

EU-StORe

Research on Open Learning Material and OERs

Creating European standards for open education and open learning resources- EU-StORe

Partner 5: Meath Partnership

<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Creating European standards for open education and open learning resources</i>
<i>Project Acronym</i>	<i>EU-StORe</i>
<i>Reference Number</i>	<i>2014-1-RO01-KA202-002985</i>
<i>Project Duration</i>	<i>01.09.2014 – 31.08.2016</i>
<i>Project Partners</i>	<i>P1 Universitatea Lucian Blaga Din Sibiu (Romania) P2 University Paderborn – UPB (Germany) P3 Ingenious Knowledge – IK (Germany) P4 European Learning Network – ELN (United Kingdom) P5 Meath Partnership – MCRSDP (Ireland) P6 Libera Università Maria Ss. Assunta (Italy) P7 Università ta Malta (Malta)</i>

Title of the task: Open Learning Material and OERs: Which Target Group will be addressed?

Activity Code: O1-A1

Partner: Partner 5 – Meath Partnership

Overview of Open Education Resources

Open Education Resources are defined as “any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license” (UNESCO, 2014). They are not solely limited to online resources, but rather they can include lecture and course notes, quizzes and tests, text books, audios and podcasts, videos, animations, projects and assignments, etc. Regardless of the type of resource, in order to qualify as an Open Resource, there is a requirement that individuals are free to “legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share” these resources (UNESCO, 2014).

Open Educational Resources (OERs) were first introduced to adult and further education at the 2002 UNESCO ‘Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries’; which outlined the need for open courseware “based on the philosophical view of knowledge as a collective social product and so [stating that] it is also desirable to make [knowledge] a social property” (UNESCO, 2002). UNESCO further defined OERs as;

“teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work” (UNESCO, 2012).

OERs in Ireland

With the rising global demand for further and higher education, Open Education Resources and courseware are seen as the future in education provision, as they offer an effective means of delivering quality education to an unlimited number of learners at once. However in Ireland development in this area has been slow. This is largely due to funding constraints on universities who are unable to financially support off-

campus learning. Due to the monies received for providing face-to-face, on-campus curricula, universities also have no monetary resources for developing their own bespoke Open Education Resources (Brown, 2014). In general, Online Education in Ireland can be characterised as fee-paying courses, with little accreditation offered and a general perception by the academic industry and employers that qualifications awarded from online universities and training providers are not as well regarded as those which are attained through traditional, classroom-based training delivery and from reputable institutions. There is a lack of reputation in Ireland where Online Education providers are concerned and so these programmes are largely undervalued. This is evident when we consider that Higher Education in Ireland is heavily subsidised by the Government, with the majority of the Irish student body qualifying for the 'Free Fees Scheme', and many qualifying for a maintenance grant of up to €12,500 per annum per student to attend university. Despite this support for students to attend Higher Education, there are currently no current government grants, subsidies or free-fee schemes for students wishing to complete courses online. As a result, less than 3% of students throughout Ireland currently study by distance or through online platforms, and comparatively few are registered as part-time learners (Higher Education Authority, 2014). Online Education in Ireland is still hampered by funding constraints, for both students and institutions, and as a result there has been a lack of development in Online and Open Education Resources. Accreditation of online content is also a major concern amongst the academic community and student body of Ireland, with many fearful that qualifications obtained through online institutions, or courses completed which are not formally accredited, will not be recognised or appreciated by employers; and so these concerns have had adverse effects on the proliferation of OERs in Ireland (Irish Independent, 2013)

A report by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2012, '*Part-time and Flexible Higher Education in Ireland*', has addressed the underdevelopment of Online and Open Education in Ireland by recommending that "by 2016, full equality of provision and support will have been achieved in higher education for all students, regardless

of time, place or pace of study” (HEA, 2012). Further to this, a report by the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education in 2014 recommended that “national funding frameworks should create incentives, especially in the context of new forms of performance-based funding, for higher education institutions to open up education, develop more flexible modes of delivery and diversify their student population” (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2014). Despite these aims, and recommendations from Europe, there has been minimal progress in Ireland.

While the benefits of OERs are numerous, educationalists in Ireland are currently debating the true value of these open resources which are free of charge and unaccredited. Education in Ireland is dominated by traditional learning formats, mostly classroom-based and fee-paying. As a result, there is a degree of uneasiness amongst the academic community about the loss of earnings for universities and colleges if free-of-charge OERs prevail (Casey. 2014). Despite these reservations, some universities and colleges in Ireland, namely the Institute of Technology Sligo, Trinity College Dublin and Dublin Institute of Technology, have adopted policies of open education by publishing Ireland’s first MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), in response to this new demand for open, free, online training programmes. The following table presents the MOOCs currently on offer by these institutions:

Institution	Course Name	Description & Duration	Source
Institute of Technology Sligo	Introduction to Lean Sigma Quality	This is a free six-week course, which provides learners with videos lectures, discussion forums, quizzes and additional resources on Lean Sigma Quality topics. If a grade of 50% or more is attained by the learner they will be awarded an electronic certificate.	http://odl.itsligo.ie/engineering/manufacturing-and-quality-management/introduction-to-lean-sigma-free/
Trinity College Dublin (in partnership with FutureLearn)	Irish Lives in War and Revolution: Exploring Ireland's History 1912-1923	This is a six week course which studies the events that shaped the nature of modern Ireland - the Great War, the Easter Rising, the Irish war of independence and civil war. It requires 5 hours of study per week, and a Certificate of Participation in awarded by TCD on completion.	https://www.tcd.ie/OnlineEducation/free-online-course/

Dublin Institute of Technology	Introduction to Pharmaceutical Manufacturing	This is a free, three-week introduction to Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, a highly regulated environment due to the need to ensure patient safety	http://dit.ie/lttc/earning/mooc/
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While these institutions have taken it upon themselves to design, develop and deliver these MOOCs, there has been no policy response by the Irish Government to these developments. In 2011, the Department of Education and Skills published their ‘National Strategy for Higher Education 2030’ (Dept. of Education and Skills, 2011). This document outlines the Government’s policies for improving higher education provision until 2030; and yet, despite the significance of the MOOC and OER movement in Europe and the USA, no mention is given to Open Education or MOOCs in the policy. Further to this, distance and online learning were only briefly mentioned, in one paragraph of the policy, as an area for which needs further development in higher education provision, but with no concrete measures or actions mentioned as to how this development will be achieved.

In spite of the discrepancies in the national policies for Higher Education, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has launched the National Digital Learning Resources (NDLR) web portal. This website is an online catalogue of OERs, and it also acts as a community portal which is shared between the 7 state universities and 14 Institutes of Technology located across Ireland. These 21 HEIs also play a role in developing content for the platform, as well as assessing and evaluating OERs which are published on the platform. The aim of the NDLR portal is to “promote and support higher education staff in the collaboration, development and sharing of learning resources and associate teaching practices” and to date it is reported that this portal hosts a total of 25,000 resources (Marcus-Quinn & Diggins, 2013; www.ndlr.ie).

ALISON.com is another example of an Irish-based online platform which promotes and stores OERs. ALISON (Advance Learning Interactive Systems Online) is a social enterprise which was established in Galway in 2007. It is recognised as the world’s

first MOOC, and is now a global leader in OERs. It has 5 million users in 200 countries worldwide; with 450,000 learners having already completed Diploma and Certificate courses through the portal in the last 8 years (ALISON.com). ALISON currently has over 1.2 million unique visitors per month, with the majority of learners accessing the MOOC coming from Developing Countries; India being the most prominent (Booker, 2013). Currently ALISON.com offers 750 courses at both diploma and certificate level, and these courses are targeted at individual adult learners, employees wishing to undertake workplace training to enhance their skills and jobseekers. The following table presents an overview of all topics for which ALISON provides Certificate and Diploma courses in work-place skills:

Accounting	Accounting & Finance Professionals	Adobe	Anatomy
App Development	Arabic	Art	Banking
Biology	British Council	Business	Business Communication Skills
Career Development	Carpentry	Chemistry	Childcare Studies
Chinese Language Studies	Computer Basics	Construction Skills	Customer Service
Digital Creative Design	E-Business	E-Business and Marketing Professionals	Economics
Electrical Engineering	Engineering	English	English Diplomas
English for Business	English for Teaching	English for Tourism	English Grammar
English Literature	English Speaking Skills	Entrepreneurial Skills	Finance
Food Safety	French	Geography	German
Global Health Initiative	Google	Health & Healthcare Professionals	Health and Fitness
Health and Safety	Health Management	History	Human Nutrition
Human Resources	Information Technology	Investment	Irish
Job Search Skills	Law and Legal Skills	Management	Management Professionals
Manufacturing	Marketing and Sales	Masonry Skills	Maths
Mental Health Studies	Microsoft Office	Multimedia Technology	Music
Nursing Studies	Office Skills	Operations Management	Photography
Photoshop	Physics	Plumbing	Procurement
Programming	Project Management	Project Maths	Psychology
Quality Management	Science	Six Sigma	Social Media Techniques
Social Work Skills	Spanish Language Skills	Statistics	Study Skills
Supply Chain Management	Swedish	Teacher Resources	Teaching and Training Professionals

(Source: <http://alison.com/learn>)

EU-StORe Target Group in Ireland

Meath Partnership will actively involve local, regional and national stakeholders and adult education providers in the implementation and testing of the EU-StORe platform, guidelines and other outputs; and will disseminate these resources as an opportunity for academic and adult education staff to update their skill set so that they can become competent evaluators and authors of content for OERs and MOOCs.

Meath Partnership will also promote the EU-StORe project as a guideline resource for adult education and academic staff to learn how to integrate OERs into their curriculum design.

Contact will also be made with the following stakeholders so as to disseminate the EU-StORe Platform (O2-A1), Online Handbook (O4-A2) and OER-Book (O4-A4):

Name	Description	Role in EU StORe
Campus Entrepreneurship Enterprise Network	CEEN is the Irish national network for promoting and developing entrepreneurship and enterprise, at third level. CEEN aims to create a sustainable national platform for raising the profile, extending engagement and further developing entrepreneurship across the Irish HEI sector	CEEN is a network of the HEA, statutory education bodies and Irish universities. They are progressive in their approach to education delivery, and so they will be involved in the project as the end-users of the EU-StORe resources. These resources will be used to train CEEN staff to create OERs and to integrate them into their innovative Entrepreneurship Education curricula.
Future Learn	Future Learn are a leading producer of OERs and MOOCs. They are a private company who work with 40 partners from the UK, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East and offer a diverse selection of courses from leading universities and cultural institutions.	As a leader in the evaluation and production of OERs and MOOCs, Future Learn will be a useful contact to have in designing the quality criteria for OERs and in evaluating all outputs produced.
Trinity College Dublin (TCD) & Dublin Institute of Technology Learning	TCD is the premier university in Ireland. Based in Dublin City and founded in 1592, TCD has a student body of 17,000 in number, with 16% international	As two of the pioneers in OER and MOOC design amongst Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland, contact will be made with these institutions for the exploitation

<p>Teaching and Technology Centre (DIT LTTC)</p>	<p>students. DIT LTTC provides training to academic staff, government department and school administrations: on matters related to pedagogies, programme design, assessment strategies and student support.</p>	<p>of the EU-StORe resources. As TCD have only published their first MOOC, and DIT LTTC have as their remit to research innovative pedagogies, there is potential for both institutions to use the EU-StORe resources.</p>
<p>Institute of Technology Sligo, Centre for Online Learning</p>	<p>IT Sligo was the first Irish HEI to publish a MOOC. The MOOC is a 3-week programme in Engineering, pertaining to a Certificate of Participation in Lean Sigma Quality. IT Sligo are the lead HEI in Ireland for Online and Distance Education; currently offering 34 fully accredited undergraduate programmes, from certificate to honours degree level, and 10 postgraduate programmes from the faculties of Science, Engineering and Design and Business and Social Science. All of these courses are offered fully online through college's Moodle platform.</p>	<p>With extensive experience in Online and Distance Education, and a clear commitment to the use of modern and digital technologies in their delivery of accredited Higher Education, IT Sligo will be a useful partner for the EU-StORe project team in Ireland. They will provide valuable insights for O2-A3 and O2-A4 (Expert analysis & rating of existing OER and existing courses) and will also provide feedback and advice when producing the EU-StORe OER-Book and Quality Standards and Guidelines. It Sligo will also contribute to the generation of Best Practice showcases for Open Education (O4-A3).</p>
<p>National Digital Learning Resources (NDLR)</p>	<p>NDLR.ie is an online portal which currently hosts over 25,000 OERs. NDLR also aims to promote and support Higher Education (HE) staff to come together and create and share learning resources and associated teaching practices. To achieve this collaboration, NDLR.ie also contains community tools to be use by HE staff to link with other academics in Ireland and abroad. It also trains academic staff to use these resources.</p>	<p>NDLR have considerable experience and expertise in the acquisition, evaluation and dissemination of OERs amongst students and academic staff in Ireland. As such they will be a valuable stakeholder for Meath Partnership to liaise with when developing the quality standards and guidelines, and when undertaking the evaluation of open resources and courseware. Further to this, NDLR are funded by the HEA and have strong working links with all HEIs in Ireland; and as such they will be a very worthwhile</p>

		partner in the exploitation of EU-StORe's outputs.
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As part of our work in actively contributing to the dissemination and exploitation of the EU-StORe project, Meath Partnership will also promote the diversity and availability of Open Education Resources to members of the following target groups:

- Unemployed and underemployed individuals aiming to improve their employability and career prospects by enrolling on courses which respond directly to current shortages in the labour market;
- Employees considering a career change and seeking to try a new subject area before pursuing formal education;
- Migrants pursuing improved English language skills – at present there is a shortage of English language courses for Meath's migrant population which numbered 16,164 in the 2011 Census (Central Statistics Office, 2011);

The primary target groups will be contacted at the beginning of the implementation phase so as to ensure their involvement in the key development work of the project. The secondary target group will be involved towards the end of the project life-cycle, during the final stages of project implementation, and when all outputs have been produced these will be actively disseminated among members of this target group.

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