

White Rose Libraries OER survey report

Introduction

One of the aims of the OER project is engagement with the academic community to establish academic awareness and needs to inform the development of library support services for OER. From an early stage, the project managers felt that a survey of academic colleagues was one way of achieving this. SPARC Europe conducts an annual survey of Open Education in European Libraries of Higher Education (the most recent being [2021](#)) but this is directed to Libraries, not individual academic staff. The [literature review](#) undertaken for the project found several articles about projects in HE libraries in the US and elsewhere that included surveys of academic staff, but nothing similar by UK HE Libraries.

The development of the survey was informed by examples from other institutions, including the University of Hawaii ([Tillinghast 2015](#)) and the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences at De Montfort University ([Rolfe 2012](#)). The [survey](#) was designed in Google Forms, and started with some background information about the project. In compliance with good research practice and ethics, the survey was anonymous and did not automatically collect names or email addresses, and the introductory section of the survey explained this. Survey participants who were interested in being more involved in the research, such as taking part in interviews, were invited to provide contact details so that they could be contacted at a later date.

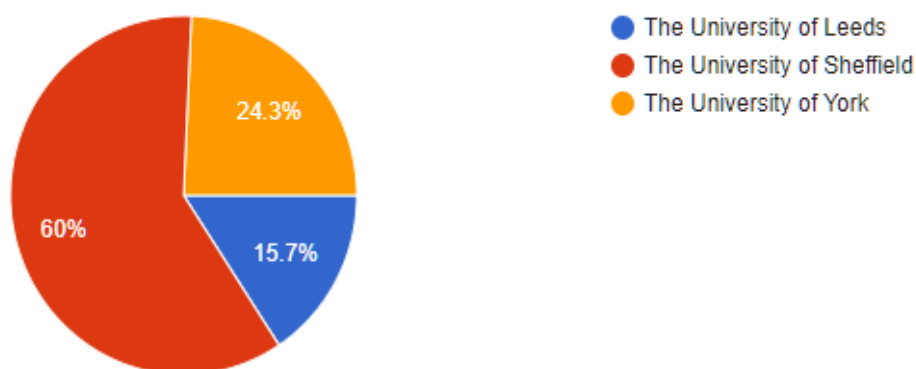
Before the survey was launched, we sought feedback from an academic colleague from the University of Sheffield who had previously indicated an interest in the project and was willing to be a critical friend. The feedback used to make minor amendments to the survey, and it was then circulated to teaching staff in all institutions using appropriate local channels during December 2021 and January 2022.

About the participants

We received 70 responses, 15.7% from Leeds, 60% from Sheffield, 24.3% from York. Twenty participants across all three universities provided their names and email addresses to indicate that they would be interested in further participation.

At which institution are you employed?

70 responses

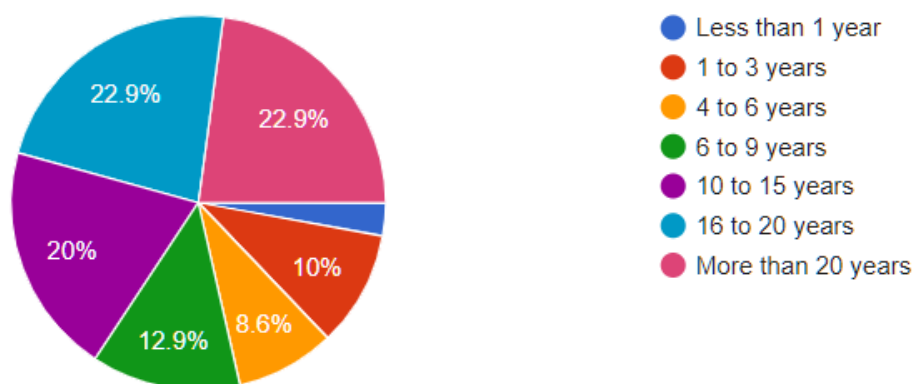


Participants were asked to say what discipline they teach in using the categories used by HESA. Nineteen different categories were selected, the most common being Social Science (27%) Language & Area Studies (13%) Education & Teaching (10%) Nursing, Midwifery & Health (8.6%) Engineering & Technology (8.6%) Geographical & Environmental Studies (8.6%)

Participants were asked to say how long they have been teaching in HE. Two thirds had more than 10 years experience, so a clear majority are experienced practitioners.

How long have you been teaching at higher education level?

70 responses



Participants were also asked to say which levels they teach at. 88.6% teach undergraduates, 77.1% PGT and 65.7% PGR. This suggests that a significant number teach across all those levels. The numbers teaching at other levels are much smaller (5.7% Foundation, 1.4% Professional Development, 1.4% Researchers).

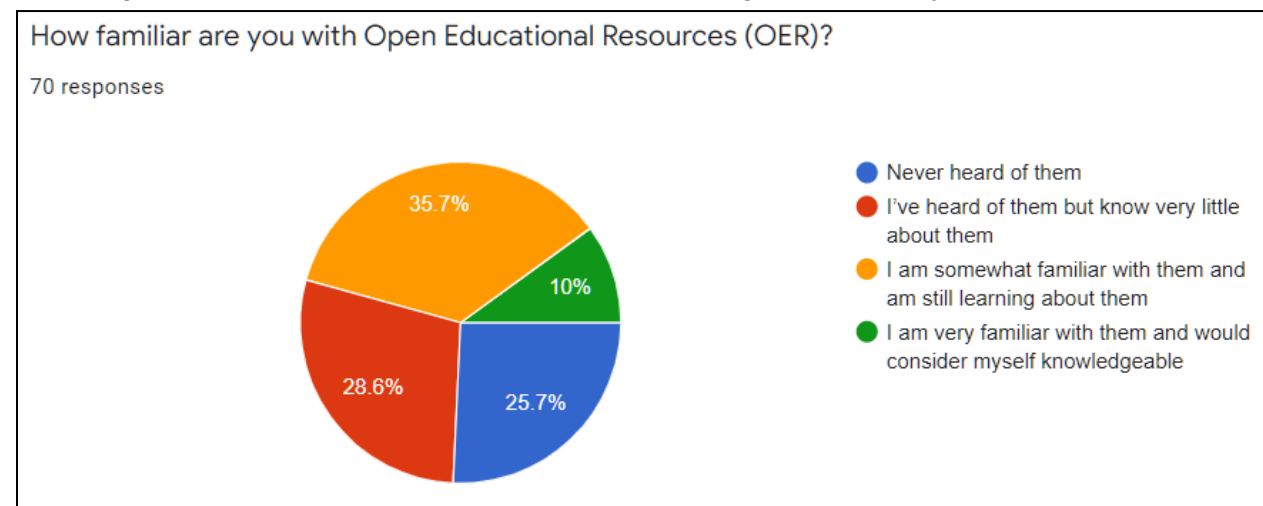
Selecting material for teaching

We asked participants to say who was responsible for selecting the materials used for teaching on their courses. 64.3% select their own material, with 30% indicating a more combined approach involving current and previous module leaders and teaching committees. This suggests that most participants have significant autonomy in this area.

Participants were also asked to rate which considerations they applied when choosing material. Appropriateness of content and availability through the Library were the two most important considerations, with price, simultaneous access, and ease of access for students showing as lower considerations.

Awareness and discovery of OER

Participants were asked to say how familiar they are with OER. Although 45% consider themselves very or somewhat familiar, 28% know very little, and 25% have never heard of them, indicating that there is a need for more awareness raising and advocacy.



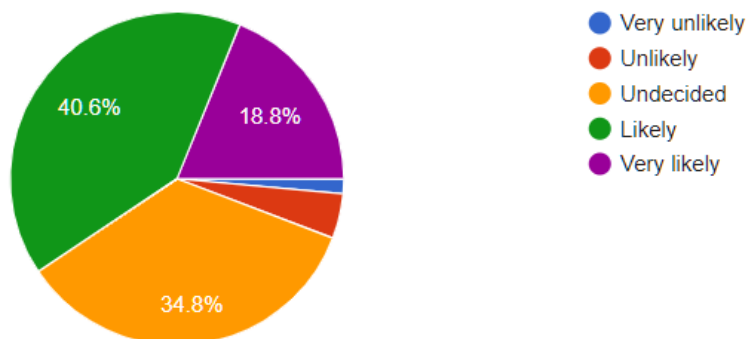
We asked participants to indicate from a range of options how they would find OER for their teaching. The top three tools selected were Google (55.7%) Library Catalogue (48.6%) and the Open Textbook Library (11.4%). 24.3% said they would ask teaching colleagues, 22.9% said they would ask colleagues in the Library. 20% said they had never looked for OER, 17.1% said they had never heard of OER. One person said they use their own OER.

This section of the survey also asked about awareness of Creative Commons licensing. A clear majority consider themselves somewhat (62.9%) or very (15.7%) familiar with them, but 12.9% say they don't know how to use or interpret them, and 8.6% have never heard of them, indicating a need for awareness and guidance.

Use, adaptation and creation of OER

Thinking about your own teaching, how likely are you to consider using or adapting existing OER?

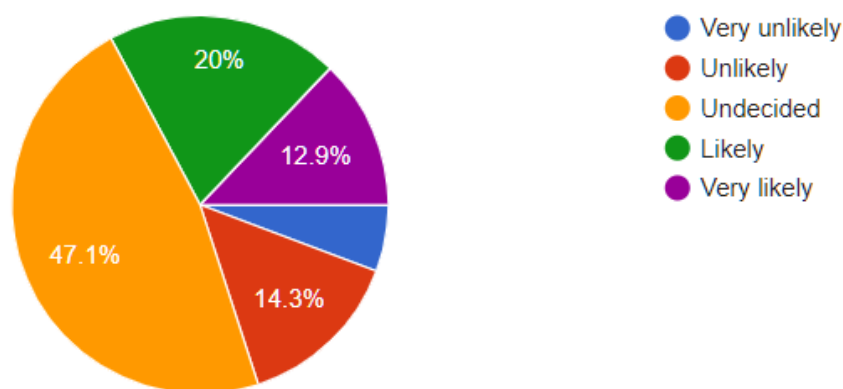
69 responses



We asked participants how likely they are to consider using or adapting existing OER in their teaching. More than half (59.4%) are likely or very likely to do so, with 34.8% undecided. When asked what factors would influence them to use OER, the most highly ranked answers were better awareness of OER (74.3%), certainty about the quality (72.9%), time to find them (60%), ability to tailor them appropriately (54.3%), and belief in open education (40%). This indicates in addition to awareness, guidance relating to quality would be beneficial. This could include reviews and evaluation guidance.

Thinking about your own teaching, how likely are you to consider creating OER?

70 responses



When asked how likely they would be to create their own OER, 32.9% said they are likely or very likely to do so, with 47.1% undecided. When asked what factors would influence the creation of OER, the most highly ranked answers were having dedicated time (64.6%), having administrative/technical support and infrastructure (50.8%), the ability to create material

specifically for their curriculum (50.8%), better awareness (44.6%), and incentives or recognition (43.1%). Other significant factors are better understanding of Creative Commons Licences (38.5%), a belief in open education (40%) and a belief that creating OER would enhance the University reputation (30.8%)

We asked participants if they had created any OER themselves, and if so, what types of material. 70.3% said they had not created any OER. The top three types of material respondents said they have created are videos (18.8%), lesson plans (12.5%) and software programs (9.4%) with smaller numbers creating textbooks, games, quizzes, audio material, case studies and images.

Reasons for not being interested in OER are not having time to create them (53%), not having time to find them (37.9%), no time to learn how to use them (31.8%) and uncertainty about quality (30.3%). Some participants (24.2%) are unsure about how their University or Department views OER, suggesting that clearer policies and guidance could make some difference.

We asked participants to rank the areas of support that they would like to help them learn more about using, adapting and creating OER. The top ranked areas are guidance on finding and using them (70.3%), availability of an institutional policy (51.6%), sources of funding or other incentives (40.6%), guidance on authoring open textbooks (34.4%), copyright and IP guidance (32.8%) and how to licence OER (29.7%).

Additional comments

At the end of the survey, participants were invited to leave further comments, and 7 participants did so. One related to challenges surrounding the use of third party images in OER. Another commented that they teach in a niche area and OER don't seem particularly relevant to them. A further comment was from somebody that had considerable experience of creating OER for different audiences. Another said that they use resources that are openly available, including open software, but is unsure if these are defined as OER.

There was a comment from someone that has recently published a textbook with Oxford University Press, and negotiated terms that allow a preprint version to be posted on WRR0. The individual is willing to share the contract clause with others. Another participant commented that:

"The main issue for me is a lack of institutional policy...I would also like to see the narrative balanced, to encourage sourcing and using material from elsewhere to encourage diversity, rather than just using it for marketing/recruitment means."

The final comment was from somebody that wants to make course materials openly available:

"We are currently forming a position and a strategy on this work but would love central guidance and support. It seems that open sourcing as part of research is strongly encouraged, but teaching is bizarrely frowned upon."

This participant goes on to raise the issue of open sourcing teaching material potentially being seen as reducing the value of the institution's degrees. This could be mitigated by clearer institutional policy.

Key findings

- The general levels of awareness of OER indicated in the survey demonstrate the need for more information, guidance and advocacy.
- Concerns about the quality of OER suggest that further information and guidance in this area would be beneficial.
- A further need is better awareness and understanding of licensing and copyright issues, including Creative Commons Licences.
- The toolkit that the project team is developing will address all of these issues.

There are a number of areas that would have to be addressed through wider engagement within each institution:

- Having enough time to find and evaluate or create OER is a key consideration, and although in some circumstances resources could be made available for library staff to support these activities, it is more likely that teaching staff would prefer an adjustment to their workload allocation to enable this.
- Other enabling factors identified are having administrative and technical support and infrastructure, and sources of funding or other incentives, including recognition for OER use and creation.
- A significant number of participants (24.2%) say they are unsure about how their University or Department views OER, and 51.6% say that an institutional policy would be useful in supporting them to engage more with OER. The University of Leeds already has an OER policy, and it is expected that as part of the project, this will be discussed further in future interviews with academic colleagues from Leeds.

March 2022