SEARCH PHRASE RESEARCH
OERU

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1 – Introduction

The following Search Phrase Research incorporates Google search results for searches carried out in two of OERu.org's largest markets, the United States and India. In one example, research from Google Australia is used.

The aim of this research is to develop a list of recommended primary and secondary keywords that the OERu.org website can be search engine optimised for. Ideally, the keywords identified will be ones that have good volume and low competition with the potential to lead to conversion.

In evaluating these keywords we've assessed their Average Monthly Search Volumes and Keyword Difficulty (KD). The Keyword Difficulty metric is one that assesses the difficulty to compete organically for a particular keyword. It's a somewhat relative measure but broadly speaking the scores can be interpreted using the scale as follows:

- 0-35 = low difficulty
- 36-51 = medium difficulty
- 52-65 = high difficulty
- 66-100 = highest difficulty

In some instances, the Keyword Difficulty rating is not available for specific keywords.

We have also assessed the keyword performance of the OERu.org website and the keywords that are currently ranking. This is important to understand how Google comprehends the site in its current form.

The keywords we have researched are based on 'Sector terms' and 'Subject terms' and include commentary to complement our recommendations.

2 – Executive Summary

The Search Phrase Research revealed significant challenges in the task of competing for keywords relevant to the sector.

This is largely due to the highly competitive landscape that exists with some well-established providers offering online courses (both paid and free). This includes the likes of coursea.org, edx.org, lynda.com, moor.org and open.ac.uk to name a few. The strong Domain Authority score of these sites (an important metric for success in Google) is, in most instances, over twice that OERu.org. This has inflated Keyword Difficulty scores of many of the relevant keywords in the sector.

The competitiveness was the main reason why both 'Sector terms' and 'Subject terms' were researched. While the 'Sector terms' have to be optimised for, the ability to rank well for those terms are slim. The potential to create subject landing pages and build authority towards those pages, gives the OERu.org a more realistic chance to rank for keywords of relevance.

In total, 22 primary keywords with a total monthly search volume of 54,250 searches has been identified along with 23 secondary keywords with a total monthly search volume of 34,230 searches. The final list of primary and secondary keywords can be found at the end of this report.

The implementation of these keywords will work in a variety of ways including optimising the OERu.org website's current page titles, meta descriptions and page copy/content. Subject landing pages will also be created and optimised with the subject terms identified with internal linking used to build authority to those pages.

We will also continue to monitor relevant keywords for any potential opportunities in the future.

3 – OERu Current Ranking Keywords

3.1 – OERu.org current ranking keywords

Keyword	Country	Position	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
oer university	US	1	10	82.18
open educational resources university	US	1	10	82.21
oer foundation	US	2	20	60.21
open university resources	US	17	10	68.53
open university free resources	US	21	10	80.55
open school software	US	24	10	54.52
open foundation courses	US	25	70	70.69
open learning nz	US	31	10	60.77
software educational resources	US	34	40	71.21
oer website	US	34	10	73.27
website universitas	US	41	10	53.65
open university nz	US	43	10	72.30
life education and resource network	US	48	40	53.20
open university foundation	US	48	10	62.75
free online educational resources	US	49	20	78.92
new oer	US	50	10	70.08
www oer	US	51	20	49.77
open school software	IND	51	10	56.39
free open educational resources	US	55	30	71.29
commonwealth open university	US	59	10	63.41

universitas	US	61	480	60.23
oer logo	US	81	10	71.34
open resources	US	84	320	64.87
how to start an educational institute	IND	92	40	65.94

The OERu.org website was tested for keywords that it's currently ranking for in its two largest markets, India and the US.

The site was found to be ranking for 24 keywords in the US totalling a monthly search volume of 1,320. Outside the OER branded keywords, the best positioned keyword was 'open university resources' with a rank of 17 and a monthly search volume of 10. The next four best positioned keywords all contained the word 'open'.

The keywords with the highest volumes that the site is currently ranking for are 'universitas' with 480 searches (pos. 61) and 'open resources' with 320 searches (pos.84)

In India, the site was found to be ranking for 2 keywords with a total monthly search volume of 50. The keywords were 'open school software' and 'how to start and educational institute'.

From this one can conclude that Google recognises OERu.org as a site containing open educational resources, most probably as a direct result of the name of the foundation. Also of note, the word 'free' appears in only three keywords from the list above while 'courses' appears once. This suggests that Google isn't, at this present time, recognising the OERu.org website for its core service of providing free online courses for prospective students.

3.2 – Course.oeru.org current ranking keywords

Keyword	Country	Position	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
micro art course	US	7	50	70.44
micro courses	US	14	10	60.53
new age courses	US	26	10	64.94
oer course	US	61	30	70.42
open university australia free courses	US	62	10	74.01
free self study management course	US	70	40	72.60
coursea org	US	70	110	57.92
free online world history course	US	88	10	76.22

The course.oeru.org subdomain was also tested for keywords that it is currently ranking for.

In the US, 8 keywords were found with a total of 270 monthly searches, the best of which was 'micro art course' with 50 monthly searches (pos. 7). The highest volume keyword was 'coursea org' with 110 monthly searches (pos. 70).

This shows there is much room for improvement with respect to keywords that are currently ranking on the site.

4 – Search Phrase Research – Sector terms

4.1 – Accredited online courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
accredited online certification courses	US	40	80.02
accredited online college courses	US	720	75.73
accredited online college courses	IND	10	64.60
accredited online courses	US	390	76.76
accredited online courses	IND	30	65.73
accredited online courses for college credit	US	170	78.15
accredited online training courses	US	50	72.49
accredited short courses online	US	50	63.19
free accredited online courses	US	480	75.71
free online accounting courses accredited	US	50	78.48
free online accredited college courses	US	30	73.07

The 'accredited online courses' keywords showed good volume in the US for broad terms including 'accredited online college courses', 'accredited college courses' and 'free accredited online courses. The comparative volume for these or similar keywords in India were much lower suggesting the term is less familiar or had less demand in that market.

The KD for all three is very high as is the case for all the keywords in this category. Given the phrase is not used outside the US it may only be worthwhile optimising for courses of relevance to US students.

4.2 – Adult learning

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
adult learning	US	3600	76.44
adult learning center	US	9900	63.93
adult learning certificate	US	110	77.31
adult learning classes	US	170	66.15
adult learning courses	IND	10	-
adult learning courses	US	10	74.64
adult learning courses online	IND	10	-
adult learning courses online	US	30	78.05
adult learning model	US	210	75.62
adult learning online	US	110	72.28
adult learning online	IND	10	-
adult learning principles	US	2400	65.12
adult learning program	US	170	61.69
adult learning strategies	US	210	71.41
adult learning systems	US	320	73.25
adult learning techniques	US	140	65.57
adult learning theory	US	4400	69.89
adult learning theory and principles	US	210	73.95

The 'adult learning' category showed quite a large amount of volume with terms relating to the theory and principles of adult learning. These could be targeted with copy that targets the 'benefits of adult learning' for example. The 'adult learning online' keyword is the most likely to lead to conversion for OERu.org courses.

These phrases showed little search volume in India.

4.3 – Distance learning

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
distance learning	IND	2900	78.79
distance learning access course	US	70	51.28
distance learning centre courses	US	70	64.90
distance learning courses	US	260	66.85
distance learning courses	IND	1600	77.44
distance learning marketing courses	US	70	62.39
distance learning program	IND	590	74.58
distance learning programs	IND	480	77.28
distance learning universities	IND	480	77.43
free distance learning	IND	70	70.52
free distance learning college courses	US	20	73.01
free distance learning courses	IND	10	61.59
free distance learning courses with certificates	US	20	70.41
free distance learning degree courses	US	70	72.94
free online distance learning courses	US	10	73.19

Distance learning is a phrase that originates from the UK which is why it has high volume in India, a strong international student market for the UK. It also has some volume in the US at a comparatively lower KD (though still in the 'highest' bracket).

The volume in India alone however easily justifies a recommendation.

4.4 – e learning

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
course e learning	US	70	72.62
e learning	IND	22200	65.77
e learning	US	22200	65.47
e learning business courses	US	30	67.82
e learning courses	US	480	71.07
e learning courses	IND	390	71.77
e learning courses online	US	40	64.59
e learning degree courses online	US	50	78.75
e learning management courses	US	30	65.64
free e learning courses online	IND	50	68.89
interactive e learning courses	US	70	56.14
university e learning courses	US	20	79.33

The 'e learning' category shows huge volume for the seed word but lower for the keyword with intent towards study being 'e learning courses'.

The volume isn't quite as high in India compared to 'distance learning' though the KD is lower presenting a more attainable opportunity.

4.5 – Free online courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online college courses	US	6600	77.45
free online college courses for senior citizens	US	390	72.93
free online courses	US	18100	79.17
free online courses	IND	12100	68.42
free online courses for adults	US	480	81.83
free online courses for credit	US	260	78.17
free online courses with certificate of completion	US	2900	68.48
free online courses with certificates	US	5400	76.97
free online courses with certificates	IND	9900	72.30
free online degree courses with certificates	US	320	74.17
free online university courses	US	880	78.76
free online university courses	IND	140	70.39
free online writing courses	US	1300	72.04
free short online courses with certificate	US	880	73.60

The 'free online courses' group of keywords revealed high volume searches across both the US and India. Interestingly 'free online courses' in India had one of the lower KD in the category. The high volume of 'free online courses with certificates' in both countries shows the demand for this keyword and indicates that this is seen as an appealing selling point. 'Certificate of completion' also ranks well in the US.

This group of keywords will be difficult to rank for but being recognised as a service/provider of 'free online courses' by Google would be hugely beneficial.

4.6 – Free educational resources

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
careers education resources free	US	70	59.14
free educational resources	US	140	69.42
free educational resources	IND	10	-
free educational resources for parents	US	70	69.82
free educational resources for students	US	30	70.83
free home education resources	US	70	59.74
free home education resources uk	US	10	52.77
free online educational resources	US	20	75.13
free open educational resources	US	30	70.70

Given the OERu.org site is currently ranking for terms around 'educational resources' it seemed appropriate to assess the same with the 'free' modifier. The phrase itself is quite specified so the low numbers are not necessarily a surprise. In India, the phrase barely registers at all.

It is nevertheless worth including as a recommended keyword given how close the phrase is to others the site is currently ranking for.

4.7 – Online certificate courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online business courses with certificates	US	320	72.81
free online degree courses with certificates	US	320	74.17
free online entrepreneurship courses with certificates	US	110	78.87
free online management courses with certificates	US	320	73.11
free online marketing courses with certificates	US	210	70.23
free short online courses with certificate	US	880	73.07
online business courses with certificates	US	110	74.81
online certificate courses	US	2400	77.03
online certificate courses	IND	8100	76.90
project management certification online courses	US	170	78.45

With interest earlier identified around courses with certificates, 'online certificate courses' was researched as a keyword category. Volume and KD was high for 'online certificate courses' in both the US and India as the seed keyword. The KD makes these challenging but certificates are available with OERu courses, a fact that should be highlighted on the site.

There were some other interesting observations like the high volume of searches with the added modifier of 'certificate of completion' in the US. This was however not found in India. Also of note was the presence of searches in this category with subject/discipline modifiers.

4.8 – Online learning courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online learning courses	US	320	79.07
free online learning courses	IND	390	72.36
free online learning sites	US	260	78.84
learn online	US	480	78.73
online learning	US	8100	77.72
online learning courses	US	390	78.58
online learning courses	IND	590	71.69
online learning exchange	US	320	65.55
online learning online education	US	110	78.93
online learning platforms	US	880	74.26
online learning sites	US	390	78.91
online learning system	US	110	69.55
online learning tools	US	140	68.75
online learning videos	US	320	78.01
online learning websites	US	260	80.51

The 'online learning courses' category showed reasonable volume across the main seed keyword and complementary keywords. KD is about 10% higher for the US market compared to India which is not too dissimilar from other categories in the report.

This category represents another way in which OERu's courses could be phrased and presented.

4.8 – Online training courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online career training courses	US	90	75.30
free online training courses	US	210	74.19
free online training courses	IND	20	69.74
free training courses online with certificates	US	590	73.03
online business training courses	US	90	75.14
online courses for training and development	US	70	77.87
online training courses	US	720	74.80
online training courses	IND	720	73.60
free online career training courses	US	90	75.30

The 'online training courses' category of keywords implies a more vocational context which is relevant to many of the courses at OERu. Volume and KD numbers were almost identical for the seed keyword 'online training courses' across both markets. Curiously, there was very little volume for 'free online training courses' in India.

This may be a keyword that is selectively applied depending on the course itself.

4.9 - Professional development

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online professional development courses	US	10	76.11
free professional development courses	US	10	74.68
free professional development online courses	US	10	76.09
online professional development courses	US	210	75.70
online professional development courses	IND	30	63.33
professional development courses	US	480	78.05
professional development courses	IND	50	68.60
professional development free online courses	US	40	77.29
professional development training courses	US	140	69.92
personal development courses	US	260	71.98
personal development courses	IND	260	71.60

The 'professional development' category presents another vocational opportunity for keywords. The demand for these keywords is much lower in India compared to the US where there is possibly a greater emphasis on this in the workplace. Of these, the keyword options with the 'online' modifier seem much more relevant to OERu.org and more likely to acquire successful conversions.

Personal development has also been added to this section for reference despite the keyword seeming less relevant with respect to the OERu courses offered.

4.10 – Short online courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
accredited short courses online	US	50	63.19
free online short courses with certificate of completion	US	30	65.43
free short online courses with certificate	US	880	73.07
free short term courses online	US	20	72.75
micro art course	US	50	73.00
micro chemistry course	US	30	75.01
micro learning courses	US	30	53.49
online marketing short courses	US	20	69.81
short business courses online free	US	50	73.41
short courses online	US	390	61.55
short courses online	IND	110	56.23
short online courses with certificate	US	40	69.68
short term certificate courses online	US	110	72.69

Given that most of the OERu.org courses are micro courses (and therefore short by nature) it seemed reasonable to look at 'short online courses' for keyword opportunities. Interestingly, this revealed the lowest KD keyword 'short courses online' for the US market for all the Educational Terms covered. The corresponding keyword in India was about 10% below this as well.

Although perhaps not as nuanced and specific as other keywords like 'distance learning' and 'online learning' it is perhaps the most realistic one that OERu.org might rank for.

5 – Search Phrase Research – Subject terms

5.1 – Asia Pacific studies

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
asia pacific	IND	5400	59.05
asia pacific	US	6600	76.11
asia pacific security studies	US	30	76.50
asia pacific studies	US	10	75.08
asia pacific studies	AUS	30	-
china and asia pacific studies	US	50	-

The number of current courses offered that are relevant to Asia and the Pacific and, in fact, have the exact phrasing in their course titles justified keyword research into this category as a potential landing page.

Although there is a large search volume into 'asia pacific' this does not translate into the same with the modifiers for study ('asia pacific course' was tested with no results). A test was also done on this phrase for the Australian market which showed fractionally more volume with the studies modifier.

As this is a fairly niche topic of study it is perhaps not surprising that it doesn't have high volume. It nevertheless is an appropriately labelled category for a good portion of the current OERu.org courses offered.

5.2 – Business courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
business courses	IND	880	70.66
business courses	US	1600	77.58
business management courses	IND	2400	70.96
business management courses	US	1000	71.07
business management courses online	IND	140	63.96
business management courses online	US	720	73.85
business related courses	IND	260	72.68
business related courses	US	30	77.32
business studies online course	US	20	70.79
free business studies courses online	US	10	72.13
free online business courses	US	1000	76.59
free online business courses	IND	10	69.53
online business courses	IND	210	76.11
online business courses	US	1900	76.69

'Business courses' and 'online business courses' present quite broad phrases to categorise courses but important ones in terms of search volume across both US and India. 'Business management courses' also has high volume and could been an option as a landing page that includes both business and management courses.

Separating these however seems like the better strategy as it allows the OERu.org site, two opportunities to rank for keywords instead of one.

5.3 – Entrepreneurship courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online entrepreneurship courses	US	110	78.49
free online entrepreneurship courses	IND	10	-
free online entrepreneurship courses with certificates	US	110	78.93
free online entrepreneurship courses with certificates	IND	10	-
free startup courses	US	50	-
online entrepreneurship courses	US	260	81.94
online entrepreneurship courses	IND	210	78.77
social entrepreneurship online course	US	30	71.43
social entrepreneurship online course	IND	40	-
startup course	US	10	58.29
startup course	IND	140	65.02
startup online course	US	20	-
startup online course	IND	20	-

The study of Entrepreneurship is one that is still emerging which is why the volumes aren't as high as some of the broader disciplines looked at. The competition is very high however in both markets. As there are good OERu.org courses in entrepreneurship it would be worthwhile optimising for these phrases in the hope Google recognises it for such.

Also recommended is 'startup course' for India. This has nearly as high volume but much lower KD so could be an attainable phrase to target, course to course.

5.4 – Foundation courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
foundation course	IND	2900	54.13
foundation course	US	210	69.41

'Foundation courses' keywords are currently ranking on the OERu.org website so it makes sense to build upon an area that is already experiencing some success. Quite a good number of the OERu.org courses can also be categorised in this way.

Foundation courses are more prevalent in Commonwealth countries. This explains the considerable difference in volume between India and the US. Foundation courses are also interpreted and function in slightly different ways across some international markets. It would be important to precisely explain what the OERu.org foundation courses are, how the work and what they offer so students of those courses are fully aware.

The KD for India is comparatively low which is encouraging.

5.5 – Humanities courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
humanities courses	US	1900	80.81
humanities courses	IND	2400	78.29

There are a good number of OERu.org courses that would sit under a humanities category for which there is strong volume. There is also high KD for these terms in both the US and India which would present a challenge.

One strategy to be more competitive in this respect would be to create sub categories like 'World History', 'Forensic Psychology' etc in the 'Humanities' category. This would in turn add more authority to the 'Humanities' page.

5.6 – Management courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online management courses	US	210	73.94
free online management courses	IND	170	73.33
free online management courses with certificates	US	320	73.78
free online management courses with certificates	IND	260	71.17
online management courses	US	1000	71.65
online management courses	IND	480	67.69

Creating a distinct category is advised given high volume and comparatively reasonable KD for 'online management courses'. It is also worth noting there is good volume for similar searches with 'free' and 'certificates' modifiers without too much of an increase in KD.

As stated in early examples, these attributes can easily be emphasised in content.

5.7 – Marketing courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free marketing courses	US	320	75.58
free marketing courses	IND	20	76.24
free online marketing courses	IND	210	73.89
free online marketing courses	US	590	74.15
free online marketing courses with certificates	US	210	71.27
online marketing courses	IND	1300	69.47

online marketing courses	US	1900	77.52

The numerous OERu.org marketing courses seemed to also justify its own category which would otherwise belong to the management category. For India the most accessible keyword with respect to KD was the seed keyword of 'online marketing courses' whilst modifiers generally made the keyword more accessible in the US.

5.8 – Project management courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
free online courses for project management certificate	US	10	72.60
free online project management courses with certificates	IND	40	67.46
project management courses online	US	1300	78.50
project management courses online	IND	320	71.46
project management courses online free	IND	210	69.70
project management courses online free	US	480	74.41

Another category with a number of courses for OERu.org is 'project management' and the data reveals strong volume, especially in the US for this keyword. The competition is also high though slightly less so when the modifier 'free' is added.

This, of course, is positive due to the fact that the OERu.org courses are free.

5.9 – Writing courses

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
academic writing course	US	70	70.80
academic writing course	IND	70	59.66
english writing course online	IND	110	-
english writing course online	US	110	-
free online writing courses	IND	140	60.92
free online writing courses	US	1300	60.99
online college writing courses	IND	90	-
online college writing courses	US	10	72.88
online writing courses	IND	320	73.25
online writing courses	US	2400	68.19

There is good demand for writing courses in the US which makes it a category worth including on its own merit. Pleasingly, the KD for 'free online writing courses' in both markets is comparatively accessible which suits the traits of the OERu.org courses.

6 – Search Phrase Research – Recommended terms

6.1 – Primary Keywords

The keywords that we suggest prioritising are:

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
adult learning online	US	110	72.28
asia pacific studies	US	10	75.09
business courses	IND	880	70.66
distance learning courses	IND	1600	77.44
e learning courses	US	480	71.07
e learning courses	IND	390	71.77
foundation course	IND	2900	54.14
foundation course	US	210	69.41
free educational resources	US	140	69.42
free online courses	US	18100	79.17
free online courses	IND	12100	68.42
free online writing courses	US	1300	60.99
online business courses	US	1900	76.69
online certificate courses	US	2400	77.03
online certificate courses	IND	8100	76.90
online entrepreneurship courses	IND	210	78.77
online management courses	US	1000	71.65
online management courses	IND	480	67.69
online marketing courses	IND	1300	69.47
short courses online	US	390	61.55
short courses online	IND	110	56.23
startup course	IND	140	65.02

6.2 – Secondary Keywords

We also will have a focus on the following keywords:

Keyword	Country	Avg. Volume (mth)	Keyword Difficulty (KD)
accredited online college courses	US	720	75.73
accredited online courses	US	390	76.76
adult learning principles	US	2400	65.12
business courses	US	1600	77.58
distance learning courses	US	260	66.85
free accredited online courses	US	480	75.71
free online courses with certificate of completion	US	2900	68.48
free online courses with certificates	US	5400	76.97
free online courses with certificates	IND	9900	72.30
free online learning courses	US	320	79.07
free online learning courses	IND	390	72.36
free online writing courses	IND	140	60.92
humanities courses	US	1900	80.81
humanities courses	IND	2400	78.29
online business courses	IND	210	76.11
online entrepreneurship courses	US	260	81.94
online learning courses	US	390	78.58
online learning courses	IND	590	71.69
online marketing courses	US	1900	77.52
online professional development courses	US	210	75.70
online professional	IND	30	63.33

development courses			
online training courses	US	720	74.80
online training courses	IND	720	73.60