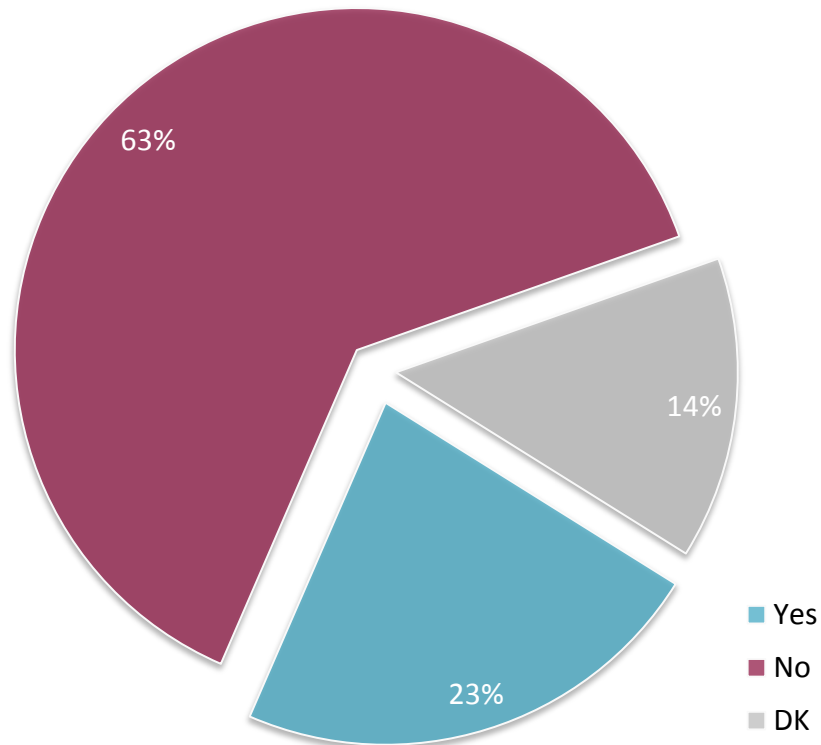
Is your institution actively involved in the OERu network?
i.e. an OERu anchor partner or a member of the OERten

Sample excludes respondents unfamiliar with OERs (n=84)

Interest in the OERu initiative as well as the mainstream adoption of OERs in the formal education sector is high with over 90% of respondents interested in these topics.
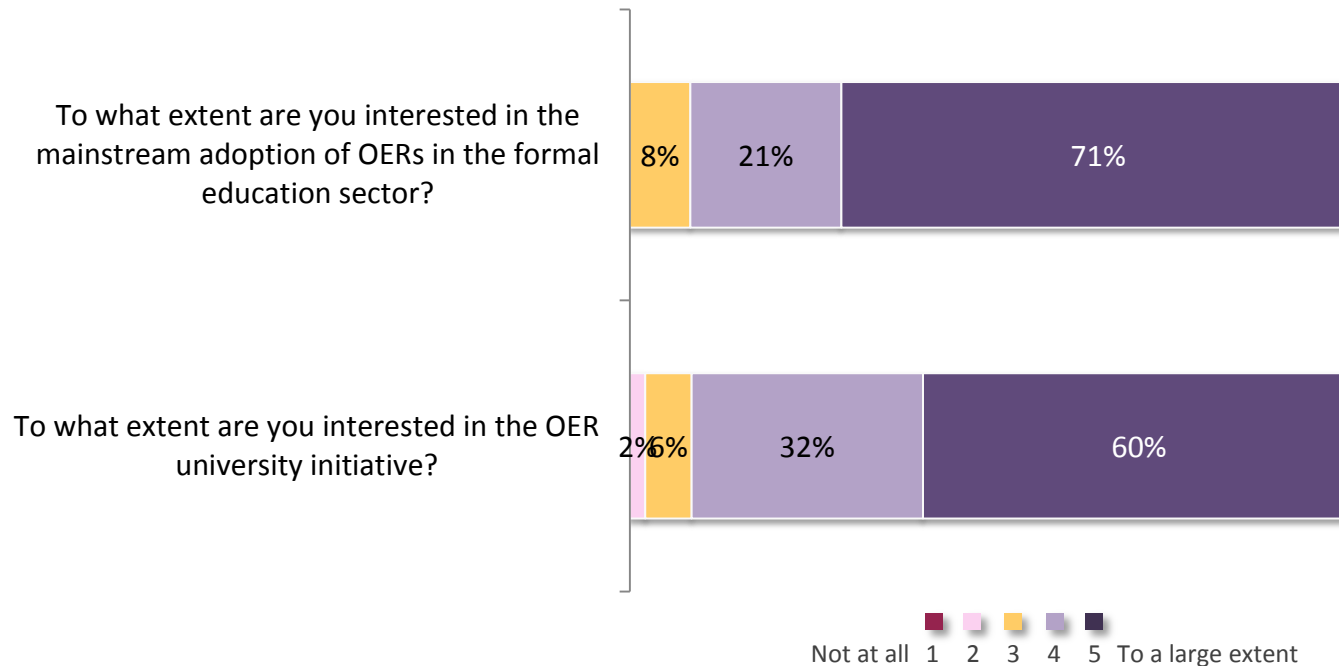
To what extent are you interested in the mainstream adoption of OERs in the formal education sector?

8% 21% 71%

To what extent are you interested in the OER university initiative?

2%6% 32% 60%

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 To a large extent

Sample excludes respondents unfamiliar with OERs (n=84)

One in two participants are presently interested observers in the OERu and many consider becoming more actively involved in the future.

Current participation in the OERu

Capacity	Percentage
Institutional representative of a OERu anchor partner	26%
Institutional representative of a prospective OERu anchor partner	4%
In my individual capacity as active OERu volunteer	21%
As an interested person contributing to OERu planning discussions	23%
Interested observer	43%
Not currently participating in the OERu	4%
Other	13%

Future participation in the OERu

Capacity	Percentage
Institutional representative of a OERu anchor partner	13%
Institutional representative of a prospective OERu anchor partner	28%
In my individual capacity as active OERu volunteer	56%
As an interested person contributing to OERu planning discussions	56%
Interested observer	41%
Not currently participating in the OERu	0%
Other	3%

In which of the following capacities are you currently participating in the OERu? (Select all that apply)

Sample excludes UK participants (n=90)

In which of the following capacities are you potentially interested in participating in the OERu in future? Select all that apply)

The opportunity to participate in an international network of accredited institutions is considered to be the most important driver of institutional participation in the OERu.

To what extent did/would the following factors impact on your institution's decision to join a collaborative OER accreditation initiative such as the OERu Network?

Unsure %

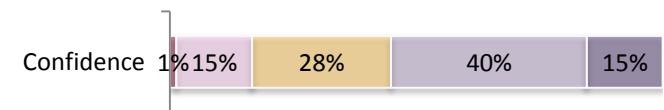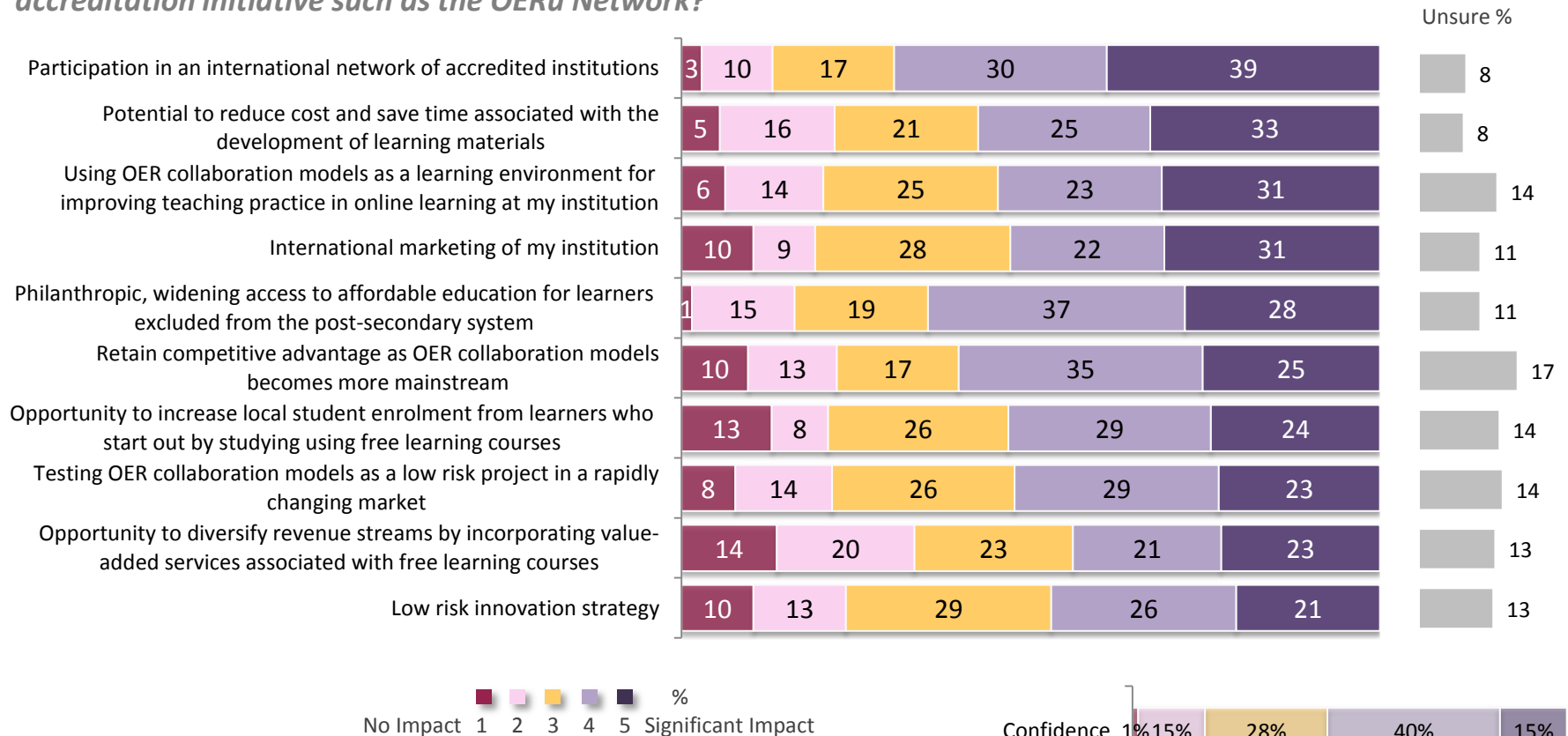| Factor	1	2	3	4	5	Unsure %
Participation in an international network of accredited institutions	3	10	17	30	39	8
Potential to reduce cost and save time associated with the development of learning materials	5	16	21	25	33	8
Using OER collaboration models as a learning environment for improving teaching practice in online learning at my institution	6	14	25	23	31	14
International marketing of my institution	10	9	28	22	31	11
Philanthropic, widening access to affordable education for learners excluded from the post-secondary system	1	15	19	37	28	11
Retain competitive advantage as OER collaboration models becomes more mainstream	10	13	17	35	25	17
Opportunity to increase local student enrolment from learners who start out by studying using free learning courses	13	8	26	29	24	14
Testing OER collaboration models as a low risk project in a rapidly changing market	8	14	26	29	23	14
Opportunity to diversify revenue streams by incorporating value-added services associated with free learning courses	14	20	23	21	23	13
Low risk innovation strategy	10	13	29	26	21	13

%
No Impact 1   2   3   4   5   Significant Impact

Sample excludes UK participants & respondents selecting not applicable (n=80)

Confidence 1% 15%   28%   40%   15%

How confident are you that your answers to the previous questions reflect your organisation's views?

Not very confident 1   2   3   4   5   Very confident

Fewer than three in ten institutions currently participate actively in the activities to support the development of OERs.

How actively does your institution currently participate in activities to support the development and use of Open Educational Resources?

Unsure

	No participation 1	2	3	4	5 Central to my institution	Unsure
My institution publishes open educational resources (OERs)	31%	25%	15%	13%	16%	5%
Collaborative development of OERs with people in other institutions	19%	29%	28%	14%	10%	11%
Use of OERs developed by other institutions or organisations	8%	30%	39%	14%	8%	11%
Provision of courses based solely on OERs	60%	19%	12%	3% 5%		8%

No participation 1   2   3   4   5 Central to my institution

These next questions ask you to provide information on current policy. Please answer as best you can.
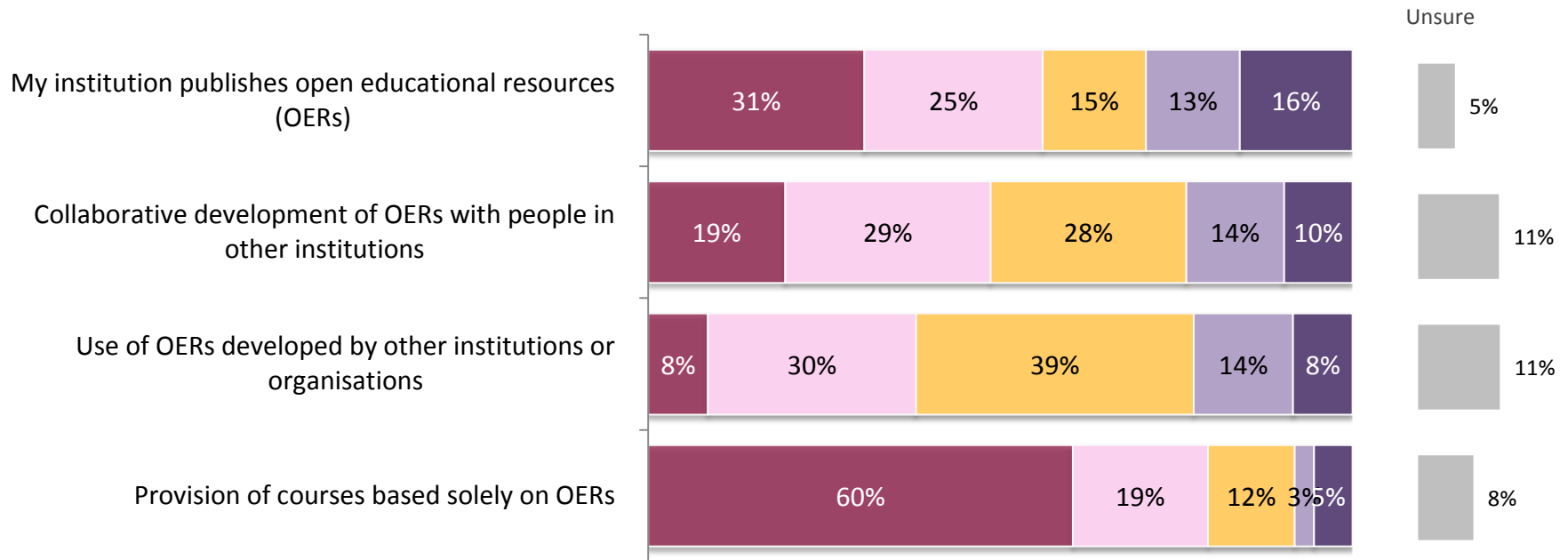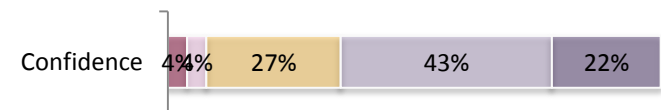
Confidence | 4% | 4% | 27% | 43% | 22% |

Sample excludes UK participants & respondents selecting not applicable (n=80)

How confident are you that your answers to the previous questions reflect your organisation's views?
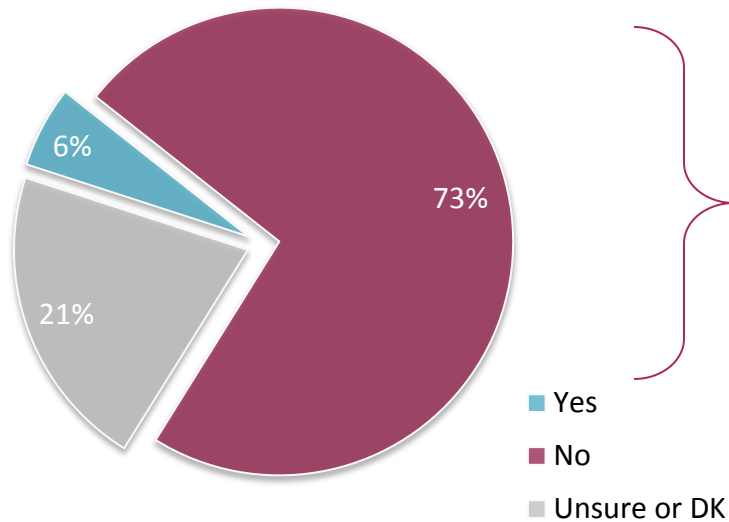
Not very confident 1   2   3   4   5 Very confident

Assessment services for courses based on OERs

Only 6% of institutions currently provide assessment services for courses based solely on OERs and only 18% are likely to provide them in the near future.

Current assessment services

- Yes
- No
- Unsure or DK

Does your institution currently provide assessment services for courses based solely on OERs? Includes assessment services for courses to be used in the OERu

Sample excludes respondents unfamiliar with OERs (n=84)

Future assessment services

5	Very likely
4	
3	
2	
1	Not at all likely
	Unsure
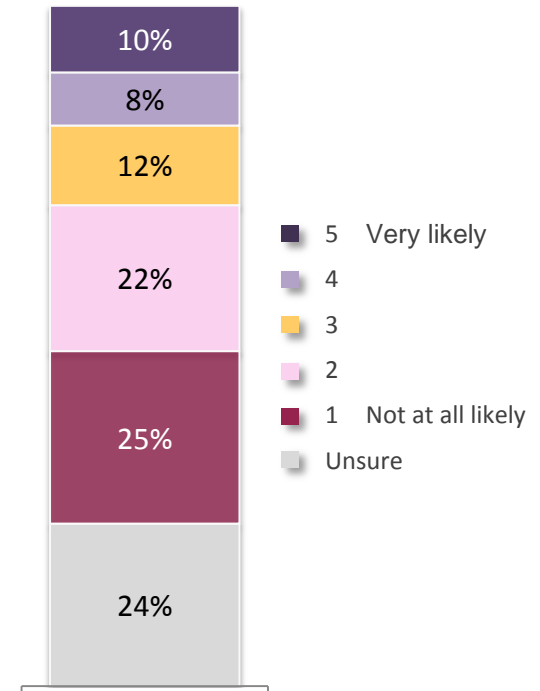
How likely is your institution to provide assessment services for courses based solely on OERs in the future?

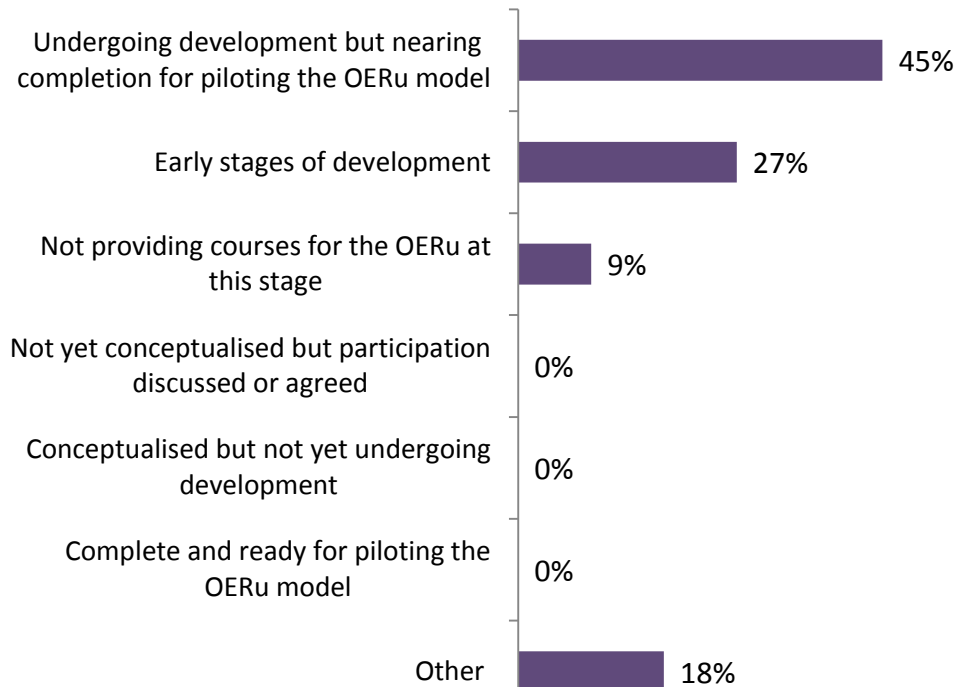*Sample excludes respondents with current services (n=51)*

OERu Evaluation

Half of the twelve OERTen representatives were nearing completion in the development of open courses to be used for the OERu and a third have obtained support that has been agreed to and institutionalised within their organisation.

Which of the following best describes your Institution's current stage in the development of open courses to be used for the OERu?

Undergoing development but nearing completion for piloting the OERu model — 45%

Early stages of development — 27%

Not providing courses for the OERu at this stage — 9%

Not yet conceptualised but participation discussed or agreed — 0%

Conceptualised but not yet undergoing development — 0%

Complete and ready for piloting the OERu model — 0%

Other — 18%   *n=2*

Sample only institutional representatives of OERu anchor partners (n=11)

Other Specify:
- *Service organization*
- *Course is designed but depending on finding open textbook*

Have the principles and policies of the OERu already been agreed to by your organisation's executive leadership and institutionalised within the organisation?

Yes, agreed to by executive leadership — 36%

Yes, agreed to but not yet institutionalised — 36%

No — 0%

Other — 18%   *n=2*

Unsure or DK — 9%
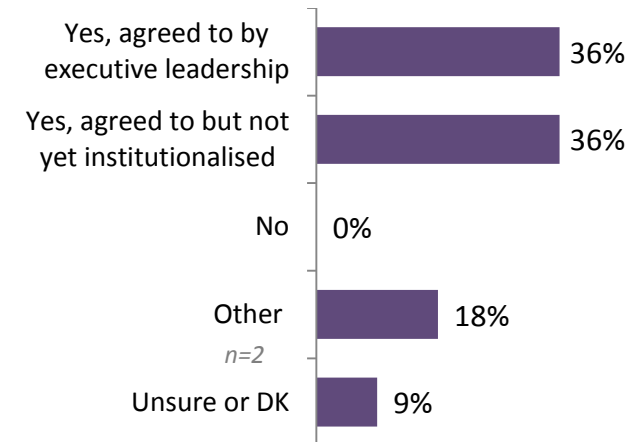
Other specify:
- *Agreed that current principles and polices need to change to be more OER friendly*
- *Recent institutional changes will reopen the discussion but overall there will be continued support*

A third are experiencing issues with availability of resources including technical development resources and time.

Are you currently experiencing any issues hindering participation in the OERu concept?

No — 64%

Yes — 36%

Please describe the problems you are experiencing:

- *Availability of resources. Clarity of process - because it is new to us, we have to work it out as we go.*
- *Organisational maturity and experience with open development models. This is a cultural barrier -- many individuals do not have experience in the open source approaches of collaborative development.*
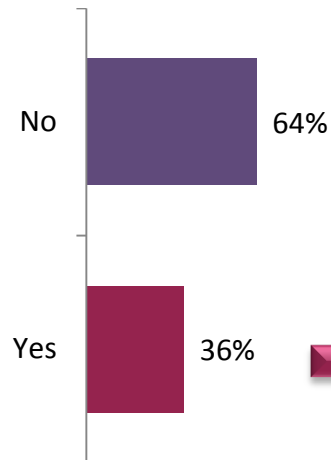- *Technological development resources are limited*
- *Time it takes to convert and redesign courses*

Sample only institutional representatives of OERu anchor partners (n=11)

Policy changes

A third of respondents are unsure as to the extent to which policy change will be required to implement the services required for the OERu, yet a further third feel that none or only minor revisions will be required.

To what extent will your institution be required to change existing policies to successfully implement assessment services for courses based solely on OERs (including courses offered through the OERu)?

0%

13%	
13%	
25%	
13%	
38%	

- 5 — Extensive policy revision required
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 — No policy revision required
- Unsure
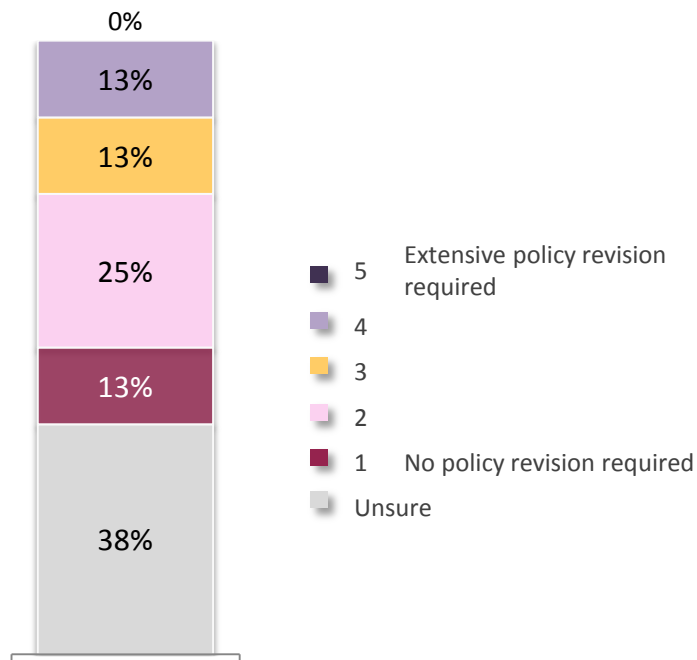
Insights into existing policies that support assessment services for courses based solely on OERs:

- *Already have RPL and accreditation services. For RPL where the knowledge is obtained is irrelevant, as long as it can be demonstrated.*
- *Existing RPL policy, accelerated assessment for many programmes*
- *Advanced RPL policy in place. The OERu model is designed to operate within existing policy frameworks. We already have a Creative Commons Attribution intellectual property policy and are integrating OER and OERu into the learning and teaching policy currently under revision. We anticipate minor refinements to accommodate operational aspects of the OERu model.*
- *RPL policy provides an opening for alternative access and accreditation.*

Sample only institutional representatives of OERu anchor partners (n=11)

Portfolio and automated assessment measures are considered to be the most likely to be used in the future by OERu partner institutions.

In your opinion, which of the following assessment methods are most likely to be used in the future by OERu partner institutions or institutions assessing learning outcomes of courses based solely on OERs for formal assessment towards credentials?
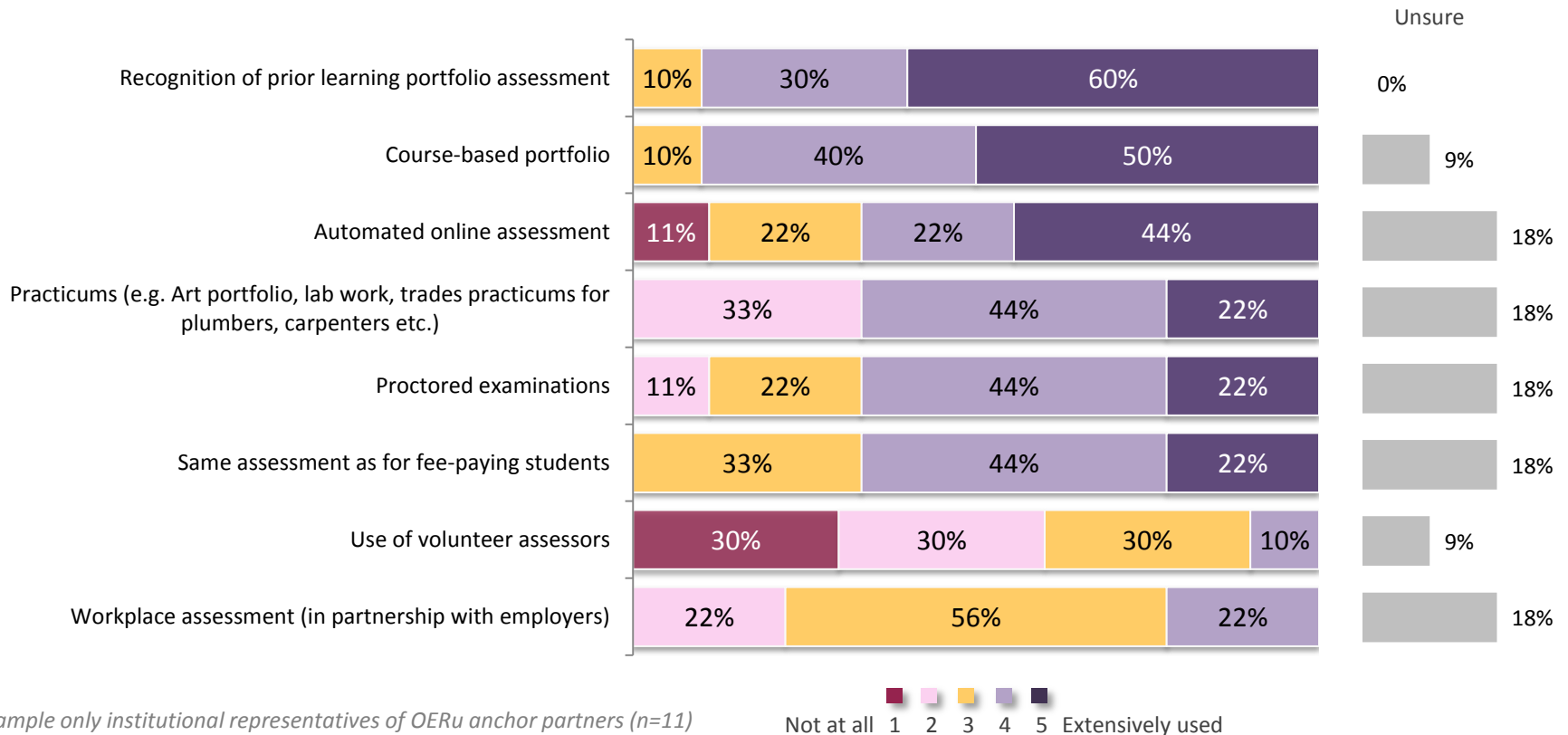
Unsure

Assessment method	1	2	3	4	5	Unsure
Recognition of prior learning portfolio assessment			10%	30%	60%	0%
Course-based portfolio			10%	40%	50%	9%
Automated online assessment	11%		22%	22%	44%	18%
Practicums (e.g. Art portfolio, lab work, trades practicums for plumbers, carpenters etc.)		33%		44%	22%	18%
Proctored examinations		11%	22%	44%	22%	18%
Same assessment as for fee-paying students			33%	44%	22%	18%
Use of volunteer assessors	30%	30%	30%	10%		9%
Workplace assessment (in partnership with employers)		22%	56%	22%		18%

Sample only institutional representatives of OERu anchor partners (n=11)

Not at all 1   2   3   4   5 Extensively used

The student services option that the majority OERTen members consider to be the most effective is the integration of peer-to-peer learning support models.

How effective do you consider each of these student support options to be for students participating in OER courses?

Student support option	1	2	3	4	5	Unsure
Integrating peer-to-peer learning support models			20%	20%	60%	9%
Granting official credit through community service learning courses for supporting OERu learners		20%	30%	20%	30%	9%
Volunteer support from professional bodies		30%	20%	30%	20%	9%
Retired academic volunteers			40%	40%	20%	9%
Designing systems for senior students to volunteer support for junior students			40%	40%	20%	9%
Use of volunteers for general learning support and study skills		10%	40%	30%	20%	9%
Institutional recognition in staff appraisals for providing volunteer support	10%	20%	20%	40%	10%	9%
Use of volunteers for providing content specific support		10%	50%	30%	10%	9%
Use of volunteers for technology support	9%		45%	36%	9%	0%
Use of volunteers for assessment of courses		56%	33%	11%		18%

Legend: Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extensively used

Sample only institutional representatives of OERu anchor partners (n=11)

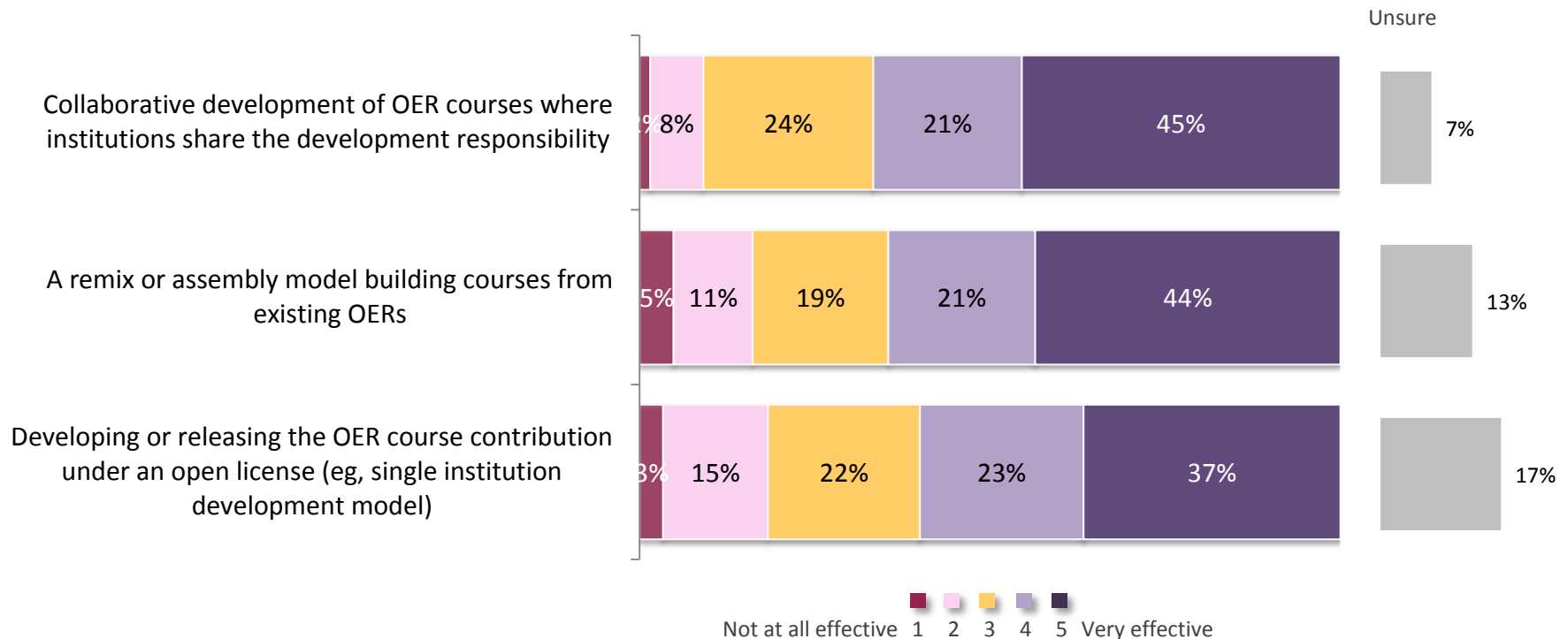# Success factors and obstacles to participation in OER initiatives

Success factors to participation in assessment of OER based courses

Although the majority of institutions consider collaborative development of OER courses, the remix of existing OERs and release under an open license to be an effective solution, there is still a great deal of uncertainty and doubt as to the effectiveness of these approaches.

How effective do you think each of the following approaches will be for developing OERu Courses?

Unsure

Approach	1	2	3	4	5	Unsure
Collaborative development of OER courses where institutions share the development responsibility		8%	24%	21%	45%	7%
A remix or assembly model building courses from existing OERs	5%	11%	19%	21%	44%	13%
Developing or releasing the OER course contribution under an open license (eg, single institution development model)	3%	15%	22%	23%	37%	17%

Not at all effective 1 2 3 4 5 Very effective

Total sample (n=72)

The greatest perceived obstacles to the successful implementation to OERu models is the lack of availability of volunteers and the lack of support at the senior leadership level.

To what extent do the following factors hinder successful implementation of the OERu model or similar initiatives within your institution?

Unsure

Factor	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 To a large extent	Unsure
Lack of availability of volunteers	2%	16%	17%	28%	38%	11%
Lack of support at the senior leadership level	13%	9%	17%	25%	36%	4%
Cost of redeveloping courses	3%	9%	22%	32%	34%	10%
Lack of availability of committed staff members	2%	11%	21%	35%	32%	8%
Lack of integration with current workflows or processes	3%	12%	18%	37%	30%	6%
Lack of alignment with organisational strategy or policy	9%	5%	17%	40%	29%	10%
Lack of availability of examiners or markers	21%	13%	27%	14%	25%	13%
Lack of a supportive community within the institution	10%	10%	26%	28%	25%	4%
Lack of availability of training and support	9%	16%	24%	28%	24%	6%
Perceived lack of demand for open courses	8%	22%	30%	17%	22%	13%
Negative perceptions towards OERs or open course delivery	15%	11%	28%	28%	18%	10%
Lack of evidence for the enhancement of student learning	21%	16%	18%	28%	16%	7%
Concerns about existing technologies or infrastructure	13%	16%	25%	29%	16%	6%

Total sample (n=72)

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 To a large extent

Acharya Narendra Dev College, University of Delhi
Amity University, Noida, UP, India
Athabasca University

BCcampus
Blackboard
Bournemouth University
Charles Sturt University
Oswald de Andrade
Coventry University
CSP scarl
De Montfort University
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Gujarat, India
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology

Ghana-Inida Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT

GOVT. INTER COLLEGE BHOJPUR

Govt. inter college Bhojpur Moradabad
ICTEDU Learning Centre
Imperial College London
Institute of Education
K12 Next Generation
Kerala University
King's College London
Leeds Metropolitan University
Likeminds
London South Bank University

Loughborough University
Middlesex University
Nancy George & Associates
Newcastle University
NorthTec
OER Foundation
OER-Brazil Project
Open Education Resource Foundation
Open Polytechnic of New Zealand

Open University
Otago Polytechnic
pedagogy.ir

SA Institute for Distance Education
Saint Michael's College (VT; USA)
School District 46 Sunshine Coast
SEAMEO RETRAC
Southampton Solent University
ST PATRICK EDUCATION DISTRICT, Ministry of Education ,Trinidad and Tobago
SUNY/Empire State College
Supten Institute
The Open University
The Open University of Sri Lanka

The University of Manchester

Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning

Universidade Federal Fluminense
University of Mumbai, India
University of Bath
University of Cambridge
University of Cape Town
University of Huddersfield
University of Hull
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Mauritius

University of Northern British Columbia
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
University of South Africa
University of Southampton
University of Surrey
University of Swaziland
Wawasan Open University

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