

Open Educational Resources

LabSpace makes many different open educational resources available to you, all of which you are encouraged to take away, re-use and remix to suit your needs as an educator. Broadly speaking, these resources fall into the categories of ‘content’ or ‘tools’.

Content

The content of the LabSpace comprises both the unit (structured self-study resources) as well as the individual assets which make up a unit.

The assets of a unit are the materials such as text, images, animation, audio clip etc and which are likely to be in different digital formats. In some cases a unit may consist of just one asset, but most will contain a mix.

As the amount of material in the LabSpace grows, so does the variety of the units available. However, the main types of unit that you will encounter are:

- Segments of current OU courses or support materials.
These comprise an XML-based front page providing a short description of the unit, its learning outcomes, hyperlinks to the sections of the unit and the unit’s assets (text, MP3, images etc). In these units the majority of the original third party material has been cleared and retained.
- Teaching texts from a discontinued OU course.
Such units contain an XML-based front page providing details of the original course and a hyperlinked list of PDF versions of the majority of the texts. Third party material has been removed.
- Audiovisual material from discontinued courses.
These units comprise an XML-based front page providing both a description and hyperlinked list of the audio or video files.
- Specially written guides.
These guides provide details on using the tools and technologies in the LabSpace.
- Knowledge maps.
These link together various different resources in a visual structure.
- Public FlashMeetings.
FlashMeetings created by fellow users of the site.
- Collaborative Units.
Groups of people and organisations can develop aspects of their project which will result in new open educational resources.

Formats

Units can be downloaded or taken away in several formats:

- Zip file of all the individual assets;
- Moodle back-up;
- OU XML;
- IMS Content package;
- RSS.

If you want to take away a unit further details are available [here](#).

At the asset level the major formats you will find are:

- Text in XML, PDF or Word;
- Animations in Flash;
- Images as GIF or JPEG;

- Audio files as MP3 and video files as MP4.

Tools

A variety of software tools are available from OpenLearn to help you communicate with others and to rework content. Two Knowledge Mapping tools are available: Compendium for personal use offline, and Cohere for use in your web browser. The FM tool provides simple video-conferencing through your web browser so you can have virtual meetings, and even replay and share them afterwards. Look in the left margin of any unit's homepage for the links to these tools.

How OpenLearn started

The OpenLearn story started in 2005 with a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Sharing our aim to open access to education for all, they agreed to help us set up the OpenLearn website.

Since 1969, The Open University has been a pioneer in making learning materials freely available through its successful partnership with the BBC. Many of our television and radio programmes are already supported by free internet activities and print materials. We wanted to use our knowledge of the latest technologies in education to extend our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. The vision was free online education.

Website development began in May 2006 and the site was launched in October 2006, with an aim to regularly add new content and features. OpenLearn now offers a full range of Open University subject areas from access to postgraduate level and has seen over 3 million visitors since launch. In April 2008 OpenLearn reached its target to have 5,400 learning hours of content in the LearningSpace and 8100 hours in the LabSpace. It continues to grow representing The Open University's commitment to opening access to education.

LearningSpace:

The part of Openlearn that is for anyone who wants to learn, whatever their educational needs and experience

Cohere:

Cohere is a Knowledge Mapping tool for OpenLearn. Working inside your web browser, it enables you to:

- record ideas, and add relevant websites.
- make meaningful connections between ideas.
- visualize the emerging network of your ideas, and the world's, in different ways.
- import social bookmark feeds from tools like del.icio.us or OpenLearn, ready for connecting.
- share maps as weblinks, or embed them in other websites.

The Open University - Open to people, places, methods and ideas

It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.

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