

UNESCO/Commonwealth of Learning Chairs in OER

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There are now two UNESCO/COL Chairs in OER, one in Canada at Athabasca University (Rory McGreal) and the other in New Zealand at Otago Polytechnic (Wayne Mackintosh). They are working with the UNESCO Chair in OER at the Dutch Open University (Fred Mulder) and the UNESCO Chair in OER at the University of Campinas (Tel Amiel) Brazil.

The co-operating Chairs have agreed on a global Plan of Action that can add value to the voluminous worldwide activity that is already there in the field of OER.

We distinguish *four main Lines of Action, each championed by one of the Chairs*:

1. [Global OER Graduate Network](#) (Open University of the Netherlands);
2. [OER Knowledge Cloud](#) (Athabasca University);
3. [The OER university](#) (Otago Polytechnic); and
4. K12 initiatives (University of Campinas) to come.

and *two enabling Lines of Action*:

5. [Global OER Map](#) of national and institutional OER initiatives
6. Global balance in the network of UNESCO Chairs in OER, connected in a [UNESCO UNITWIN](#) network.

1. **Global OER Graduate Network**

Goals of the GO-GN

1. substantially expand the OER research base;
2. establish good quality PhD trajectories;
3. find these PhD trajectories distributed among universities in a variety of societies in the different continents around the world (global balance);
4. connect the research projects and researchers through a global learning network; and
5. provide free and easy access to the generated knowledge through papers, conference presentations, dissertations, as well as reports and publications for a broader audience.

2. **OER Knowledge Cloud**

The OER Knowledge Cloud is a growing repository of more than 600 scholarly research articles, reports and other resources useful to researchers studying various phenomena related to open educational resources. It has been established to support the Global OER Graduate Network and other OER researchers. It consists of a full text search engine and other feature such as browsing by keyword, author, title, etc. to enable searching of relevant content. You can also search by Creative Commons licence, region or a specific country.

3. **The OER university**

The Open Educational Resource university (OERu) is a virtual collaboration of [like-minded institutions](#) committed to creating flexible pathways for OER learners to gain formal academic credit. OERu aims to provide free learning to all students worldwide using OER learning materials with pathways to gain credible qualifications from recognised education institutions. It is rooted in the community service and outreach mission to develop a parallel learning universe to augment and add value to traditional delivery systems in post-secondary education. Through the community service mission of participating institutions the OERu will open pathways for learners to earn formal academic credit and pay reduced fees for assessment and credit.

4. K12 Initiatives

This Brazilian initiative is getting underway, with the goal of conducting research into the implementation of OER at the K12 (primary/secondary) school level.

5. Global OER Map

This project aims to develop a global map of the OER landscape showing institutional initiatives (and national when available) as a starting point. This OER world map can then be enhanced as the OER community develops. There are already several global maps that have been created for specific OER groups such as the [Open Courseware Consortium](#) and the UK Open University OLnet project [Evidence Hub](#).

6. Global Balance UNITWIN

The Chairs are working together to ensure that there is a global balance in the UNESCO/COL Chair programme. Chairs are now in place (or being put in place) in North America, Europe, Oceania and South America. These Chairs are actively promoting the establishment of other Chairs in Asia and Africa. Through this UNESCO UNITWIN network, higher education and research institutions all over the globe can work together and pool their resources, both human and material, to address pressing challenges and contribute to the development of an OER ecosystem. The Network of OER Chairs can serve as think tanks and as bridge builders between academia, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making. They have already proven useful in informing policy decisions, establishing new OER initiatives, generating innovation through research and contributing to the enrichment of existing OER programmes while promoting cultural diversity. In areas suffering from a dearth of expertise, the OER Chairs have been contributing to strengthening North-South-South cooperation.