

No-cost textbooks: Developing low-barrier courses for Australian higher education

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Open Educational Resources (OER) have continued to gain significant global traction over the last decade, with research claiming the transformative power of these resources for broadening access and participation in Higher Education and driving new pedagogical approaches. An institutionally mature approach to open education has been viewed as one possible way to consider educational sustainability and the design and development of a curricula that purposefully supports the application of digital literacy skills required for 'twenty-first century learners'.

In 2015, the University of Southern Queensland funded four open textbook grants as a pilot project that aimed to not only provide students with free and open learning materials, but also purposefully support staff as open practitioners. As part of an institutional commitment to open education, this project actively sought recommendations and strategies from the grant participants to mainstream the creation, use, and reuse of openly-licensed resources within holistic course design. A community of inquiry model was used as the mechanism to support a discovery approach to the creation of open materials and qualitative participant data was gathered at key milestones during the grant through semi-structured interviews.