Open Education in Promotion, Tenure, & Faculty Development

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The Iowa Open Education Action Team (Iowa OER) has built upon DOERS3's OER in Tenure & Promotion Matrix to help faculty and staff advocate for the inclusion of open educational practices (OEP) in the promotion, tenure, and faculty evaluation practices at their institutions.

Open educational resources (OER) are defined as "teaching, learning, and research resources that are free of cost and access barriers, and which also carry legal permission for open use. Generally, this permission is granted by use of an open license (for example, Creative Commons licenses) which allows anyone to freely use, adapt and share the resource—anytime, anywhere."

This is a broad definition, but it serves an important purpose. OER can encompass any sort of educational resource, from single lesson plans and presentation slides to interactive lab exercises and full textbooks. While open textbooksundefined are the most commonly discussed type of OER, even these materials may differ in appearance. Some open textbooks are direct analogs for print materials, while others primarily contain videos, exercises, and other multimedia projects.

The possibilities for using OER are also wide-ranging. Instructors can adopt existing OER for use in their classes or they can create and share resources that they have developed. For text-based OER, materials may be peer-reviewed (a feature that traditional, commercial textbooks often lack), or they may be piloted in a course without review and adapted later to meet student needs. These practices are not incompatible, either: an instructor can choose to utilize OER in multiple ways in their teaching, if that best meets their pedagogical needs.

Being such a broad category of materials, it is important for those working with OER to consider the level of work involved in creating and teaching with OER and how that work might be acknowledged in traditional promotion and tenure practices. When instructors are working with OER, they are often participating in a type of work known as Open Educational Practices (OEP). There are four ways that instructors typically participate in OEP:

1. The adoption and use of open educational resources (OER). This is often considered part of traditional teaching practices.

2. The adaptation or creation of OER to meet a course's needs. This work is often time-intensive and may be compensated by grant funding, departmental support, or course release to facilitate the production of open content.

3. The use of open pedagogyundefined or other innovative teaching methods that incorporate OER into the instruction of learners.

4. The study of OER and/or its impact on learners. This might fall under the category of research, Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL), or it may be considered part of traditional teaching practice.

Throughout the rest of this document, we will be discussing ways of interacting with OER, how these practices might meet existing promotion & tenure guidelines at your institution, and how you can advocate for including OER explicitly in your institutional or departmental promotion & tenure guidelines.

Fitting Open Education into P&T Requirements

While institutional guidelines for P&T vary widely, faculty are typically assessed in the areas of research, teaching, and service. OEP can fit into all three categories, and faculty should consider where their own work in open education best fits. For example, using OER in class, revising it to be more relevant to students' needs and course outcomes, and creating new OER are all activities that could align well with tenure standards for excellence in teaching.

Sometimes research is weighted more heavily in the promotion process than teaching and service. While OEP would seem to fit most naturally under teaching, the creation of new OER, especially peer-reviewed materials, is starting to be counted as research at some institutions, although this is far from common practice.

In a March 2019 report, "A Place for Policy: The Role of Policy in Supporting Open Educational Resources and Practices at Ontario's Colleges and Universities," James M. Skidmore and Myrto Provida argue that without institutional support for the recognition of OEP in the tenure process, faculty may be reluctant to undertake the work. They write,

> "The largest barrier to participation in OEP is the lack of professional recognition. Tenured and tenure-track faculty members who evince interest in becoming involved in OEP worry about the amount of time needed to do it properly. Those concerns are compounded if the faculty member thinks that the time and effort expended on OEP will not be recognized in the normal career progression processes, namely tenure and promotion."[undefined]

During a 2019 session of The Rebus Community's Office Hours, guests discussed the emerging acceptance of OER creation as a scholarly activity. Associate Professor of Mass Communications at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Mark Poepsel, described the need for OER to be recognized as such. "You're basically bringing brand-new literature as recent as possible to students and then, the final aspect of peer review was everybody who reads the book has the opportunity to open up a little tray on the right side and comment."[undefined]

Indeed, activities such as contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning, presenting at conferences, and writing grants for OER support are also beginning to emerge as research activities

for the purposes of promotion and tenure. See the list below for some examples of OEP in promotion and tenure policies. You may also consider using the content in [Appendix A](#) to see how different types of OEP fit into the three major P&T categories identified.

Examples of existing policies related to Open Education

- University of British Columbia: *[Guide to Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Procedures at UBC](#)* [pdf] (pp. 16, 19, 48)

- University of Massachusetts Amherst: *[Provost Annual Promotion and Tenure Memo](#)* [pdf] (p. 5)

- Miami University: *[Guidelines for Second Promotion of TCPL Faculty Members](#)*

Talking points and stakeholders

In crafting an argument about the inclusion of OER work in faculty promotion and tenure procedures, it's vitally important to consider the many stakeholders at your institution and to provide compelling evidence. Common stakeholders and their potential roles are listed below, though each institution's situation is unique.

Stakeholder	What they can do for you	When to contact
Provost	**Advocacy, encourage policy change, provide funding**	**Once some data is available, such as initial student cost savings or survey results. May be likely to get on board if need and/or early results can be demonstrated**
Academic deans	Advocacy, encourage policy change	
Department heads/chairs	Advocacy, encourage policy change	When seeking faculty involvement in grant programs and/or professional development offerings
Faculty Senate	Advocacy, pass a resolution, assist in codifying policy change	When seeking broad faculty support for initiatives and specific policy measures such as promotion & tenure requirements
Faculty union (if applicable)	Advocacy, encourage policy change	
Faculty handbook committee	Advocacy, codify policy change	When implementing approved policy changes
Faculty evaluation committees	Advocacy, implement policy change	When seeking broad faculty support for initiatives and specific policy measures such as promotion & tenure requirements
Student success & retention programs/committees	Advocacy	When seeking institutional support for OER as connected to academic success
Dean of Student Life	Advocacy	Early in growing an initiative to ensure student affairs support
Student accessibility services	Advocacy, expert guidance re: accessibility standards & procedures	When considering best practices and planning OER author training
Offices and organizations or committees supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice	Advocacy, training, and consultation re: DEI and social justice	When considering best practices and planning OER author training
Financial Aid	Advocacy, institutional data about student financial needs	When advocating for program growth to address student costs
Academic Advising	Advocacy, institutional data about student academic behaviors/preferences	When gathering information about students' academic behaviors related to textbooks, when advocating for course affordability marking
Registrar's Office	Advocacy, support for implementing course affordability marking	In the early stages of planning course affordability marking
Student government	Advocacy, pass a resolution, provide funding via student fees, student testimonials	When seeking student input via surveys or testimonials, early in the initiative's growth to encourage student voice
Campus bookstores	Advocacy, support for communicating textbook policies/procedures, support for print-on-demand services	Early in the initiative to ensure partnership and positive relationships, when planning details for capturing OER use data & printing services
Institutional research office	Advocacy, high-level support for data management/assessment	When planning how to gather and use program assessment data to measure impact
Distance and continuing education	Advocacy, opportunities for faculty professional development, instructional design expertise	When planning course design support, when identifying potential zero textbook cost programs
Dual enrollment and degree completion/ articulation programs	Advocacy, opportunities for zero degree programs	When identifying potential zero textbook cost programs
Information technology	Advocacy, support for technology and printing policies/needs	When planning for OER authoring/archiving platforms and determining printing & accessibility options

Tips for talking to stakeholders

1. **Clearly demonstrate how OER work aligns with the institution's strategic plan**. For example, OER adoption, modification, and creation can connect with institutional goals related to:

   - student success, including recruitment and retention,

   - diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice,

   - effective and engaging pedagogy,

   - community engagement, and

   - affordability & access to education.

2. **Provide clear evidence from the literature and/or local data for the impact of OER on institutional priorities**. A few examples are provided below:

   - Students in a course using an open textbook are more likely to do better in the course and less likely to withdraw from the course.[undefined] [undefined]

   - Students of color are less likely to be able to afford college textbooks.[undefined] Additionally, OER can more easily and quickly include diverse representations.

   - OER adoption supports access and affordability, saving students an average of more than $116 per course.[undefined]

   - Leverage any local data, such as student surveys about textbook affordability concerns and the relationship with academic success.

Appendix A: Fitting Open Education into P&T Requirements

The following section compiles types of Open Education work commonly handled by faculty and staff, and separates them into three major categories typically found in promotion and tenure documents: research, teaching, and service. When a type of work may fall under multiple categories, this is noted under the "this may also fall under…" section. In addition to categorizing these works, we have provided descriptions of how you might report on the impact and import of your work, through the collection of data or evidence to support your work's rigor.

The base for this Appendix was taken from "[OER in Tenure and Promotion](#)" by the DOERS3 team, including Amanda Coolidge, Andrew McKinney, and Deepak Shenoy, available under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License](#).

Research

Within promotion and tenure procedures, "Research" is a broad category, encompassing the development and publication of traditional scholarly works (books, journal articles, and conference proceedings), creative works, working documents, patents, and more. The scope and type of works included in this category will likely be influenced by one's disciplinary norms and expectations.

What you've done	Evidence to present	This may also fall under:
Publish a peer-reviewed Open textbook or other OER	**When creating OER, make it available to peers for their review. Document their reviews and include them in your dossier. The following is a [common rubric](#) used to review Open Textbooks.**	**Teaching**
Remix OER with original content to create a new, enhanced OER	Gather data on the adoption and use of the OER outside of your classroom, and any informal reviews that may have been contributed by peers in the Open Textbook Library. If the content is peer-reviewed, provide a peer review statement in your book's front or back matter and provide information in your dossier about the review process.	Teaching; Service
Publish an experimental or ongoing OER project	Gather data on the adoption and use of the OER outside of your classroom, and any informal reviews that may have been contributed by peers in the Open Textbook library	
Share curriculum materials as OER by openly licensing them and posting in an open access repository (e.g. institutional repository, OER repository)	Document downloads and usage statistics from those who have utilized your materials.	Service
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) about OER	Provide citations and links to work completed related to SoTL and OER. In this case, SoTL is defined as a type of research "focused on student learning, grounded in context, methodologically sound, conducted in partnership with students, and [shared through public means]."[undefined]	Teaching
non-SOTL Research into OER	Lit reviews on available OER in your discipline, book chapters on the history of OER, or case studies about your "path to adopting or creating OER" may fall into this category.	
Conference Presentations	Provide citations, links, recordings, and slides of the work done to disseminate OER knowledge	Service
Grant Writing	Provide excerpts from grant proposals, including budgetary requests and narratives as to how the grant will benefit the department and/or institution.	Service

Teaching

Within promotion and tenure procedures, "Teaching" typically refers to the preparation, execution, and refinement of the formal instruction processes handled by faculty or instructional staff at an institution, though it may also refer to leading professional development or workforce development training for parties external to one's institution.

What you've done	Evidence to present	This may also fall under:
Use OER or open access materials in a class or classes	**Survey and gather data on how the use of an OER in class affected student learning. A [similar study](#) was conducted in British Columbia as well as in the United States via the [Open Education Research Group](#). If you teach a subject like Math, note when professional societies such as AIM have officially endorsed the OER you are adopting**	
Disseminate knowledge about OER	Provide a list of workshops, webinars, presentations related to OER and OE advocacy	Service
Improve student outcomes	To best understand the improvement of student outcomes, increased student engagement, innovation, and reduction in cost-- survey students in your course. Review the survey and questions conducted in "[A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students.](#)"	
Innovation through open pedagogy or other pedagogies that leverage OER	Provide evidence of using Open Pedagogical Practices (OEP) in the classroom, including working with students to create OER, use of authentic assessments, or other innovative teaching practices facilitated by the use of OER.	
Increase student engagement through the use of OER or OEP	Survey and gather data on student engagement with course materials and course assignments. [Similar studies](#) have been conducted by scholars doing SoTL work for decades. It is important to note that student privacy and choice should be prioritized for any project seeking to quantify engagement in a course.	
Revise others' OER to be more relevant to student needs	Survey students in class to learn more about the impact the revised materials have had on their learning. A [similar study](#) was conducted in British Columbia.	Service
Revise your own OER to be more relevant to student needs	Provide evidence on what was revised or remixed to best suit the course learning outcomes. Survey students in class to learn about the impact the revised materials had on their learning A [similar study](#) was conducted in British Columbia.	

Service

Within promotion and tenure procedures, "Service" typically refers to work that is done "in service to" one's department, college, institution, or scholarly discipline. This may include participation on committees or in public outreach, volunteer work for editorial boards or in administrative agencies tied to one's discipline, or other aspects of community service.

What you've done	Evidence to present	This may also fall under:
Reduce material costs to students	**Document the cost of previous course materials used in your course against the new, lower (or no-cost) materials you have adopted or developed. For a bigger impact, consider calculating the total money students saved by multiplying your course enrollment by the previous cost of your course's materials.**	**Teaching**
Peer Review a new OER	Provide citations of the reviews conducted and proof of review (if available). For example, a "Peer reviewers" acknowledgment within the book or certificate of completion may be provided.	Research
Review an existing OER	Provide citations of the reviews conducted and links to where reviews can be found (i.e. in The Open Textbook Library)	
OER leadership (change culture, policy change, lead an initiative)	Provide a list of committees and specific actions you took related to OER and committee work. For tasks led, describe the initiative, provide evidence of change, and seek references and recommendations on the work completed.	
Mentor others in OEP	Provide recommendation letters from mentorships and via the mentee	

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Appendix A, "Fitting Open Education into P&T Requirements," was adapted from "OER in Tenure and Promotion" by the DOERS3 team, including Amanda Coolidge, Andrew McKinney, and Deepak Shenoy, available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License.

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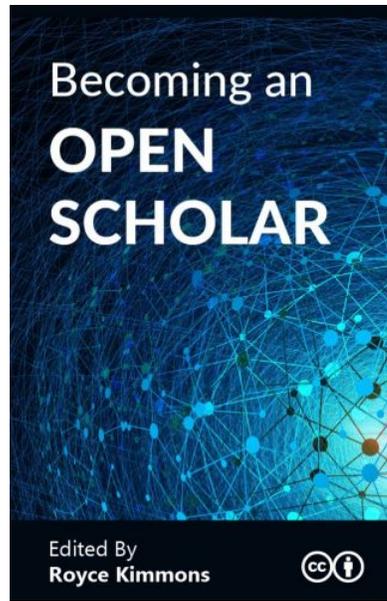
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