



## Open Education Resource Foundation (Ltd.)

*OER is a sustainable and renewable resource*

Private Bag 1910  
Dunedin 9054  
NEW ZEALAND

Telephone: +64 3 477 3114  
Fax: +64 3 471 6869  
Email: [info@oerfoundation.org](mailto:info@oerfoundation.org)  
Web: [www.oerfoundation.org](http://www.oerfoundation.org)

7 March 2015

Addressee

email:

Dear

### **Strategic invitation to join the OERu international innovation partnership**

**(Opening paragraph usually customised to align with local interest or strategic objective )**The OERu is an international network of post-secondary institutions using open education approaches to provide free learning opportunities with pathways to achieving credible credentials. Our innovation partnership is working together to achieve more sustainable education futures. I include a formal invitation to **<insert institution>** to consider joining our international innovation partnership.

The OER universitas (OERu) is an international network with a **philanthropic** mission to build a parallel learning universe to provide first-class, accessible and affordable education especially for learners excluded from the formal education sector using open online courses.

In short, the OERu model invites partner institutions to assemble two courses from existing OER and offering formal assessment services on a fee-for-service basis. In the near future OERu partners will have access to over seventy courses without incurring development cost for local reuse. The OERu provides a viable and sustainable alternative to the commercial MOOC collaborations.

The OERu innovation partnership comprises universities, polytechnics, community colleges, national and international agencies from six regions of the world who are cooperating to reduce the costs and time required to produce high-quality online courses, while working towards social inclusion using open education approaches (see Appendix A for our list of partners). Reach the untapped potential of under-served markets, and take the opportunity to diversify your curriculum in a cost-effective manner, especially for low enrolment courses. The implementation of the OERu is also a designated project of the UNESCO /Commonwealth of Learning and ICDE OER Chair network.

There are many benefits to joining the OERu network – but based on our research the top three reasons institutions join the network are:

1. to participate in an **international network** of “like-minded” institutions;
2. to participate in the **philanthropic mission** of widening access to more affordable education, especially for learners excluded from the formal higher education sector;
3. to retain a **competitive advantage** as open education approaches become more mainstream.

The OERu is an exemplar of sustainable innovation in higher education providing a low cost, low risk but high impact option for implementing higher education futures in a digital age.

## Organisation and decision-making autonomy of partner institutions

The OERu is coordinated by the [OER Foundation](#), an independent not-for-profit organisation that provides leadership, international networking and support for educational institutions to achieve **their** strategic objectives using open education approaches. Partner institutions are allocated a seat on the OERu Council of Chief Executive Officers who oversee strategic planning of the collaboration. Raise your institution's profile through WikiEducator, a flagship initiative of the OER Foundation and one of the world's largest and most productive educational wiki communities.

The OERu is first and foremost a **philanthropic collaboration** aimed at providing more affordable access to post-secondary education for learners currently excluded from the formal sector. It is smart philanthropy because engagement in the OERu model does not require "new" money and recurrent costs for formal assessment services are recouped through fee for services offered by OERu partner institutions.

A key feature and principle of engagement is that OERu anchor partners retain decision-making autonomy regarding which courses they will accredit and the fee structure for assessment and credential services they provide. All planning activities for the OERu are conducted openly and transparently in WikiEducator.

## Brief history of the OERu

The OERu concept was first tabled at an open meeting in February 2011 which was streamed live on the Internet with funding support from UNESCO.

In November of the same year, the founding anchor partners convened in Dunedin with representation from UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning where the concept and logic model for planning the implementation of the OERu was agreed. During 2012 and 2013 the network prototyped a small number of open online courses to facilitate planning discussions at the second meeting of anchor partners coinciding with the international launch of the OERu by Sir John Daniel on 1 November 2013. In November 2014, the OERu Council of Chief Executive Officers approved the [OERu Strategic Plan 2015 – 2017](#) developed through an open consultation process.

I provide links to the summary of OERu meetings which document the decisions of the network:

- [OER for assessment and credit for students meeting](#)
- [Report of OERu 2011.11 meeting of founding anchor partners](#)
- [Report of the OERu 2013.10 meeting of anchor partners](#)
- [Report of the OERu 2013.11 Transnational Qualifications and course articulation meeting](#)
- [Report on the inaugural OERu Council of Chief Executive Officers](#)
- [Report of the OERu 2014.11 meeting of anchor partnership](#)
- [Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the OERu Council of Chief Executive Officers](#)

## Membership categories

Anchor partners of the OERu network join the OER Foundation as a Silver or Gold [contributing members](#) of the OER Foundation. The majority of anchor partners have opted to join as 3-year gold members, qualifying for the multi-year membership discount (20%) equating to a net annual membership cost of US\$4,000 per annum. Membership fees can be paid annually.

Gold members designate an individual or group to work 1 day per week on institutional OER projects (i.e. a designated 0.2 full-time-equivalent OER staff member). Silver members who pay a higher fee are not required to contribute staff time.

## Institutional course contribution

At this time, OERu partners have agreed to assemble two courses from existing OERs. At the current levels of membership, OERu partners will have access to a minimum of 70 high quality courses in the near future. As the network grows, partners may collaboratively decide to reduce the number of course contributions or utilise surplus revenue generated from membership fees for the commissioned development of OER courses for the benefit of the network.

We also have a growing network of non-teaching institutions who have joined the OERu partnership, for example, BCcampus, eCampusAlberta, Contact North | Contact Nord in Canada and Ako Aotearoa, New Zealand's National Centre for Teaching Excellence. Non-teaching members are not required to assemble courses, but collaborate on projects of mutual interest for the network.

## Next steps

Understandably, prospective partners would you'd like to be fully informed before joining us. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have about the OERu.

The OERu website ([www.oeruniversitas.org](http://www.oeruniversitas.org)) also provides an excellent source of information and answers to frequently asked questions.

OER provides unprecedented opportunities for post-secondary education to become more affordable, more accessible and more efficient. This is an opportune time for your organisation to join the OERu network so as to benefit from sharing the tacit knowledge and experience we are gaining from the design and implementation of sustainable and scalable OER solutions.

With kind regards

Robin Day (PhD)  
Chair of the Board of Directors

Wayne Mackintosh (PhD)  
Director, OER Foundation  
UNESCO, ICDE Chair in OER



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO-COL Chair in  
Open Educational Resources  
New Zealand



## Appendix A OERu International Partners (January 2014)

The [OERu](#) is an international innovation partnership of universities, polytechnics, community colleges and non-teaching agencies who are widening access to more affordable education opportunities for all students worldwide using open education approaches. The OERu is also an official project of the UNESCO-COL OER chair network. The OERu philanthropic network draws its strength from our international diversity with thirty six partner institutions from six global regions.

### Africa

[University of South Africa](#) (South Africa)  
[North-West University](#) (South Africa)

### Asia

[S.N.D.T Women's University](#) (India)

### Europe

[Institute of Technology Sligo](#) (Ireland)  
[Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics](#) (Russian Federation)  
[Open University of Catalonia](#) (Spain)  
[The Open University](#) (United Kingdom)  
[University of South Wales](#) (United Kingdom)  
[University of the Highlands and Islands](#) (United Kingdom)

### Middle East

[Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University](#) (United Arab Emirates)

### North America

[Athabasca University](#) (Canada)  
[BCcampus](#) (Non teaching partner – Canada)  
[Contact North | Contact Nord](#) (Non teaching partner – Canada)  
[eCampusAlberta](#) (Non teaching partner – Canada)  
[Excelsior College](#) (USA)  
[Kwantlen Polytechnic University](#) (Canada)  
[Portage College](#) (Canada)  
[Southern New Hampshire University](#) (USA)  
[Thompson Rivers University](#) (Canada)  
[Thomas Edison State College](#) (USA)

### Oceania

[Ako Aotearoa](#) (Non teaching partner – New Zealand)  
[Charles Sturt University](#) (Australia)  
[Curtin University](#) (Australia)  
[Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology](#) (New Zealand)  
[NorthTec](#) (New Zealand)  
[OER Foundation](#) (Non teaching partner - New Zealand)  
[Otago Polytechnic](#) (New Zealand)  
[Unitec Institute of Technology](#) (New Zealand)  
[University of Canberra](#) (Australia)  
[University of Southern Queensland](#) (Australia)  
[University of the South Pacific](#) (Regional University - 12 Pacific Island States)  
[University of Tasmania](#) (Australia)  
[University of Wollongong](#) (Australia)  
[Waikato Institute of Technology](#) (New Zealand)

### International sponsors

Commonwealth of Learning  
UNESCO-COL OER Chair network.



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OTAGO  
POLYTECHNIC