

2nd Interim External Evaluation Report: The OTTER Project

Final

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1. External Evaluation Focus and Methodology

1.1 This is the **second** of two interim evaluation reports of the OTTER project. Each interim report is structured around three core questions as defined in the JISC six-step evaluation model¹:

- What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality, and how efficiently?
- What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?
- How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

1.2 This interim report, as in the previous reports:

- confirms the extent to which work packages have been completed satisfactorily;
- scrutinises evidence and confirms the extent to which the project's intended outcomes are being realised and confirm the impact that this is having;
- summarises key learning points from the project and where relevant, recommend actions for sharing learning with other stakeholders;
- provides the project team with formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to help the team maximise outputs and/or, enhance evidence in support of outcomes;
- provides formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to inform future project planning and prioritisation;
- Provides evaluative commentary on outputs from the project and recommend actions to enhance the output, as appropriate.

1.3 The second external evaluation has focussed on:

- The outcomes and outputs from work package 2.
- Progress of work packages 3 to 10 and their associated outputs/outcomes.

¹ <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/evaluationhandbook.pdf>

1.4 The methodology used to externally evaluate the OTTER project at this stage has included:

a. **Focus Group Discussions** with the OTTER Project Team.

b. **Literature Review.** *The literature review took into* account:

- Project Plan
- Project Interim Report to JISC
- Steering Group Minutes
- Project BLOG
- Synthesis Framework for OER Projects (JISC Synthesis OER Synthesis Group).

2. Evaluation of Work Packages 2 and 3

Overview

- 2.1 Work packages 2 (Collection of existing digital material from all partners) and 3 (Clearance of rights) has been designed to collect and categorise the original materials from academic partners, identify any context specific requirements and develop processes for conducting IPR and copyright clearance checks on source materials to ensure that any third party content in OERs have formal approval for use. The Work packages are scheduled to run between May and July 09 and May 09 and the end of February 2010 respectively.
- 2.2 Evaluation has focussed on:
- Key learning points from progress to date.
 - Providing the project team with formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to help the team maximise outputs and/or, enhance evidence in support of outcomes.

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how effectively?

- 2.3 Following recommendations from the last external evaluation, the CORRE Framework is now embedded into the work flow used by the team for OER development and publishing. The Framework has been refined since the last interim report in July 09 and has been adopted by all members of the team involved in the development of OERs. The Framework provides flexibility in workflow sequences. The CORRE Framework is a key deliverable from the project and should be shared with other institutions interested in developing processes for the development and publication of OERs.
- 2.4 The project has adopted the institution's definition of 'credit' as being equivalent to 10 hours of study time. It is recognised by the project team and by JISC that this is an arbitrary measure and it is being used as a guiding measure rather than being applied rigidly.
- 2.5 The initial credit target of 360 credits of core materials have been exceeded with approximately 472 credits worth of core materials now gathered. The core materials have not manifested themselves exactly in accordance with the targets by subject area in the original plan, but still cover a good range of subject areas.
- 2.6 All core materials received have been IPR assessed. Some were rejected because they infringed copyright.

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

- 2.7 The CORRE framework approach results in quality enhanced OERs being produced. The team believe it would be an expensive model to implement as it requires a team dedicated to the production and distribution of OERs. It is questionable if institutions could resource its implementation post project unless the benefits to learners and staff could be justified and quantified. The extent to which the CORRE framework could be adopted to include the quality assurance aspect needs further research, but this work is not within scope of the current project. It is an area worth considering if JISC or another funding source was identified to progress the initial work carried out in this project.
- 2.8 The project team have learnt the process for collecting, assigning credit and copyright clearing to core materials is complex. There are challenges associated with obtaining core materials from academic departments that can add considerably to the time needed to obtain core materials for conversion to OER. These include:
- Ensuring academic staff deliver the core materials promised.
 - Overcoming cultural barriers and institutional barriers when trying to persuade academic staff to release materials for OERs.
 - Figuring out who owns the core materials when staff are contracted externally to write course materials when copyright ownership has not been detailed in contract agreements
 - Dealing with complex copyright issues.
 - Determining a reasonable credit value for materials.
- 2.9 Copyright problems are arising sometimes because of the lack of explicit agreement detailed in contracts with external members of staff. Examples include situations where:
- Core materials have been produced by third party sub-contractors under contract from the institution, but the contract has not made it explicit who owns the copyright.
 - Individual members of staff originating the materials have left the institution and have incorporated source materials into published academic texts. As a result the publisher assumes they own the copyright on the materials.
- 2.10 Having funding available to negotiate copyright and pay IPR fees to publishers has been of minimal benefit to the project. The majority of publishers are not prepared to enter into discussion about their texts being used in OERs and are giving blanket refusals. Also many large publishers have long response times (6-8 weeks) and do not understand the concept of Creative Commons licences.

- 2.11 Academic staff are not fully aware of copyright issues when creating learning materials. Wrong assumptions are being made about for example materials sourced on the web. In particular staff are unclear about content held on social networking sites such as YouTube and Flickr.
- 2.12 The majority of existing core materials that have been designed and copyright cleared are for internal classroom use only, not for open access. The change of use for OER creation is giving rise to some of the copyright issues. Designing materials with OER production in mind would help prevent some of these problems emerging in the future.
- 2.13 Currently the model for collecting core materials is a 'supply driven' model. Further thought and dialogue with academic staff and learners is needed to ascertain how to make this more of a demand driven model.

How has learning been acted on or fed back in?

- 2.14 Experiences are being exchanged with the JISC Programme Manager/ JISC Synthesis team supporting the OER pilots and other JISC- funded OER pilots.
- 2.15 Evidence and experience is being shared at national levels by Professor Salmon through committees interested in the impact of the use of OERs in attracting students to study in the UK.
- 2.16 Experiences are being disseminated through conferences and programme meetings and the BDRA's own conferences and seminars.

3. Evaluation of Work Packages 4 and 6

Overview

- 3.1 Work package 4 (Formatting and standardisation) has been designed to develop processes for ensuring that OERs are technically ready for release. Work Package 6 (Release and testing) has been designed to ensure that OERs are tested and published. These work packages are scheduled to run between June/July and the end of the project in March 2010.
- 3.2 Evaluation has focussed on:
- Key learning points from progress to date.
 - providing the project team with formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to help the team maximise outputs and/or, enhance evidence in support of outcomes;
 - providing formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to inform future project planning and prioritisation;

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

- 3.3 An OER repository for the project/university has now been created and can be accessed by University of Leicester staff and students. Each OER is displayed with basic meta-data which includes the name of the originating author.
- 3.4 The majority of OERs available currently are text-based.
- 3.5 The project team have agreed the range of download formats available. The options chosen have been designed to increase access and to give the user different possible uses of the OER.
- 3.6 The repository has a range of tools available to assist the user to access and use the OERs. For example, the repository has RSS feeds of recent uploads to ensure users are kept informed of additions and changes to the repository. also has tools available that the user may require to use the OERs.
- 3.7 Now that JORUM Open has been launched, the team plan to add web links in JOURM Open to the OERs held in the University of Leicester OER repository.

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

- 3.8 The team have experienced situations where academic staff have updated the source material that the OER was originally developed from. This has given rise to questions around how to handle OER 'versioning'. It has also given rise to questions relating to whether staff should be updating the source materials or the OER. At the time of this interim evaluation, decisions on how best to proceed had not been reached.
- 3.9 The team have realised that some of the web links in the OER over time become broken or out of date. As a result, there has been the need to add a disclaimer to the repository stating that all links were active at the time of publishing.
- 3.10 The team have found PLONE relatively simple to use and it is meeting their requirements for OER distribution.
- 3.11 The team have recognised that key wording will assist people to search and find relevant OERs. Key words are being added to OERs in the repository.
- 3.12 To date the different download file formats available are meeting user needs and helping to maximum re-use of the OERs.
- 3.13 It has been recognised that irrespective of thorough copyright clearance activities, it may be that some OER's could still breach copyright. As a result, the team have added a copyright disclaimer to the repository and are in the process of drafting a 'take-down' policy for the repository.
- 3.14 The team have recognised that iTunes U may provide a potential outlet for OERs. The Open University in the UK are already using iTunes U as a vehicle for accessing course materials. The team intend to explore this further in collaboration with the University's marketing manager.

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

- 3.15 Experiences are being exchanged with the JISC Programme Manager/JISC Synthesis team and other JISC-funded OER Pilots.

4. Evaluation of Work Package 5

Overview

4.1 Work package 5 (Validation with partners) has been designed to develop processes for engaging academic partners in the validation of OERs, prior to release. The work package is scheduled to run between July 09 and February 2010.

4.2 Evaluation has focussed on:

- Key learning points from progress to date.
- providing the project team with formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to help the team maximise outputs and/or enhance evidence in support of outcomes;
- Providing formative feedback in the form of recommended actions that are intended to inform future project planning and prioritisation.

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

4.3 The process for getting academic staff to sign-off the final OER has relied on email. The team have experienced some difficulties in getting academic staff to confirm satisfaction with the OER.

4.4 In some instances the project team have used the Carpe Diem workshops run by the Beyond Distance Research Alliance team to raise awareness of OERs and encourage academic staff to embed their use into learning and teaching activities.

5. Evaluation of Work Package 7

Overview

5.1 This work package (Reality check by beneficiaries) has been designed to develop processes for engaging students and other potential users in the validation of OERs prior to release. The Work package is scheduled to run between November 09 and the end of February 2010.

5.2 Evaluation has focussed on:

- The extent to which progress with tasks in work package 6 have been achieved.
- The extent to which students and other online users have been able to review and feedback comments on OERs developed to date.

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

- 5.3 The project had planned originally to work with the university's Academic Liaison Officer to arrange to recruit students to participate in the assessment of the OERs produced and to provide feedback. In addition to this approach, the project has contacted their academic partners directly to identify students who are willing to give feedback on the OERs.
- 5.4 Online questionnaires have been developed to obtain student feedback. Students were asked to evaluate the potential of the OER and to describe situations where the OERs would be of value to their learning. A full analysis of the feedback received was not available at the interim evaluation. This will be considered in the final evaluation report.
- 5.5 An outcome of the project (see project plan Outcome 2) is that the project would provide a wider, improved institutional understanding of and commitment to the value of free OERs for promotion and positioning purposes in a global HE market. The project team are currently in the process of collecting data from different stakeholders including senior managers to address this outcome. The extent to which there is evidence to demonstrate that OERs are having (or have the potential) to position the university in a global HE market will be considered further in the final evaluation report.

6. Evaluation of Work Packages 8 and 9

Overview

6.1 Work Package 8 (Tracking) has been designed to track the extent to which OERs are being used by staff and students and report activity to academic departments and funders. Work Package 9 (Analysis of lessons learnt) has been designed to generate reports ready for dissemination.

6.2 Evaluation has focussed on:

- The extent to which progress with tasks in work packages 8 and 9 have been achieved.

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

6.3 Samuel Nikoi has now been assigned to activities to assess the impact of OERS in the institution. An initial study involving five senior staff, four academic staff and seven students has been conducted between December 09 and January 2010. The study is to be continued, but early findings are showing that:

- Stakeholders **support** the open sharing of educational resources, despite some views that this as a contested area.
- OERs can help **position** UK HE and UoL in particular.
- Academic staff is generally willing to share teaching materials. **More evidence** is needed, however, to make a convincing case about the value and impact of OERs.
- Students view OERs as a supplementary resource that could improve the quality of the **learner experience**.
- A **mandate** in the form of a policy and strategic action are required to take the OER agenda forward.
- A **team effort** working with all stakeholders is seen as the appropriate way forward.
- A developmental approach around a **pilot** focused on production and evaluation of generic materials within individual colleges is preferred to a grand scale project across the institution.
- Sustainability remains an unresolved issue in terms of **funding**, staff **capacity** and **support**.
- **Reward** and **recognition** of academic staff is seen as key to the success of OERs.

Source: Nikoi S (2010) OTTER Research Report

7. Evaluation of Work Package 10

Overview

7.1 Work Package 10 (Dissemination designed to ensure that project activities, outcomes and deliverables are shared with the wider JISC community and across the University.

7.2 Evaluation has focussed on:

- The extent to which progress has been made with disseminating project activities to the wider JISC/HE community.

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

7.3 Full details of OTTER's dissemination activities are provided in <http://bit.ly/dnkKaN>

7.4 The Project website now contains links to the OERs that have been developed during the project. The OERs are grouped by academic department.

7.5 The project team continue to update the project Blog regularly with news about progress and key achievements.

7.6 The OTTER team participated in the Open Learning Conference organised by the University of Nottingham.

7.7 The OTTER team have formed a partnership with the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE). The intention is to work collaboratively with SAIDE to generate OERs.

7.8 The OTTER Team presented the project as part of the Beyond Distance Research Alliance's online '*Learning Futures*' Festival in January 2010.

7.9 A series of departmental level information sessions for academic staff are being planned to further disseminate the work of OTTER in the University.

7.10 Further dissemination is planned at the EMALink seminar in April which is being hosted by the University of Leicester library.

7.11 A further paper is planned for the Cambridge Conference in March 2010 which explores the process of transforming teaching materials into OERs using the CORRE Framework.

7.12 An abstract has been submitted to ALT-C 2010.

8. Recommended Actions

It is suggested that:

1. The project team need to conclude work to evidence the extent to which the project has gained a wider, improved institutional understanding of and commitment to the value of free OERs for promotion and positioning purposes in a global HE market. (Outcome 2 in the project plan).
2. The project team should implement plans to disseminate the effective use of OERs in learning and teaching to academics in the university and use events to gather further information to evidence growing commitment to and use of OERs. This evidence could help the project team to justify further investment in OER development with university senior staff and external funders.
3. The project team should continue to obtain feedback from students on the value of OERs in their learning.
4. The project team should agree the process for managing different versions of OERs.
5. The project team should consider recommending that as an outcome from the OER pilots, JISC enter into a dialogue with publishers to explore engagement with OER development
6. The project team should consider preparing a briefing paper for senior managers highlighting the IPR and contractual issues that have emerged in the project. The project team should explore the potential for refining the OER models to make it more demand driven.

**OTTER Project External Evaluation
Structured Questions**

WORK PACKAGE 3 – CLEARANCE OF RIGHTS

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

1. What IPR challenges and issues (if any) have emerged since the last external evaluation visit? How have you resolved these?
2. Do you have clearer ideas on the time and cost implications associated with clearance of rights?
3. To what extent are you using the CORRE framework now to record information associated with copyright clearance?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

4. What have you learnt from this work?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

5. How are you sharing your findings with other OER initiatives?

WORK PACKAGE 4 – FORMATTING AND STANDARDISATION

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

6. What formatting and standardisation issues and challenges (if any) have emerged since the last external evaluation visit? How have you resolved these?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

7. What have you learnt from this work?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

8. To what extent are you learning from other OER initiatives and sharing your experiences with them?

WORK PACAKGE 5 – VALIDATION WITH PEERS

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

9. What progress have you made in engaging staff in the peer validation process?
10. What are the key issues and challenges in ensuring staff engage in the validation process and provide meaningful and quality feedback?
11. Have you developed any guidance/resources to help staff better understand and/or engage with the peer validation process?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

12. What have you learnt from peer validation of OERs so far?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

13. How does your experiences compare with other OER initiatives?
14. Have you been able to learn from other initiatives? Have they been able to learn from your work?

WORK PACAKGE 6² – Release and Testing

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

15. What are the key issues and challenges associated with the publication of OERs on OER repositories?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

16. What have you learnt so far?

² Note the change in sequence of WPs 6 and 7 in the OTTER Project's Interim Report to JISC, 9 Nov 2009.

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

17. Have you been able to learn from other initiatives? Have they been able to learn from your work?

WORK PACAKGE 7 – Reality Check by Beneficiaries

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

18. To what extent have you been able to engage students in the evaluation of OERs produced?
19. What are the key issues and challenges in engaging students and ensuring you get meaningful feedback?
20. Have you developed any guidance/resources to help students better understand and/or engage with the peer validation process?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

21. What have you learnt from student evaluation of OERs so far?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

22. Have you been able to learn from other initiatives? Have they been able to learn from your work?

WORK PACAKGE 8 – Tracking

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

23. To what extent has this work started?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

24. What have you learnt so far?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

25. Have you been able to learn from other initiatives? Have they been able to learn from your work?

WORK PACKAGE 9 – Analysis of Lessons Learnt

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

26. To what extent has this work started?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

27. What have you learnt so far?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

28. Have you been able to learn from other initiatives? Have they been able to learn from your work?

WORK PACKAGE 10 – Dissemination

What have we done/built/achieved, to what quality and how efficiently?

29. To what extent has the project been disseminated to others so far?

What has been learned or confirmed through development activities?

30. What have you learnt from dissemination?

How has the learning been acted on or fed back in?

31. Has the feedback you have been receiving been used to influence further refinements of your delivery model(s)? If so can you give examples?

32. What other dissemination activities do you have planned?

Appendix 2

The following people participated in the focus group discussions:

Individual	Position
Gabi Witthaus	Project Co-ordinator
Ale Armellini	Senior Learning Designer
Richard Mobs	Learning Technologist
Emma Davies	Learning Technologist
Samuel Nikoi	OER Evaluator
Tania Rowlett	Copyright Administrator
Professor Gilly Salmon	Principal Investigator/Project Director