

Go open! Supporting higher education staff engagement in open educational practices

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Introduction

“For many of the proponents of openness its key attribute is freedom – for individuals to access content, to reuse it in ways they see fit, to develop new methods of working and to take advantage of the opportunities the digital, networked world offers” (Weller, 2014)

Open education can be viewed as a philosophy declaring that “everyone should have the freedom to use, customize, improve and redistribute educational resources without constraint” (Cape Town Open Education Declaration, 2012). A key aspect of this philosophy is that higher education should be viewed as a public good and that, therefore, knowledge produced by higher education institutions should be freely accessible and openly available to all (Weller, 2014). This approach to openness in education links directly to the UN Sustainable Development goal 4 - Quality Education, which frames open education as a power that can democratize and improve access to education and knowledge more broadly (UNESCO, 2019). Holistic approaches to encouraging and supporting higher education staff capacity building in open educational practices are needed, as complex, interconnected changes and adjustments within institutions are required if widespread take up is to be achieved (Nascimbeni et al. 2020). Staff engagement in open educational practices can address a number of issues, for example, using open textbooks to remove the barrier of study-related costs (Costello et a., 2018).

The Go Open Project

The Go Open project is a collaborative project between academic staff and library staff in Dublin City University (DCU) that encourages members of the DCU community to engage in open educational practices. The project was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and DCU’s Teaching Enhancement Unit through the SATLE 19 fund.

The academic staff team members, from DCU’s Open Education Unit, have experience in providing online, flexible, open education/access programmes that include many examples of open educational practice, while the library staff have experience in advocating for engagement in open educational practice and open scholarship/science.

The Go Open project goals were: to produce user-friendly resources that would give an introduction to open education generally and more specifically key types of open educational

practice; to provide concrete examples of open educational practice to contextualise the educational problems for which such practices can provide a solution; and provide links to other sources of information on open education such as key websites and thought leaders so that those whose interest in open education is sparked by the resources are facilitated in taking their next step. These project goals align with the first action area of the UNESCO OER recommendation, that of building capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER.

Project outputs

The Go Open project developed both a guide, 'Go Open: A beginners guide to open education', and a LibGuide (<https://dcu.libguides.com/GoOpen>) of the same name. Both are structured around five key questions around the concept of open education and open educational practices: 1) *What is open education?*; 2) *What are open teaching and learning practices?*; 3) *What is Creative Commons licensing? And how do I use it?*; 4) *What are open educational resources (OER)?*; 5) *How do I find and use open resources?* Separate sections in the guide focus on these key questions, providing a concise definition of the associated key concept along with contextualised examples of an open educational practice and resources that link out to more information and resources in that area.

To illustrate the structure of the guides sections we will now discuss how the second question, *What are open teaching and learning practices?*, is presented in the guide. The section begins with the presentation of two definitions of open teaching and learning/open pedagogy, one more concise and the other broader. The concise definition, "open teaching and learning or open pedagogy is the integration of open practices, open educational resources and assessment approaches into education" (Farrell et al., 2021), is contrasted with a broader perspective, drawn from Koseoglu (2017), where open teaching and learning/open pedagogy is viewed as being centred around social justice and concepts of open sharing. Some types of open pedagogy are presented, for example the use of open textbooks in teaching or the inclusion of non-disposable assessments in assessment structures. A contextualised example was provided relating to an open pedagogy, undergraduate educational psychology assessment in which students were empowered to produce a communication that is openly shared with the public (<https://openpsych.home.blog/>). Finally, additional links and resources were provided relating to Equity Unbound (<http://unboundeq.creativitycourse.org/>) and the Open Pedagogy Notebook such that those who become interested in this area having read the guide have additional links to explore that will in turn lead them to further resources and communities relating to open pedagogy.

The guide and libguide also provide readers with take-away infographics and images from the guide, licenced CC-BY.

Dissemination and ongoing advocacy

The Go Open Guide and LibGuide were launched at a public event in April 2021, with attendees from within DCU and from other educational institutions, as part of the team's ongoing project output dissemination and advocacy for open education practice. The event involved a keynote address by Dr Catherine Cronin, a presentation of the project outputs, and a panel discussion exploring key aspects of open education. In the two weeks after the launch event the guide had 387 views and 178 downloads, while the libguide had 781 views.

References

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