Title: "It takes mOre than sprEading the woRd!" Approaches to support academics in their engagement with OER.

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:
1. Appreciate the range of institutional approaches to promote engagement with OER amongst academics and relate these to the context of their own institution – what might or might not work and why.
2. Reflect upon the kinds of support for OER engagement offered in their own institution by positioning and re-positioning support offerings on the 'OER engagement ladder'
3. Reflect upon their own engagement with Open Educational Resources by positioning and re-positioning themselves on the 'OER engagement ladder'
4. Draw upon those approaches and support activities, which would be of value to their institutions and could be integrated into existing staff development programmes

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

It is widely recognised that academic buy-in is crucial for Open Educational Resources (OER) to move out of the realm of externally funded projects into every day teaching practice on campus (e.g. Browne, et al., 2010; Highton et al., 2011). Still, academic staff needs support in using OER, not only at the beginning of their engagement with the openly licensed educational materials, but also later on in the process, when they are ready to take this engagement forward and make OER central to their teaching practice. The need for institutional support was strongly highlighted in the OER impact study, where one of the recommendations encouraged higher education institutions (HEIs) to "capitalise on existing professional development activities in order to foster a voluntary culture of sharing and reuse" (Masterman and Wild, 2011). In the UK, major OER funding came from the HEA/JISC OER programme[1]. While the first two strands of JISC projects were focused mainly on realising OER, themes in the foreground now pay more attention to the use-side of openly licensed materials and to the ways in which academics can be trained and supported in using OER (Thomas, 2011). Against this background the paper presents findings from the OER engagement study, a project conducted under auspices of SCORE[2], which set out to investigate the approaches that HEIs take to promote OER use amongst their academics. The

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[1] http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/oer
[2] SCORE is a HEFCE funded programme to support UK OER: http://www8.open.ac.uk/score/

outcomes of the study – a model and a set of guidelines for promoting teachers' engagement with OER – constitute a valuable resource for those wishing to strategically encourage open practice at their own institutions. Using the 'engagement ladder' as a metaphor this paper discusses the steps that academics are likely to take when getting engaged with the use of OER, the barriers they are likely to encounter on the way, and the kinds of institutional support they might need to get things going.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The session is divided into two parts: the presentation of findings (25 min) and a plenary discussion (20 min). During the presentation, two interactive activities are envisaged: the first aiming to engage the audience in reflecting on their own, personal use of OER through identifying their personal positioning on the OER engagement ladder; the second asking the attendees to reflect on the OER support initiatives offered in their home institution, by positioning their home institution on the ladder. These interactive exercises prepare the audience for the discussion part of the session, where attendees are invited to share and discuss about which of the approaches and support activities presented could be of value to their own institutions and, vice versa, which support activities offered in their own institution could further enrich the findings of the study.

References

Highton, M., Fresen, J., & Wild, J. 2011. Making academic OER easy: Reflections on technology and openness at Oxford University. Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning, 15(2), [28–40]. Available online at: http://theelearningsite.com/2011/12/the-journal-of-open-flexible-and-distance-learning-volume-15-issue-2/ [Accessed on 30 April 2012].

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Thomas, A. 2011. The OER turn. JISC Digital Infrastructure Team, 16 September 2011. Available at: http://infteam.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2011/09/16/the-oer-turn/ [Accessed on 30 April 2012].

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