First Meeting: OERu Course Approval and Quality Working Group

Attendees

Wayne Mackintosh (WM)
Sarah Lambert (SL)
Marcus Harmes (MH)
Mika Hoffman (MiH)
Diane Purvey (DP)
Steve Phillips (SP)
Meg Goodine (MG)

Minutes

Welcome and Introductions

Aims and Challenges of OERu

SL: Current aims of OERu – increasing content and product

MH: Challenge for 2014 is increasing number of programs and building a coherent program of studies

SL: Big picture aim is to provide enough materials to provide a Bachelor of General Studies. Some organisations within OERu have accredited qualifications, while others do not. For those that do not questions are raised as to whether credit could be provided for an existing qualification. The Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education offered by University of Otago is suggested as a model.

WM: The Diploma offered by Otago carries a third year bachelor's degree level credential. The basis behind this is that it would potentially offer a specialisation in tertiary education, particular to vocational educators. The challenge of the developing world is a trend to become a tertiary educator, and it is very often required that qualifications are upgraded to a degree level.

Every partner institution of OERu will have the autonomy to accredit any course they put into the pool against their own credentials. Partners are not required to have every course accredited by their Institution.

Aims of the Working Group

SL: There is a concern that OERu should be offering a product that meets a set of quality standards that each course would be compared against. The role of this working group is to come up with an appropriate set of standards. The suggested method is collegial, allowing us to take early ideas – such as that will be proposed in the audit – and proactively shape the course as it is being considered. There is a particular emphasis on early phase development so that a course can be shaped rather than approved or disapproved at the end.

WM: That reflects the sentiments of the Partners meeting – incremental designs taken one step at a time

SL: Alberta College have developed a set of quality standards for fully online learning. There was a suggestion that this working group should review their standards and determine if those existing frameworks might be useful in establishing a quality framework to be used as a guide. Obviously we are looking for a framework and not a subscriptive list.

MiH: Are you aware of the 'Quality Matters' Framework? I suspect it is similar to the Alberta College one. The Quality Matters framework is proprietary – you subscribe, Excelsior is a subscriber. They evaluate courses and give a seal of approval. It's not an open platform but if one were to subscribe to the service, it would likely be recognised within the US, and possibly Canada, at the very least

MG: We looked at the eCampus Alberta Guidelines and adapted a version for use at KPU. We found it very well researched – it used a number of well-established frameworks on which to base their guidelines. It was a lot of work already done and we were able to adapt it for our own use.

SL: There was an Australian Government funded project looking at standards, however I believe there were some concerns surrounding it.

Discussion to be had about the way in which materials and courses are broken up – the way in which there is a learning pathway and opportunity for students to engage, and to ensure that the assessment matches the outcomes – we would expect there to be some consideration of those things. There is an interest in a minimum standard on the technical side of things, however this may go beyond the scope of the working group

WM: There will be areas of overlap amongst the working groups. The quality aspects of this group definitely has input to make into the minimum standards. It is difficult to separate quality of pedagogy to technology. Part of the coordination role of the management committee is to oversee that overlap. We will also experience overlap with the course accreditation group and the minimum standards as decided by this group

There is a concept of having an OERu designated course that carries some form of quality label in meeting minimum standards that the Partnership agrees to so that we can have a model that future models are based on. People will then know that if a course has an OERu quality stamp that it meets a minimum standard.

SL: If we take the approach that if all hurdles are met and there is some form of OERu approval what happens to the courses offered that don't meet the standard? Is it a matter of if it meets the standard it is offered, and if it doesn't it isn't? Or is it that all courses will be offered, but only some will be approved?

WM: At this stage it is only a proposal. Different partner institutions have different sets of requirements, ie: accreditation course articulation differs locally. If we know what those requirements for a minimum label are, then the Partners will become aware too. We are thinking that it will not be every course that has to meet the standards. An example of a minimum standard may be the revision history of the course – a US Institution may need to know what outcomes were assessed in the course at any given point in time. The quality standard would be that courses offer a snapshot model so that there is a record.

SP: Have we considered whether it would be necessary to go back through courses that are currently on offer and seeing if they align with the guidelines, once the guidelines have been developed?

WM: It will be a task of this working group to determine if that is necessary. At one level, each Partner has agreed that they will, at the very least, award transcript credit for each course at their institution. There won't be any Partners that want to jeopardise their status. That is our first level of quality control.

SL: We should develop time lines by which we have a process of review. We should decide a time by which we'll have one set of process for courses that are currently undergoing audit. That way the courses can still be shaped in the development stage. There would be an approval cycle and a development cycle.

WM: Running course development with what is currently available would be very productive.

SL: While things are formative we need to have questions with regard to minimal accreditation. We need to make sure that contribution is product for the students. If we could list where a course might be able to contribute to a whole qualification of some kind we could develop a sense of what we are building towards.

SP: In order to do that we would need to see what has been contributed so far

SL: Yes – and that is at the core of why the audit is being undertaken, to stimulate new developments but also see how many options we can currently provide.

SP: Is there a set of requirements currently determining what constitutes a Bachelor of General Studies? Have all the OERu Partners agreed on what that would look like?

WM: It's a work in progress. Institutions with a Bachelor of General Studies award the credentials based on requirements of that particular institution. Each conferring institution determines the requirements. One of the working groups is conducting an inventory to investigate the current partners with a BGS

SL: -Outline of working groups-

Overview of AST1000

SL: We're currently testing out a new technology platform that is a step forward in course delivery. This course is a foundational staff development course which outlines a core concept of the open framework. If you would like to get a feel for an OERu micro-course you can register and review/audit the course. I'd encourage everyone to give it a go.

Another offering is AST1000 – this is currently being redeveloped as a series of micros which can be built up to a while subject. The purpose was to move away from courses that are 13-14 weeks to a series of micros. The course material is developed faster and it becomes easier to ensure accreditation across all partner institutions

SP: Is there a criteria for what constitutes a micro-course?

WM: There has been discussion and testing. The micro course needs to be a coherent learning experience – the standard that has been adopted is something of 40-50 notional learning hours in old non-competency basis speak. By a US standard it is equal to 1 credit. There is a plan to move forward to competency based thinking, as it shouldn't matter how long learners are taking to complete the course.

MH: When we turned AST1000 into a micro course we just cut it into four ways. The course organically fell into divisions with an item of assessment in each divide. Also, each micro course has a particular set of learning objectives associated with it

WM: And that would be an example of a minimum standard – each micro course has a comprehensive assessment assessing the associated learning outcomes

Review Draft Aims of the Work Group

WM: The draft aims were proposed at the original meeting, now we have an opportunity to refine them and add more.

SL: I'm not comfortable with the term 'OERu designated concept' – I think that if we have a course that is approved on a quality perspective we should allow it to go through and get it onto the website, so long as there can be once source of accreditation. Determinations as to whether each partner agrees should be separate.

MiH: I think there is some work to be done on how each different institution might look at these. One area has to be that whatever the assessment is, there needs to be a clear communication of what is actually being assessed. May need an agreed method of how these are to be displayed

MH: Looking at the prototype courses I'm confident that they'll meet the requirements that we're discussing. They have qualitative learning outcomes; they are exemplars of good design. As guidelines to other partners, none are mandatory to any institution, but become useful when designing the courses

SL: I think the fitness for purpose and quality is a good base – is it good for the learners – and ensuring the learning experience is positive as well as contributing to the network. I'd like to remove the designated concept aim – we should investigate whether it is useful but not commit

WM: Explore the options without committing

SL: It just seems to early. The primary concern is to provide a quality learning experience for the student. I would be more comfortable having that as a primary rationale with the addition of usefulness towards the networks' various credentials.

Intro to Wiki-Educator

SL: The front end that the students see is the branded green site. All the planning takes place in the educator – and this is done by way of collaborating and making contribution. Tracking processes are included so that we know when changes are made. If you want to make contributions it is enormously helpful if people can add it to the page directly.

WM: Call for volunteers – The way we build each course is by taking a bullet list of pages in the wikis and implementing technologies that will build the course website. An aspect we are prototyping is testing an early alpha design for peer evaluation and formative assessment. We will be testing the alpha version to get initial feedback and we're requesting volunteers from this group to join as surrogate learners to submit one or two pieces for evaluation. We need some questionable responses to see how this peer evaluation would work. It entails posting a short blog answers a number of questions. I would appreciate volunteers to get testing and feedback.

Volunteers: Meg, Mika, Brad, Sarah

SL: I'll personally invite staff that participated in the audit last time it ran at UOW to see if they'll participate again

MG/MH: Could there be an informal conversation of AST1000 into OER1001 and looking at the Alberta Quality Framework to see if there has been consideration to the items in it. Does it in some way capture the key qualities of the course – is it a good fit for what the subject is trying to achieve? Could a table be developed where the quality elements can be commented on, and anything that is hard to place in that framework.

WM: Also useful to look at which of the quality standards would not apply to the OERu Model

SL: Another thing – perhaps with Wayne – is to get familiar with the audit contributions, the number and type of contributions that we might be looking at.

Actions before next meeting

- Review peer review functionality in the new open content licensing micro
- Action for Meg and Marcus: Comparison of Alberta Quality Framework as to AST1000
- Action for Sarah, Wayne and Stephen: Review audit contributions

DP: I haven't signed up for any action item, but if any groups need help feel free to call me in.

Next Meeting: TBA after Poll