



## Project Document Cover Sheet

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# OCEP: Open Content Employability Project

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Final Report  
29 April 2010

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We also wish to thank the other projects in the programme, and those in the institutional strand in particular, for their openness in sharing practice and ideas.

### **4. Executive Summary**

The OCEP (Open Content Employability Project) was Coventry University's contribution to the UK OER Programme. It was part of the pilot phase of the programme and provided one of seven institutional exemplars. Coventry, like many universities, had been active in developing institutional repositories, with funding help from JISC. In Coventry's case much of the development work focused repository development for learning and teaching resources. Whilst promotion of re-use and re-purposing of learning and teaching assets was at the heart of those developments we had not embraced or fully understood the idea of "openness" or worked through the technical, organisational, pedagogic and other implications of making resources originated at Coventry open to all. The main aim of OCEP was to extend that programme of development by taking some of our existing resources and attempting making them "open". In doing so we would refine our understanding of "openness", across its various dimensions of discoverability, accessibility, re-usability and availability and from individual, organisational, legal, technical and other relevant perspectives.

The model of development was one of institutional exploration and experimentation but set within a wider programme of projects facilitated by JISC and the HEA. This model was particularly important since the project raised many questions which were not best answered by an institution working alone. Internal debate and discussion could not be vigorous enough or as well-informed as one conducted within the wider community. The debate at the programme level developed a consensus on many issues, for example licensing arrangements and third-party IPR, which were carried back into institutional policy and processes.

OCEP adopted a "thematic" approach. The choice of employability as a theme was based on a number of criteria. Firstly, Coventry University has a mission to develop employability skills for all its students and implements this, in part, via a cross-university Employability Learning Programme (ELP) and requiring faculties to include explicit employability modules in the curriculum. Secondly, and as a consequence of the mission, employability resources are found across the university. Thirdly, the resources covered a wide variety of forms, media, sizes and delivery patterns. Fourthly, employability is of widespread interest across the sector. All the resources were pre-existing allowing OCEP to concentrate on issues of how to make existing resources open rather than new content creation.

The project was managed and directed by a university central department, the eLearning Unit. The internal partners included three of the four university faculties, the Student Centre including the careers advice function and Acua. Acua works with organisations to embed higher level skills and qualifications into development programmes currently running or planned. Programmes are accredited by Coventry University. Starting at Certificate level, the qualification route can build through Foundation Degree to full degree and potentially beyond. Acua's model is one of total integration with the partner.

Our ex ante expectation that we would face few technical problems was not realised in practice. The major issues arose from our philosophy of "make one, store one, distribute many", that is the desire to reduce the difficulties of updating, version control, archiving and other background processes by retaining one master version of the resource to which other wrappers, metadata sources and publishing channels could refer. The main difficulty was related to large and complex resources which were themselves integrated collections of material, much of which could be useful disaggregated from the whole. This type of resource, for example the ELP, raised difficult issues of how they should be described, reusability if only parts of the resource were adopted and placing the resource in its

pedagogic and curriculum context. Our progressive release system also caused technical issues. The progressive release system was designed to stage the process of taking existing resources which lived in our closed repository and moving them to full openness via a stage of making them freely available across the university. This would allow us to consider IPR, quality, description and metadata issues on a more gradual basis and build the confidence of depositors. The technical issue arose as a result of another policy to have a single institutional repository, which would have to accommodate both open (http:) and closed (https:) access but without duplicating resources and thus breaking the “store one” policy.

As expected, the major issues have been ones of integrating the idea of openness into organisational policies, processes and procedures as major drivers of achieving cultural change. In the long term we would hope that academic staff would develop new resources with open release in mind. This would obviate many of the contextual, IPR and pedagogic issues which come to the fore when trying to convert existing resources to re-usable ones. Cultural change per se is beyond the scope of a year-long project; however OCEP has laid the foundations by providing an infrastructure (technical and organisational) which will underpin cultural change. This includes recognising open educational resources as valuable outputs on a par with others such as research publications for development and performance review purposes.

## 5. Background

### 5.1 *Fit to the OER Programme*

The OER Programme, as initially conceived and reflected in the bid call documents, did not require projects to take a thematic or subject-based approach to identifying content for potential inclusion in open collections. The reason for this seemed to be that projects were to be “institutional” and that this was not consistent with a narrow view of what could be included by institutions and that the subject-based interests were the focus of another strand.

OCEP argued that a thematic approach could have advantages provided that the theme was an institution-wide one. In Coventry’s case employability is, and has been, a major strand of the university’s strategy and vision for its students. The way in which this vision is translated into curriculum design and delivery is a combination of central provision and faculty/department initiatives. There is relatively little emphasis on course-based activity, partially because this is not a particularly sensible level at which to consider issues of employability, or where it is (as in professional courses) there are strong external drivers and requirements to address employability issues, often within the context of particular careers.

The adoption of a thematic approach was intended to:

- Play to a university strength
- Include not just academic departments but also student services (careers staff in particular)
- Involve library staff since they also contribute to the employability curriculum
- Enable cross-university debate on issues without the added dimension of subject or discipline differences intervening
- Reflect the growing national (and international) trend for universities to explicitly include employability issues in a broad sense within the curriculum
- Enable us to share our experiences, through making resources freely available, in an area where Coventry has taken a distinctive approach (for example, through the Add+Vantage Programme).

We also knew that the resources which had been developed under the employability banner were diverse in nature and would therefore test out the different issues involved in making varied types of resources open.

## 5.2 *OER at Coventry University before OCEP*

Coventry University also participated in the JISC Repositories Enhancement Programme (the CURVE Project). This helped us build an institutional repository (now referred to as a “resource centre”) to store, share and exploit a wide variety of institutional assets, notably learning and teaching materials. However, CURVE was essentially a closed repository in the sense that access to it was either via the Coventry University authentication system or guest access which required a sign-in. We did have some experience of sharing resources outside the university from our work with the Centre for inter-Professional E-Learning (CiPEL), a CETL hosted by Coventry but having external partners (notably Sheffield Hallam University). The university also led a major AHRB funded project to create a repository of dance objects and we remain a leader in this particular specialist arena. Finally we had limited but useful experience gained from participation in the JISC ReProduce programme.

Whilst promotion of re-use and re-purposing of learning and teaching assets was at the heart of Curve development we had not systematically considered what making such assets “open” would mean either in policy terms or in the various domains of practice and very few objects were openly available in a systematic way.

## 5.3 *OCEP and Previous Work*

OCEP was the obvious next step for us. We had a working repository and some experience of the issues surrounding re-use and re-purposing of learning and teaching content. We had identified a collection of diverse but thematically-linked resources which could form the basis of an exemplar open collection. What we did not have was a clear view of what making resources “open” entailed from an organisational, group or individual perspective. Obviously some individuals were already making resources open, often in a very haphazard way, but not within a university culture where “openness” was seen as valuable. This situation has the potential to damage all parties. Individuals may be taking risks which they are not aware of, the university does not recognise the contribution being made by resource originators and the resources may not be discoverable or re-usable in any systematic way.

## 5.4 *OCEP and OER Release*

OER release is important for the following reasons:

- The university aspires to be known as one which has a strong record of helping its students into graduate jobs
- The university wants to build a strong reputation for curriculum innovation, particularly related to its core aims (employability, sustainability etc)
- Academic staff want their contributions to learning and teaching recognised by the university and externally in the same way as, for example, research outputs; this means making them open
- The university’s academic work is only sustainable in the longer term if there is greater sharing of resources both internally and externally
- Opening up resources for use by others, particular professional peers, is an important driver towards improving quality of teaching content

OCEP advances OER release at Coventry University (and hopefully elsewhere) by raising the profile of the issues and advantages within the university. The recognition, stimulus and discipline afforded by a JISC project raise institutional visibility to a level where it competes successfully for attention at all levels.

Involvement with a an externally-funded project, and particularly one where there are a number of partners at a programme level, also generates self-confidence within the institutional (Coventry) team and gives the university reassurance that OCEP outputs will be based on best-practice. It is sometimes difficult for project teams to be “prophets in their own land”; when the team is seen as reflecting a wider view based on solid evidence from across the sector and internationally then OER evangelism becomes much easier.

## 6. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives agreed at the start of the project were to:

- Create a significant (greater than 360 CATS points) corpus of high quality, credit-bearing, diverse and re-usable open learning and teaching content in the area of “employability” based on our existing resources;
- Develop, test and implement institutional processes, policies and incentive structures to embed the practices of an open resource culture and open content release within the university;
- Develop a model for building open content release considerations into the educational resource creation cycle particularly at the (critical) module approval stage;
- Deposit a minimum of 360 CATS points worth of content into JorumOpen in line with the key aims of the OER programme;
- Add significantly to the content available in our own institutional repository, CURVE, by establishing a specific “employability” collection;
- Create exemplars of open content which will inspire academic staff to develop and release their learning and teaching resources;
- Build the capacity and expertise to support open content development across the university;
- Develop an economic, effective and sustainable model for developing and managing open content;
- Help improve the evidence base in support of sharing learning and teaching materials on an open basis;
- Lay the foundations for a sustained release of open content by Coventry University.

These objectives have remained intact with the exception of the metric of 360 CATS points worth of material. Whilst we will deposit a corpus of material which could be justified as being equivalent to a minimum of 360 CATS points, this may well be a very crude and unhelpful measure of value or even crude size.

For example, the deposit of a fairly brief module description coupled with a few resources such as reading lists, summary lecture notes, teaching timetable, suggestions for seminar topics would be easily measurable in CATS point terms; however, there is nothing to suggest that the resources would be particularly re-usable, valuable in learning or teaching terms, innovative, exemplary or anything else. On the other hand an innovative example of assessment or a guide to using a publicly available resource in an engaging way within a teaching session may not be usefully described in CATS points terms but may have great value in improving delivery of existing content.

OCEP includes, inter alia, some Second Life machinima. One of these is an animation of a customer services encounter of the type which might be observed in many situations. The example can be included in presentations, as discussion stimulus material in face-to-face and virtual learning environments, to illustrate good and bad practice and to add diversity to the range of resources being used to help learning through presenting issues in a new and engaging way. It could be used to help student nurses, marketing students, psychology students and in contexts which the originators are not in a position to anticipate. The time taken to produce such resources bears no sensible or identifiable relationship to CATS points measures (unless we artificially ascribe zero). However the motivation for including such resources in OCEP is driven by the challenge of describing such resources in a way that makes their purpose and use easily discoverable and accessible to others.

## 7. General Approach

### 7.1 *Sourcing OCEP content*

At the outset of the project we saw the depositors being those who originated the content shown in the table. This was identified early on by the project team rather than through a process of inviting people to contribute. That is we applied the criteria set out in the bid to identify a portfolio of material for inclusion. That is we wanted a collection which would be drawn from across the university and would be diverse in the type of materials and their pedagogic approach. We then approached the originators and invited them to become part of the project team. All agreed to do so. In some cases the originators were teams embracing teachers and colleagues with an instructional design expertise. This was particularly the case with Add+Vantage materials. An interesting consequence of this is that “ownership” of the materials was difficult to establish in any meaningful way. We did however publicise our intention to make the materials open and invited comment on our intention. No-one came forward with any objections.

Contributors of materials saw advantages in making their resources open. Partially this was because employability resources may have taken on a “Cinderella” status compared with “serious” academic content. Participation in OCEP conferred recognition on their work. In addition the project team agreed to enhance the resources in the process of making them open.

### 7.2 *Using OCEP content*

Internal users of the content beyond the pre-existing ones are more difficult to identify. In part this is because some of the resources were core elements of mandatory modules. In other cases, for example support material for placement students and those going into professional training, the process of making the resources open will be part of sharing best practice across the university.

We have not taken any particular view of the ways in which users will exploit OCEP materials. We think it unlikely that many people will adopt them “wholesale”, although parts of them may be. We believe that they will be very useful models for other users to adapt and develop to fit their own working contexts and all resources have been made available under Creative Commons derivative licenses to allow this to happen. In the case of Second Life machinima these are likely to be used as they are and dropped in to other teaching materials, for example presentations. We wish to gather as much feedback as we can on how resources are being used so that we can optimise the resource transition process. It may be that less rather than more work is needed to raise resources to our “open standard”, especially if it is the case that users are adapting them rather than using them in their original form.

### 7.3 *Engaging institutional stakeholders*

Senior management of the university, including Deans, were briefed by the Project Director at the outset of the project. The VC and relevant PVC’s were aware of the bid and had endorsed it. The Project Director has provided this grouping with regular updates.

All content contributors became part of the project team.

The Project Team has promoted OCEP at a wide range of internal events including the iPED<sup>1</sup> and ELATE<sup>2</sup> conferences and faculty-based learning and teaching conferences.

We have also held regular workshops and training events for academic and library staff.

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<sup>1</sup> iPED (Inquiring Pedagogies) is our annual international three day conference attended by approximately 150 delegates from Coventry and elsewhere, including overseas.

<sup>2</sup> ELATE (Enhancing the Learning and Teaching Experience) is an annual e-learning exhibition coupled with workshops, seminars and “show and tells”. ELATE is attended by around 150 university academic staff and a small number of external visitors.

#### 7.4 *Technical, legal and organisational issues*

The question of what technical issues we planned to address is easy – none! However, this was an error of foresight and we spent a considerable amount of effort tackling technical issues.

Our (over-confident and partially mistaken) expectation at the outset of the project was that there would not be any significant necessity for technical development contingent of making resources open. Indeed the project plan did not include any provision for technical development or a workpackage in the area. The issues were deemed to have been “solved” during the Curve project.

Experience has shown we were wrong. Curve runs on the *Equella* repository software from The Learning Edge. The Coventry University strategy was always to develop a single repository for the university to cover a variety of academic uses, including teaching and learning resources and research objects. There are considerable potential advantages to such a strategy. Most obviously we only had to run a single instance of the software which makes support much easier. Secondly all the university’s “wares” could be made available through one access point (although some would be made available through multiple channels). Thirdly we could concentrate our efforts on integrating a single repository system with other university systems, for example the VLE and library management systems.

The approach also fitted with our philosophy of “make one, store one, distribute many”. However this was the bit which broke down. Initially we had two major types of collection. One was for university use to which access is controlled through the university’s usual authentication system. Secondly we wanted one which was open to “guests”, that is people we know about but who are not Coventry University members (ie do not access to university computer systems). Our initial view was that we could use the guest access system to make resources “open”. During the course of the project we decided that we wanted to embrace a less intrusive definition of open and, indeed, to make clear and obvious distinctions between open resources, university resources and guest resources. The problem that emerged was that many of the resources which we wanted to make open were in fact sophisticated collections of smaller resources which were interlinked but were also usable in their own right. The prime example is the Add+Vantage scheme<sup>3</sup>. We also wanted to preserve the notion of resources progressing through internal uses to open availability. Initially the only way we could handle the problem of transferring resources from internal to open status was to copy the entire resource over into the open collection. This infringes the make one, store one idea and makes progressive development of parts of resources very difficult. The problem has been solved by storing all resources in the university collection and placing brief descriptions (“wrappers”) of them in the open collection. Put another way, the open collection contains the meta-resource whilst the university collection contains the entire resource. The challenge was to make this invisible to open users, that is links between the meta-resource and the full resource should be invisible. Whilst, in principle, this sounded an easy thing to do, in practice it required a significant amount of technical development and has delayed deposit into the open collection, but not the process of redeveloping existing resources for open use. The technical development has now been completed.

The other major technical issue which we had to tackle was one of collection security. Our original instantiation of the Equella software used https; we needed to run the open collection on http. We needed to be able to run separate collections on the same software and therefore have both https and http versions and be able to pass between them. This required some technical redevelopment on the part of The Learning Edge (the suppliers and developers of Equella software) which has now been completed.

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<sup>3</sup> The Add+Vantage scheme is a cross-university scheme which all students participate in. It’s aim is to provide all students with an opportunity to develop their employability profiles. Some elements of the programme, for example the Employability Learning Programme (ELP), are compulsory and delivered and managed centrally. Other elements are delivered by the faculties and are contextualised to particular needs. OCEP includes the ELP element, but it is intended to make other parts open in due course.

We were not quite as blasé about legal issues. Our experience of working in the ReProduce programme<sup>4</sup> had highlighted these for us. On the other hand, our prior knowledge of the potential resources for inclusion and the nature of the subject matter did not give us any great cause for concern. The one major problem we have encountered is with some Add-Vantage material which concerns career planning. This makes a number of references to the *Destinations* database service. Destinations is a subscription service used by many universities and, quite reasonably, the rights holders would not allow us to make resources open in such a way that other users would be able to access the database for free.

This issue created a tension between the desire to make a potentially very useful resource available, but one which, arguably, was not fully open. Our decision was to include this resource for a number of reasons. These are listed here because they provide an interesting insight into some of the more general issues concerning OER's. The issues raised were:

- The resource is large and complex, but much (most) of it can usefully be used without reference to Destinations
- Many elements of the resource are independent of Destinations, but for some users it will still be helpful to know how they fit in to the whole
- Many potential users will have Destinations and the availability of the resource would help them exploit that service more effectively
- It is open to any bona fide HE institution to acquire Destinations
- We do not know how others will use the resource, they might be interested in it as an exemplar or template for developing their own resources (possibly integrated with their own or other careers databases)
- If we alert users to the fact that parts of the resource integrate with Destinations at the metadata level (that is signal the restriction on openness) is that enough?

### 7.5 *Organisational issues*

We had already established an organisational infrastructure to support Curve developments. We developed this structure and the knowledge and skills of the relevant staff (in particular the Repository Manager) to help advise on open deposit issues. We also trained our Instructional Designers to be able to help potential contributors with both the pedagogic aspects of open resources and the potential IPR issues. Our strategy, therefore, was to enhance the organisational structure we had already developed. This approach worked, principally because we already had a repository containing in excess of 3,000 learning and teaching objects.

We will codify and consolidate advice to depositors, based on our experience and feedback from workshops, into a guide to open resources. The guide will be available on the OCEP website.<sup>5</sup> We will offer an ongoing service for depositors through the Lanchester Library<sup>6</sup> (where the Repository Manager and her co-workers are based) and the e-Learning Unit Instructional Design team.

### 7.6 *Evaluation*

The OCEP Project Plan includes a detailed evaluation plan. However, it is still too early to evaluate beyond "inputs" such as resources in the process of deposit, workflows determined, processes developed, and policies reviewed etc. Output measures such as use made of resources, student evaluations and so on will be possible once resources have been in the open domain for some time. The impact of OCEP on cultural change within the university will clearly take longer again.

We have noted the great benefit of developing OCEP as part of a wider national programme. This has allowed us to benchmark some of our processes on those of others. For example we have

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<sup>4</sup> <http://cuba.coventry.ac.uk/reproduce>

<sup>5</sup> <http://cuba.coventry.ac.uk/oer>

<sup>6</sup> Coventry University's main library

benchmarked our (progressive) deposit process against the Leicester “Corre” and Heriot-Watt OER Workflow processes. Our accessibility policy and process have been benchmarked against the TechDis “Accessibility Passport”. Our resource description framework has been designed with reference to LOM and IMS Learning Design standards. Recognising what is emerging as common practice we are implementing Google Analytics to provide some impact data of open resources.

Clearly evaluation activity will extend beyond the formal funded life of the project. Evidence collection and dissemination is a vital part of demonstrating to stakeholders that the effort involved in generating and maintain OERs is worthwhile.

## 8. Implementation

The sections above give some information as to how we implemented OCEP. However, the picture can be usefully amplified by recounting some of our implementation experiences.

The main differences between the planned activities and what we did in practice are threefold:

- i. There were many more iterations than we thought. Whilst this might have resulted in an over repetitive project, it was more the case that we kept discovering that the things we thought we knew were not as clear cut as they appeared. This meant that we had to constantly revisit issues to adapt and refine processes, guidance and policies in order to improve them to a point where they were usable.
- ii. In many cases the only way to make progress was by experimentation and testing issues out. We ended up doing much more by trial error than we anticipated.
- iii. An important part of testing things out was interaction with other projects. I suspect that, at times, many of us wondered whether some of the IPR, licensing and quality issues had any resolution at all, or at least only had resolutions which were extremely guarded, risk averse and would lead to disincentives for depositors. In the end the debate reached a balanced position which is workable; one where the major issues are addressed but the processes are light enough to remove disincentives. But the debate was a long one.

The net result was that what we did was messier, but much more interesting, than what we planned. More importantly, the project team’s confidence in the advice and guidance which we can now give and the processes we have put in place for sustaining open deposit is much stronger than it would have been in the absence of the external influences and the vigour of the internal discussion.

As noted earlier, materials for potential inclusion were identified at the bid stage, with the agreement of originators who became members of the project team. It is our practice to have internal kick-off meetings where the Project Director briefs all stakeholders and the project team. The identified contributors were given the opportunity to withdraw from the project at this stage; none did.

The next stage was to undertake independent internal audit of the proposed materials from a number of perspectives:

- IPR and licensing
- Pedagogic design
- Format (that is, were the materials available in formats which could be re-used)
- Accessibility
- Ownership/origination

“Quality” was not included, but originators were asked to provide information on any quality assurance processes which had been applied to the materials. In all cases the materials had been subject to an existing quality review, either as part of course or module approval or through another existing peer review process.

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The next stage was to select a sub-sample of the materials and to experiment with making them open. The responsibility for doing this was assigned to the originators working with the Instructional Design team. The experience gained was captured in a draft workflow document which was presented to the full project team and discussed at length. This was built on the notion of successive release. This model was then applied to the other materials.

Curve allows us to control access to materials at a number of levels. In order to encourage deposit the basic level mirrors that which staff were familiar with from working with a VLE. That is access was restricted to the originator but could be granted to identified groups of students via the access controls available on the VLE (for example students on a specific module). At the next level up access could be restricted to university members through (LDAP) authentication. The final level is open release. Progressive release is designed to move materials through the successive levels as originators wish (or can be persuaded) providing help along the way. This would give staff confidence and be a less threatening way of working rather than making a single jump to open release. This process can be accomplished through modification of the materials and gradually changing their status rather than having to “move” them around.

It all sounds very straightforward, but in practice it was far from easy and smooth.. The unforeseen technical issues caused some delay. We began to realise that the more complex and internally interrelated the set of materials being looked at (for example the Employability Learning Programme) the more difficult the issues became. In particular it became obvious that such materials were not self-describing in the sense that their potential use and content could easily be assessed from metadata and cursory inspection. Our solution (and that of other projects) was to develop a “wrapper” which would describe the resources in sufficient detail to engage the potential interest of users. The wrapper is a resource in its own right but seamlessly points to the substantive resources. In turn the substantive resources contain the internal links to the individual assets. The wrapper will also be the element which is deposited in external repositories such as JorumOpen.

The approach which evolved essentially took the most complex resources we had available and took the view that if we solved the issues associated with these resources then we would be alright. However there is a danger in this approach in that we may end up designing a system which is appropriate in a few complex cases rather than in general. Experience will tell us if this is the case. A major potential area of difficulty concerns metadata. Take the Employability Learning Programme as an example. This comprises a large collection of interlinked materials, but is treated as a single resource. Whilst metadata is easy to generate at the resource level, this may do little justice to the disaggregated materials. Within Curve this is less of a problem given the power of the full-text searching facilities. Our internal data suggests that the majority of Curve users (over 90%) automatically use full-text search rather than one based on tags. We may need to include some advice on searching the resource in the wrapper.

## 9. Outputs and Results

### 9.1 Open Educational Resources released

The final list of OERs to be released is shown in the table below.

Origin	Description	Type
Add+Vantage Scheme	Cross university scheme to give academic credit for learning activity promoting employability	Over 180 different 10 credit modules covering all aspects of employability from general and specific (discipline, professional or sectoral) aspects.
Centre for Inter-professional e-Learning	Seven objects in Interpersonal Skills for Transition to Employment	Flash videos and animated PowerPoint supported by lecture notes and user guides. Total of 12 CATS points.
Faculty of Business, Environment and Society	Placement support package.	Online support materials, podcasts, video-casts, model learning contracts and associated advice, handouts, PowerPoints. 40 CATS points.
Learning Innovation Research Group	Second Life objects and media which can be used across courses and media.	Re-usable machinima (eg presentation boards, video screens etc).
Faculty of Engineering and Computing	Engineering and Computing Employability	40 credit professional training module
Institute of Applied Entrepreneurship	Specialist cross-university undergraduate programme to help students start their own businesses.	Undergraduate modules and associated resources from the BA/BSc in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.

The OCEP Project Team commissioned an audit of Employability Resources contained in Curve from an independent consultant, Caroline Ingram. Her report was received in October 2009. Such resources were obvious candidates for inclusion within an open collection focusing on employability. The audit identified 122 distinct resources which were relevant, not all of which are accounted for in the table above. There is therefore scope, which will be exploited, for extending the range of resources included beyond those in the table.

### 9.2 Technical developments

Our progressive release system caused technical issues. The progressive release system was designed to stage the process of taking existing resources which lived in our closed repository and moving them to full openness via a stage of making them freely available across the university. This would allow us to consider IPR, quality, description and metadata issues on a more gradual basis and build the confidence of depositors. The technical issue arose as a result of another policy to have a single institutional repository, which would have to accommodate both open (http:) and closed (https:) access but without duplicating resources and thus breaking the "store one" policy. An important technical development has therefore been to identify a way of allowing seamless open access to resources which reside in our closed collection but which have been tagged as "open". This allows us to change the status of a resource without moving or duplicating it.

Over time we have gradually redeveloped our e-learning technology base. We have moved from a highly integrated proprietary institutional VLE to a more loosely-coupled system based on the integration of a number of separate components, including a dedicated institutional repository which is used for managing learning and teaching content. This allows us to provide simple access to

resources from any other web-based system rather than it being “walled-in” by a VLE. However, it is also important that we integrate our systems to help our users. In particular this requires us to make linking to content as seamless as possible. WE have completed the integrations with e-learning systems successfully. The area which we now need to tackle, but which was always seen as being beyond the scope of OCEP, is to integrate learning-content repository search into our e-library systems, and in particular, into the federated search systems.

### *9.3 Innovations in practices/ processes around OER*

Like many other institutions, including many involved in the UKOER programme, we did not have any formalised practices or processes around OER. Some individuals or small groups may have released learning and teaching materials in some open form but only in the context of an informal process, for example placing something on YouTube. What the OER project has uncovered is the need to put appropriate practices and processes in place. These should not be so heavy as to discourage contributions but need to be rigorous enough to bear the university imprimatur.

The assumptions (givens) underlying the development of new practices and processes must be:

- Trust in the professionalism of colleagues
- Recognition of the contribution made by staff in making resources open

The second of these calls into play processes which are not immediately and obviously linked to the development of OERs, for example the (much debated) question of whether or not OERs should have the same status as research outputs, at least when it comes to performance review.

The role (and practicality) of peer review of resources is also important. Should this be an ex ante condition of inclusion in an open collection or a requirement before an OER is reckonable as a professional output? Or is it an ex post process deriving from use? And where does impact fit in?

These have turned out to be much more taxing questions than the more instrumental issues of IPR and other rights clearance, consent gathering, metadata schema, transferable formats and so on. These are important, taxing and time-consuming and we have benefitted greatly from discussing them with others in programme fora, but they are capable of solution and codifying.

### *9.4 Guidance on OER release and associated issues and processes.*

Appendix 14.2 shows our key processes diagrammatically.

Appendix 14.3 gives our take-down policy.

The OCEP Guide will be available shortly from the project website.

### *9.5 Outputs from the evaluation process*

#### Ten OCEP Lessons

1. Legal, standards and other similar issues can be overstated and take up a great deal of time. Ultimately OER deposit requires risks to be taken. These risks cannot be ignored but they should not drive policy. They can be sensibly managed.
2. Do not invent new processes to deal with OERs unless you have to; there are enough processes already.
3. Remember that content can go out of date. The back catalogue needs active management (and will form the majority of resources in time) at the same time as we are trying to encourage new deposit.
4. Do not underestimate the value of a strong take-down policy.
5. Clear guidance and information on what a resource is, how it has been successfully used and links to supplementary information (if available) may be more effective than attempts to comply with standards which are best limited.

6. In the end you have to rely on the professionalism of colleagues; mutual trust is a delicate commodity and it will not be developed through an emphasis on standards, unnecessary quality processes etc.
7. Make sure the technology works – all the time. Many staff are reluctant to contribute anyway without giving them excuses not to.
8. Not every resource should be made open; we need to choose carefully and promote the idea that having an open resource to your name is a matter of pride.
9. OER are very diverse; it may not be sensible to have the same processes and requirements for all of them.
10. We are likely to learn by experimentation; there are many questions about OERs which we can only get answers to by trying things out.

#### Lessons to be learned about OER release

- i. Making something open is easy; making it useful to others is much more difficult.
- ii. Learning and teaching resources are often complex, interlinked and contextually bound. This does not mean that they should not be open; it does mean that they need to be explained.
- iii. IPR issues can be overstated, but they cannot be ignored.
- iv. Although employee content may be contractually owned by employers, relying on this does not help to generate a stream of good open content.
- v. Teachers like recognition for their work; we need to feed back to them how their open content is being used.

## 10. Outcomes and Impact

OCEP has successfully put Coventry-originated OERs on the Coventry University map. However we have yet to determine whether or not OCEP has put Coventry OERs on the maps of others or others' OERs in Coventry's consciousness.

In terms of OER Programme focus areas we would bring attention to the following contributions and ideas. This is not meant to be comprehensive comment on all potential evaluation issues but a summary of where we think OCEP has a particular contribution to make.

### 10.1 Release processes

The notion of (supported) progressive release is important for many staff. It gives them confidence and incentives them to improve what they have.

We have learned that not all resources can become open. Some will not be in a form which will be useful to others. Some may be too contextualised around Coventry University. For some the benefit/cost ratio of making resources open may be too low to make it worthwhile. In many cases it may be better to make resources open via a subject repository such as HumBox. We should also avoid "me too" resources. By "me too" resources we mean resources which are very similar to ones which already exist and have no obvious advantage over them, but are nevertheless created because they do not originate at a particular institution. Thus there might be very good resources already available on, for example, introductory statistics which were originated elsewhere but might still be created in a slightly different form for use in a particular university and deposited in an institutional repository. It probably makes much more sense for a limited collection of such resources to live in a subject repository and be used across a number of institutions.

The "make one, store one, distribute many" model is one that we aspire to. Thus some resources will be released via CUTV (our YouTube channel), Coventry University iTunes U or open repositories such as Merlot. But all of them will be in Curve, and all of them will be accessible through JorumOpen.

Few resources make much sense released "as is". Some accompanying information (the wrapper) is often needed to help users understand what the pedagogic intent and use of the resources might be. This does not need to be in a form dictated by an external standard, but does need to be clear and concise.

### *10.2 Developing, managing and sharing OERs for sustainability*

OCEP has enabled us to undertake a great deal of work developing documents and guidelines for consent, copyright, accessibility, open formats etc. These are a valuable resource and will help develop a sustainable flow of deposits.

Where copyright material is incorporated in resources it is important to understand the pedagogic purpose of the material. In some cases non-copyright content can be used to the same pedagogic effect. In other cases this may not be possible, however linking to it (sometimes avoiding deep-linking) may be possible. Most staff are unaware of these distinctions.

Open models are becoming prevalent in other arenas, for example open source software, open research and open data. The OER movement needs to be seen in this broader context to help develop a culture of “openness”.

Institutions need to be persuaded of the long-term benefits of OERs in terms of sustainable, agile and cost-effective course development models rather than focusing on short-term costs. This is equally the case for individuals who may see OERs as yet another way of doing more work.

### *10.3 Guidance and support mechanisms*

The OCEP project team view is that the forthcoming Infokit is very much needed.

### *10.4 Business cases and benefits realisation*

The business case for using OERs is understood in general terms but case studies are needed. The ReProduce programme provided some insight into the benefits and costs of using existing content at a fairly micro level, but some wider understanding is needed.

Students' attitudes to the use of OERs in their courses need researching. Some teaching staff are apt to believe that students equate value with using resources which are unique to their courses, something which can only be achieved if the lecturer creates all their own resources.

The business case for OERs may be in terms of enabling the rapid development of high-quality courses in response to student demand. Such agile product development may be increasingly important in a rapidly changing employment market.

Using OERs may enable us to concentrate on other aspects of teaching and learning, for example collaborative activities, social learning, learning from peer assessment, making use of the wider range of resources made available by universities and other agencies.

Can use of OERs reduce dependency on textbooks?

### *10.5 Cultural issues*

We need to get past the “not invented here” syndrome. Paradoxically, OCEP and the other institutional OER projects may have reinforced this tendency by concentrating in resource generation rather resource use.

The current cultural norm at Coventry is for some material to be shared among specialised teaching groups. There are exceptions to this, notably where external funding has been used to generate resources or where individuals have wished to publicise their work. In these cases CUTV and iTunesU have been the favoured channels for distribution. Other colleagues have been active participants in subject centres and have shared resources through them. OCEP has attempted to build on these limited successes, but the focus on employability has limited this.

We are building in OER awareness into our Pg Certificate in Professional Practice, our development course for staff new to university teaching. Hopefully this will help to establish a new norm where active use of OERs is seen to be a first port of call when designing and developing new courses.

We are also building generation of OERs into our DPR (Development and Performance Review) process to give them status and their originators recognition

#### *10.6 Institutional strategy, policy and practice*

The university takes a positive stance on OERs. The question is how far this is reflected in faculty policies, (subject) departments and individual practice. The recent decision to appoint Associate Heads of Department for Learning and Teaching in all subject areas should be helpful in that it creates a cadre of people who should be able to promote change.

However the bulk of curriculum development is still carried out at the individual level, module by module, and for many hard-pressed staff a retreat into the tried and trusted is a safety net. The widespread use of OERs needs to be encouraged by learning and teaching policy which places a high value on pedagogic innovation rather than low-risk traditional teaching.

The “softer” and potentially bigger issues of building curriculum development and pedagogic practices which embrace a culture of openness will take much more time and will need to be embedded within a broad collection of existing processes, for example course development and review.

The development of delivery bases beyond Coventry (for example the new London Campus) can be exploited as a stimulus to greater use of OERs.

#### *10.7 Quality issues*

Many of the OCEP resources have been subject to some quality assessment as part of course review processes. However this will have been, at best, cursory. Our current view is that we should leave quality issues to the professionalism of the originator. That is we should not invent a new quality assurance process for OERs per se (this is not the same as checking them for IPR infringements etc). We would hope that originators would seek the advice and help of colleagues and students as part of the progressive release process. What is clear is that, in the present climate especially, there is no appetite for adding new processes to what is already perceived as an overburdened system. Put more simply – we will need a trust of colleagues.

An important part of any quality process is a take-down policy. This will enable us to remove resources from the open collection and reverse them into the closed collection or, in some cases, to remove them from Curve altogether. This latter case would obtain if IPR infringements came to light, or some users deemed material offensive or inaccuracies were uncovered. Cases of disputed ownership would also be relevant. The take-down policy<sup>7</sup> is important because it is clearly not possible to identify all issues ex ante.

#### *10.8 Pedagogy and end-use issues*

The question of whether or not “pedagogy in” matters is not a useful one. For some users it might, for others it may not. However it seems sensible to give some indication of the context and way in which a resource has been used successfully by originators both to promote reflection on the part of originators on how their resources might be beneficially exploited and to help better describe the resource. The distinction between “pedagogy in” and guidance on how materials are currently used is not a useful one.

#### *10.9 Learner involvement*

To date learners have played little part in OCEP per se. However the majority of the resources have been developed with strong learner input as part of the usual processes of development. Many of the resources have also been used pre-OCEP and have benefitted from learner feedback. OCEP has not ventured into the issues which arise when resources are designed ab initio to be open. In such a case means of building learner involvement into the release process would come to the fore. If, as at

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<sup>7</sup> Available from <http://cuba.coventry.ac.uk/oer>

present, we are working with specially picked tried and tested resources than learner involvement will already have occurred.

## 11. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report details a number of conclusions and recommendations under different headings. However, it is use to add some broad ones below:

- Future policy and processes should concentrate on ways of incentivising our best learning and teaching staff to develop open resources ab initio rather the current situation in which we “chase the game” by converting existing resources
- Openness not only increases the range of resources available to teachers and learners but can also raise their quality
- The use of open resources should be encouraged in the curriculum design process; the question should be “why should we develop new resources?” rather than “why should we use open ones?”
- Both subject and institutional repositories are important; whilst institutional repositories are now part of the accepted ICT infrastructure of most HE institutions, subject repositories will need continual external nurturing if they are to survive
- The effective use of open resources needs to be included in courses provided for new HE teaching staff and the HEA should take account of this in relevant standards
- Whilst cost considerations are always important, the widespread use of open resources has the potential to invigorate learning and teaching through the sharing of the best pedagogic practice and bring new ideas into institutional development, departmental teaching practices and course design

## 12. Implications for the future

OCEP has established the framework on which to build a sustained release of open resources, not just in the employability area. However there are a number of areas where continuing development is needed:

- Establishing ownership and stewardship of resources – should this be the responsibility of the university, the depositor or “collection managers”
- How can the university best make a contribution to the community? Should we continue the strategy of playing to our strengths and trying to build collections of resources in particular areas or should we simply open everything up.?
- Should we encourage colleagues who wish to deposit open resources in particular subject areas to make subject-based repositories their first port of call?
- We need to understand more about ways in which we can introduce the use of OERs into existing processes, for example course design and teaching materials development.
- We need to evaluate our processes in the light of experience to ensure that we eliminate gaps but also “lighten” those which generate work which has little payback.

### 12.1 Sustainability

Although we could not have made the progress with OERs that we have achieved without OCEP, we now have a sustainable system within the university. Ongoing advice, guidance and support will be available from the Curve Team based in the library and the Instructional Design Team based in the e-Learning Unit. We will continue to run workshops on OERs. We have introduced a competition to encourage generation of new OERs which sits alongside our Teaching Excellence Awards scheme. We are ensuring that OERs feature in our staff development programmes, including those for new teachers. We will continue to celebrate excellence thorough our ELATE exhibition and conferences. OER outputs will be recognised in performance reviews alongside other outputs.

Project Acronym: OCEP  
Version: Final  
Contact: David Morris  
Date: 29 April 2010

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### **13. References**

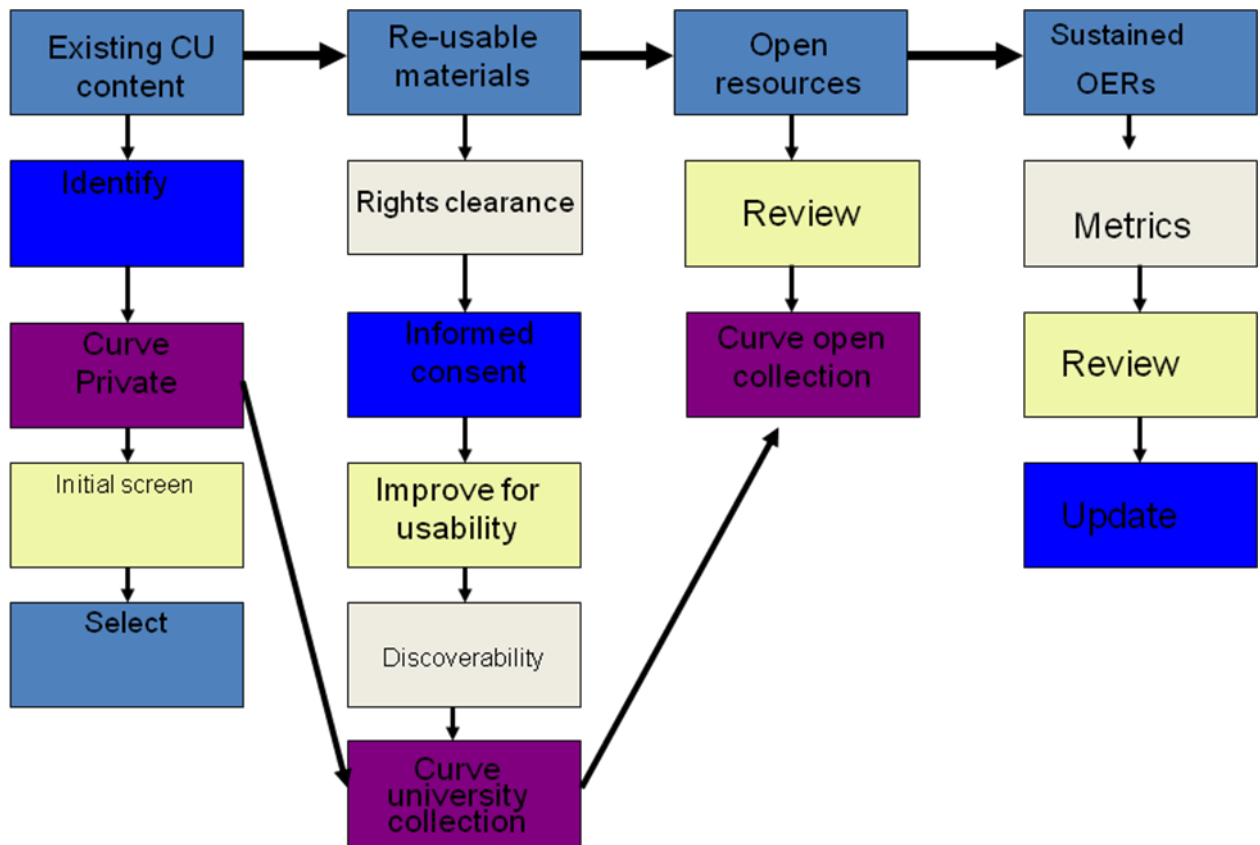
None which are not identified elsewhere.

## 14. Appendices

### 14.1 Comparison of project objectives and achievements

Objective	Project achievements
Create a significant (greater than 360 CATS points) corpus of high quality, credit-bearing, diverse and re-usable open learning and teaching content in the area of “employability” based on our existing resources	Subject to our reservations about using CATS points as a measure of content, this has been achieved in full. Whilst not all of the content is credit-bearing, the bulk of it is. We have also met the diversity objective.
Develop, test and implement institutional processes, policies and incentive structures to embed the practices of an open resource culture and open content release within the university	As described, our methodology has been to take “extreme” examples of content and build an approach which manages. This has to be tempered by the need not to develop systems which are heavier than they need to be in less extreme cases. Hopefully we have reached a useful middle position.
Develop a model for building open content release considerations into the educational resource creation cycle particularly at the (critical) module approval stage	The project has been concerned with developing pre-existing resources. However the guidance material which has been developed will be equally applicable to the ab initio development of open resources.
Add significantly to the content available in our own institutional repository, CURVE, by establishing a specific “employability” collection	Done.
Create exemplars of open content which will inspire academic staff to develop and release their learning and teaching resources	A variety of exemplars is available to staff. We also want to refer staff to open resources made available from other OER projects. The word “create” should be replaced by “create and identify” since there are clearly useful exemplars from outside the university.
Build the capacity and expertise to support open content development across the university	The project deliberately concentrated on resources from across the university and the project team included sub-teams based in faculties and other areas of the university such as Student Services, the library etc. These, now experienced, teams will help develop capacity locally.
Develop an economic, effective and sustainable model for developing and managing open content	At this stage we have not fully addressed the issue of updating content. The technical issues of content management (version control, audit trails, use monitoring etc) are features of the Equella software. The human and organisational issues of revising, updating and improving content on a regular basis need to be part of the curriculum management cycle.
Help improve the evidence base in support of sharing learning and teaching materials on an open basis	Initially evidence will be collected from use metrics. More detailed qualitative analysis will be undertaken as a subsequent research project.
Lay the foundations for a sustained release of open content by Coventry University	We believe we have developed solid foundations. There is clearly a greater awareness of “openness” as an aim at institutional level as reflected in the 2015 Vision.

14.2 Diagram summarising the OCEP Release Process



The top horizontal shows the basic flow from taking existing content to produce sustainable OER's. The boxes linked by arrows show the progress of resources through the different Curve collections (progressive release). Yellow boxes show review points.

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### 14.3 *Take-down Policy*

#### **CURVE Notice and Takedown Policy**

Every effort has been made to ensure that nothing in CURVE infringes UK law and to trace rights owners where relevant. However, upon notification of a complaint, CURVE will consider removing material from the repository. Should you discover any content in CURVE that you believe infringes copyright law or rights you may possess, please send full details of the item and the grounds for complaint to the Repository Manager.

Your complaint will be acknowledged on receipt and we will act as quickly as possible to remove illegal or objectionable links from the repository. Following acknowledgement of a complaint an initial judgement will be made regarding the validity of the complaint and where the complaint is valid and to be pursued, the resource will be temporarily removed from the repository, pending an agreed solution.

We will advise the person who has deposited the resource about any complaint and give them the opportunity to refute the complaint. All attempts will be made to resolve the issue swiftly and amicably to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the contributor.

If the investigation finds in your favour, we will remove the resource permanently from the repository unless you give us permission to retain it. A metadata record of the item may remain in CURVE.

