Open Educational Resources (OER) universitas - OERu

http://oeru.org
https://wikieducator.org/OER_university

The OERu makes higher education accessible to everyone. Coordinated by the OER Foundation (OERF), an independent, not-for-profit organisation, the OERu network of institutions offers free online courses for students worldwide. The OERu partners also provide affordable ways for learners to gain academic credit towards qualifications from recognised institutions.

Director OER Foundation: Wayne Mackintosh

Origins

The OER Foundation (OERF) was established in 2009 – with the goal of using open education as a means to provide leadership and international networking, as well as supporting educational institutions to achieve their strategic objectives.

The OER Foundation hosts WikiEducator, a flagship community of +65,000 educators, which focuses on being able to share knowledge freely.

In February 2011, with funding support from UNESCO, an open meeting was convened to explore the establishment of the OERu. The meeting's aim was to build a parallel learning universe, in order to widen access to more affordable education for learners excluded from the traditional tertiary education system. In November of the same year, the founding OERu anchor partners commenced planning for the implementation of the OERu network.

Today, OERF hosts an OERu network that includes recognised universities, polytechnics and community colleges from five continents. A full list of OERu partners can be found here - http://oeru.org/oeru-partners.
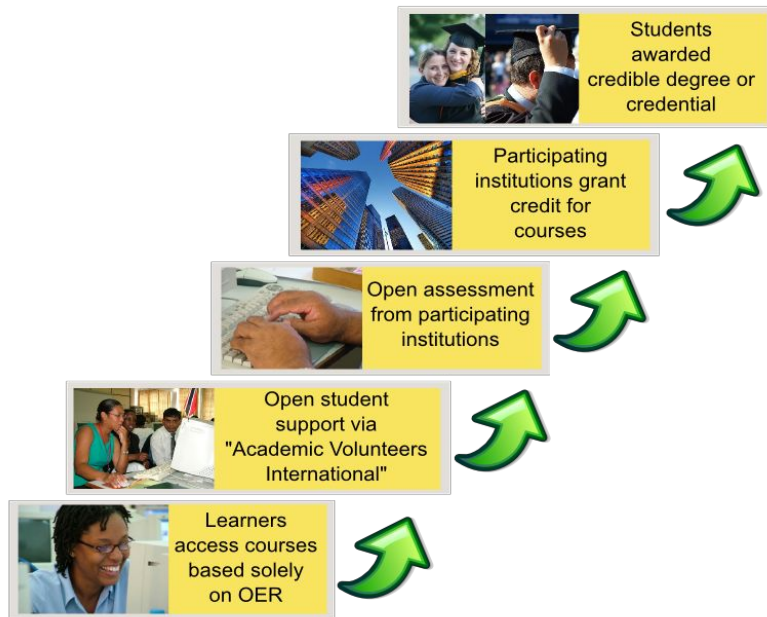
OERu Description

Figure 1: OERu Concept

The OERu aims to create a sustainable innovation partnership between accredited educational institutions which will provide free learning to all learners with pathways to gain academic credit from formal education institutions around the world. It is based on the community service and outreach missions of tertiary education providers to develop parallel delivery systems (now possible with the open web and free content licensing of learning materials) that will augment existing educational provision. Figure 1 shows the OERu concept depicting a stairway to success for OER learners.

The OERu is an open network and public-private partnership (PPP) including post-secondary institutions, the private sector, non-profits, government and international agencies. This OER ecosystem aims to serve both formal and informal learners by creating more flexible and affordable pathways to meet diverse student needs.

The OERu collaboration:
- Will design and implement a parallel learning universe to provide free learning opportunities for all students worldwide with pathways to earn credible post-secondary credentials.
- Offer courses and programs based solely on OER and open textbooks.
- Design and implement scalable pedagogies appropriate for the OERu concept.
- Will implement scalable systems of volunteer student support through community service learning approaches.
- Coordinate assessment and credentialing services on a cost recovery basis for participating education institutions to ensure credible qualifications and corresponding course articulation among anchor partners.

Openness

The OERu is distinctively open in that it incorporates openness in everything it does as shown in Figure 2.

The distinctively open aspects of the OERu, include its use of open-source software, open peer review, open public input, open file formats, open practices, and Open Educational Resources.

Inputs for OERu's logic model include, existing open content, open textbooks, open access journals, open courseware, OER, and open source software infrastructure. The OER logic model is designed to address the current gaps in the OER ecosystem including open curriculum, open student support, open assessment and open accreditation.

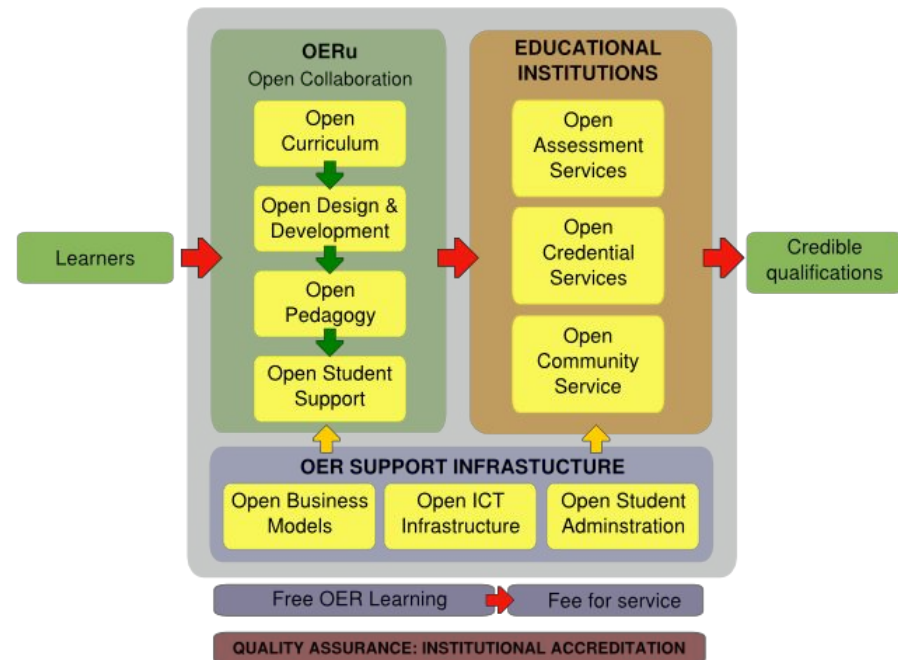Educational content OERu uses and develops are all licensed with Creative Commons.

Figure 2: OERu Logic Model

Open Business Models

OERu's Logic Model has always included open business models. However, the early years of OERu were focused on establishing a critical mass of global partners and initial course offerings. Work to establish open business models for the whole initiative didn't get seriously underway until 2015 with the launch of the Creative Commons open business models initiative.

The first open business model component to be built out was that for the OERF which is the host organization for the OERu. Here's the latest OERF open business model canvas:

OERF Open Business Model Canvas

Overall Open Environment Business Fits In?

The OER Foundation is a non-profit organisation that provides networking, leadership and support to education institutions to achieve their strategic objectives through the adoption of open education approaches. The OERu is a flagship initiative of the OERF and its partner institutions.

Key Partners

- OERu partner institutions
- Free and open source software development community
- Global OER community
- International agencies
- WikiEducator community
- Creative Commons

Key Activities

The OERF is distinctively open with all planning activities conducted openly and transparently.

Open planning

- "Evergreen" strategic planning
- Open operational planning

Open organisation and communication

- Convening activities of the OERu Management Committee and supporting working groups
- Hosting of open communication technologies

Open software development and administration

- Administration of the central open source technology infrastructure of the OERF
- Open source software development to support assembly and delivery of OERu courses and incremental innovation

Value Proposition

- Widening access to more affordable education for learners excluded from the formal education sector
- Facilitating international networking of "like-minded" institutions in open education
- Nurturing the sustainable integration of open education approaches to assist partner institutions in achieving their strategic objectives
- Establishing a global collaboration platform for reducing cost, improving efficiency, and diversifying curriculum - especially for low enrolment courses, which are too expensive to develop locally and independently
- Modelling open governance and open management practices
- Providing opportunities for participation in a low risk innovation partnership focused on

Customer Relationships

Partner engagement

Supporting the active engagement of partners in all aspects of the implementation of the OERu via working groups and maintaining a public record of all planning activities. Active working groups:

- OERu Management Committee
- Strategic planning
- Curriculum and programme of study
- Partner engagement
- Course approval and quality
- Standing committee for credit transfer
- Technology
- Marketing and communications

Open communication

The OERF administers a number of open communication platforms enabling the network to connect and collaborate thereby facilitating implementation

Customer Segments

OERu partner institutions

- Executive leaders and senior administrators
- Academic staff
- Professional staff (learning design, librarians, media, credit transfer / PLAR etc.)
- Technical support staff

OERu learners

Learners studying OERu courses hosted on OERF technology who may request assessment services from OERu partners.

(See OERu partners canvas for detailed description of learners.)

- Adult independent learners
- "Try before you buy" learners
- Professional development learners
- Informal learners

Educators and trainers

(Educators wanting to learn more about OER, OEP and how to engage in the OERu

- Sharing open frameworks for replicating open technologies at partner institutions.

Open support and capacity development

- Supporting partners in the assembly, design and development of OERu courses
- Engendering capacity development for open design models
- Creating opportunities for capacity development in OER for educators worldwide.

emerging open technologies and associated flexible pedagogies
- Building local capacity in open design methodologies
- Generating opportunities for new revenue streams for partner institutions arising from dis-aggregated services enabled through OER.

Open support

- Resources to support capacity development in OER and open design
- Annual international OERu partner's meeting
- Regional OERu partner meetings
- OERu Council of Chief Executive Officers

open design model)
- Staff at OERu partner institutions
- OERu volunteers
- Any educators interested in OER and OEP.

Key Resources

Core resources

- OER and open access materials used to assemble OERu courses
- Open source software technology infrastructure to support the OERu
- Open source software developers
- Project leadership and administration

Volunteer resources

The following resources are largely sourced through the FTE contributions of gold-tier partner institutions:

- Subject matter experts

Channels

- oeru.org
- groups.oeru.org
- community.oer.org
- wikieducator.org/OERu

	● Learning design and multimedia professionals ● Library professionals ● Graphic artists ● Technologists and developers ● Administrators		
Cost Structure ● Provision and maintenance of the central technology infrastructure to support open design, assembly and delivery of OERu courses at no-cost to learners ● Software development to support sustainable innovation for OER reuse and remix ● Leadership, management and operational support for the OERu network	**CC Licenses** The OERF subscribes to Free Cultural Works approved licenses **OERu Categories** *Public Domain Mark* *CC0* *CC BY* *CC BY-SA*	**Social Good** ● Promoting the sustainability of education systems via open education practice (OEP) ● Widening access to more affordable education leading to credible credentials.	**Revenue Streams** Initiatives of the OERF are restricted to charitable education activities. The OERF does not rely on revenue sharing models with its partners thereby endorsing partner autonomy. *Partner membership fees* This is the core revenue stream for sustainable OERF operations. Recurrent costs of partners for assessment services are recouped on a fee-for-service basis. *Philanthropy* ● Donor funding to support strategic projects ● Contributions to shared positions donated by the partner network (eg Platinum tier partners) *Corporate citizenship* ● Sponsorship from the corporate sector to commission and outsource the assembly, design and development of OER courses for the benefit of the network.

Open business model accessed 5-Oct-2015 at: http://wikieducator.org/OERu/Open_business_model_canvases/OER_Foundation

OERF Business Model Analysis

The OERF has very strong value propositions - all based on the benefits and value OER brings.

Offering education to learners at zero cost requires OERu and its partners to devise business models different from those by which higher education typically operates.

The OERF has a very strong commitment to Open Source Software, open governance, open practices and OER.

The OERF operates in a very transparent way.

The OERF use of multiple means of open in it's business model has the potential to generate [compound benefits](#).

The OERF is committed to being a charitable education organization. While it has received Foundation grants, the OERF finances the OERu initiative largely through membership fees that it charges partner institutions who join the OERu. This keeps the OERF out of the many possible open business models partner institutions may choose to adopt.

The OERF open business model is supported not just through revenue but through social capital, largely in the form of faculty and staff time from partner institutions. The OERF relies on this human capital for design, development and implementation of OERu academic offerings. Currently the academic offerings of OERu are spartan and actual student enrollment low suggesting a greater investment of human capital is necessary.

The OERF open business model is supported not just through revenue and social capital but also through OER. Partner institutions provide OER and the OERu utilizes partner OER and OER on the open web as inputs, designing, developing and further enhancing those inputs into its own OERu output course and program offerings, similarly licensed as OER. This extensive use of Creative Commons makes OERF unique.

The OERF has three OERu customers - 1. Institutions, 2. Learners, and 3. Educators. To date it has done a great job of attracting partner institutions with over thirty-two partners from five continents. However, there are few students enrolled suggesting there is a critical need to engage learners directly not just as recipients of academic offerings but in the design, development, and use of OERu itself. Significantly more learners are needed to test out the value propositions OERu is providing.

OERF partner engagement, communication and support model open governance and open management practices with partner institutions. However, relationship building, engagement, channels of communication, and support for learners has not been developed as equally strong.

OERu Partner Institution Open Business Models

The OERu is interesting from an open business models perspective because it has over 30 partner institutions. In August and September 2015 Creative Commons led open business model workshops for OERu partner institutions in Oceania and in North America inviting them to define an open business model that works for their institution. The OERu initiative requires an ecosystem of open business models that work together in a mutually beneficial way. During the workshops partner institutions generated their own open business model canvases. These were then aggregated into a single open business model representative of the perspectives of all OERu partners:

OERu Partner Open Business Model Canvas

Overall Open Environment Business Fits In?

The OERu is a philanthropic collaboration widening access to affordable education using OER with pathways to achieve formal academic credit from our partners. The OERu is contributing to nurturing the development of sustainable and scalable ecosystems for open education on a global scale.

Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Proposition	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments
Existing partners	*Core activities*	● More affordable access to high quality courses for learners traditionally excluded from the formal education sector.	*Self-service*	*Adult independent learners*
● OERu Partner institutions ● OER Foundation ● UNESCO/COL and ICDE OER Chair network ● Donor organisations and corporate citizenship	● Open course design and development ● Open planning for implementation of the OERu ● Sharing of technological and pedagogical expertise ● Open peer review ● Assessment services	● Low cost, low barrier pathways to formal academic credit for "non-traditional" learners. ● Pathways to transition to higher education.	The OERu develops high-quality open online courses designed for independent study which are mapped to the learning outcomes of courses available for formal academic credit at accredited partner institutions. The courses are:	*(Studying for formal credit)* ● Socio-economic disadvantaged learners ● 2nd chance learners ● Reskilling for new career ● Mature learners studying 1st degree ● Degree completion learners
Potential partners to be engaged	*Value added activities*	● Low cost, low risk but high impact innovation in open education.	● Offered at no-cost to OERu learners ● Do not require the purchase of any proprietary resources (eg textbooks) ● Do not require password access to view the materials.	● Foreign students preparing for local national study ● RPL learners filling skills gaps ● Refugees and migrants
● Politicians/government officials responsible for funding higher education, who are increasingly aware of the lack of fiscal sustainability of existing systems.	● Joint delivery of courses ● Shared professional academic development for open design	● Developing learning literacies for a digital age. ● International and intercultural open online course experience.		*"Try before you buy" learners* *(May convert to formal credit)* ● Trialling higher learning

Key suppliers

- All OERu Partners
- OER Foundation
- Open source software projects
- OER and open textbook projects

Resources acquired from partners

Courseware; Assessment and credentialing services; Open source technology infrastructure and associated expertise.

Motivations for Partnerships

Access to and acquisition of open source expertise; Cost-effective sharing of courseware design, development and delivery activities; Low cost and low risk innovation; Cooperative development of innovative open pedagogies; Development and implementation of new business models.

Key Resources

Core resources

- OER and open access materials used to assemble OERu courses
- Open source software technology infrastructure provided by the OER Foundation

Human resources

- Subject matter experts
- Learning design and multimedia professionals
- Library professionals
- Graphic artists
- Technologists and

Support

The OERu model does not provide tutorial support services from academic staff, however the following support options are available:

- Courses are designed to integrate peer-learning support through social media.
- Communication and interaction technologies accessible on the open web and selected support technologies hosted by the OER Foundation.
- Self-study help tutorials for core technologies.

Channels

Learning channels

Open online courses designed for independent study with peer-learning support offered at no cost to OERu learners.

Assessment channels

- Challenge examinations (proctored)
- 3rd party testing centres (automated assessment)
- Recognition of prior learning
- Graded assignments
- Credit transfer

(eg 1st in family or Secondary school learners.)

- Marginalised populations (can fail anonymously or take extra time before attempting assessment)

Professional development learners

(Micro-credentials / Open badges)

- Credentialled learners updating / expanding skills

Informal learners

(Self-motivated learners)

- Learners participating out of self-interest
- Learning for learning's sake

International brand promotion

Promoting international visibility through collaboration with the OERu international network of partners.

	developers ● Administrators		

Cost Structure	CC Licenses	Social Good	Revenue Streams
Direct cost	*Categories for OERu courses*	● The OERu provides more affordable access to quality higher education for learners excluded from tertiary education for financial or physical access reasons.	**Cost recovery model (& potential transfer to study benefit)**
● Annual membership fees to support shared central infrastructure (Gold partners contribute $4000 p.a. after multi-year discount)	*(Free cultural works approved licenses is an OERucore principle of engagement.)* *Public Domain dedication*		*(Most partners are contributing to OERu as community service on the basis that "no new money" is required)*
	CC0		● Fees for assessment-only services (to cover administration and staff costs for grading)
	CC BY		● New students who transfer for full-fee study.
● Staff time contribution towards collective planning and assembly of courses (Gold partners contribute 0.2 Full-time equivalent per year).	*CC BY-SA*	● Philanthropic contribution to building more sustainable education systems using OER.	**Value added services**
			(Some OERu partners are planning to better serve the community through value added services which may include new revenue streams.)
	External resources	● Modelling open governance and open management approaches in education	● Optional "pay as you go" tutorial support services
● Platinum partners who contribute more than $10,000 p.a eg shared positions for the network.	*(OERu courses may link to external resources)* *CC BY-ND*		● Fees for micro-credentialing / professional development certifications.
	CC BY-NC	● Leverage network models for "open sourcing" education for all without compromising the fiscal sustainability of the public funded tertiary sector.	**Note:**
No "new money" approach	*CC BY-NC-SA*		1. OERu partners are autonomous and retain decision-making over all aspects of assessment including the price for services.
	CC BY-NC-ND		2. The OER Foundation as an independent charity **does not** share in any revenue generated from partners for services arising from the OERu collaboration.
OERu partners nominate to assemble two courses from OER and open access materials. No increase in the marginal cost by applying a open license when developing an OERu course nomination that is part of normal organisational workflow for design and development. (Recurrent cost for assessment is recouped	*Open access "all rights reserved"*		

through fee for service.) ***Reducing local development cost*** Partners can diversify local curriculum offerings and reduce costs by reusing existing OERu courses without incurring local development costs. This is particularly attractive for low enrolment courses which are too expensive to produce locally in a cost effective way.			

Open business model accessed 5-Oct-2015 at: http://wikieducator.org/OERu/Open_business_model_canvases/Aggregated_OERu_partner_canvas

Analysis

The open business models of OERu partner institutions diversifies customer segments for most by focusing on learners who have been traditionally excluded.

Full realization of OERu value propositions may come from OERu offerings being dual purpose serving the needs of existing partner institution learners as well as new learners.

OERu's social good is a compelling reason for partners to join. Some partners see their participation as purely philanthropic generating no new revenue.

Customer self-service, minimal academic support service provision, and OERF provided infrastructure make participation in OERu low cost. However, low student uptake and completion may require these aspects of the business model to be rethought.

The cost structure for participation is based on memberships and staff/course contributions. Relatively low membership fees make joining OERu within the reach of almost all institutions.

Partner institution commitment to contribute staff time at fractions of an FTE have cumulative potential but may make actual provision of effort difficult to allocate and sustain. Cumulative FTE of staff time is low relative to the value propositions being pursued.

Marketing and channels of communication to attract, engage, and track student participation are absent.

Revenue generation is forecasted as a fee-for-service charge to students for formal assessment and credentialing, conversion of free learners into full time for fee learners, and pay as you go tutorial services. These revenue sources are more theoretical than actual at this point.

Motivations for partner participation in OERu vary. For some it is less about new learners or revenue and instead is about learning how openness works and developing new practices and innovations associated with open education.

OERu offerings are entirely based on OER with content coming from partner institutions and the open web. Extensive use of Creative Commons licenses and many other forms of openness including open design, open planning, open pedagogies, and use of open source software technology infrastructure make OERu a model open business.

The many different ways of being open make OERu incredibly transparent but it also creates navigation complexity and overhead for partners.

Converting OER into actual offerings requires partner participation in designing, developing and enhancing them to work in the OERu context. This creates additional workload and a parallel but separate process from regular partner institution workflow. This is both a source of innovation and a bottleneck.

OERu is a model of multiple means of open and a bit of an experiment in how the many ways of open successfully combine into a new open business model.

Additional Resources

Mooc rival OERu puts accreditation on menu
https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/mooc-rival-oeru-puts-accreditation-on-menu/2008571.article

5 Things You Should Know About the OER universitas http://wikieducator.org/images/7/7d/OERu.pdf

The University of Open http://edtechfrontier.com/2011/01/04/the-university-of-open/