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## ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE OF OPEN EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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### Background

Australia has a long history in open education both as an early pioneer and in delivery at scale, successfully facilitating access to a university education for millions of students from diverse backgrounds that could not access traditional campus-based education. Looking back over the changing definitions, changing channels and changing purposes provides a landscape for consideration of new directions in Australian open education. Open has morphed through three phases: (a) free of location or time constraints; (b) free of pre-requisites; (c) free of cost.

Australia currently lags the rest of the world in the third phase, fostering use of cost-free open educational resources and courses. This is an anachronism in the context of a higher education sector and an overall economy that has moved decisively into a digital plane.

The previous two phases were supported and facilitated by government strategy and substantial funding. So far, the third phase has no vision or backing at the national level. Sir John Daniel, in a study for the Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO about national policies identified Australia as one of the countries without a national policy. Whilst the Australian government has put resources and support behind its aspiration to facilitate open access and reuse of Australia's *publicly funded research resources* via the Australian Government's Open Access and Licensing Framework (AUSGOAL) the reform process has not significantly moved to *embrace educational resources*.

The benefits of open education for Australia include:

- economies of scale through collaborative co-production of learning resources;
- opportunity to raise quality of learning at decreased time and financial cost;
- provision of learning materials that are richer, and more appropriate to the contexts and styles of learning of an increasingly diverse student community;
- opportunity to provide learning to diverse disadvantaged communities globally; to the remote and regional areas of Australia;
- promote greater collaboration between Universities in fostering peer review and collegial development of learning materials;
- greater levels of transparency into the teaching process.

Open Education can also play an important role in positioning Australian higher education on the global stage through showcasing the expertise contained within our Universities.

## **Project OpenEdOz**

In 2014, the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching funded a national project called OpenEdOz ([openedo.org](http://openedo.org)) which produced a roadmap towards a national policy for open education. The project involved three important partner institutions; each of which provided key expertise needed for the successful completion of the project. The partner universities were: Charles Sturt University (lead), the University of Technology Sydney, and the University of Tasmania.

The project team, composed of five members from the universities above, were guided by the project's reference group and the evaluator, who were OEP experts recognised nationally and internationally (for more information about the project team, visit the website (<http://openedo.org>)).


The project conducted think tanks and sourced case studies which might provide signposts for national action.

From analysis of 22 case studies of open education practices and outcomes from the Think Tanks, the project derived three key recommendations for national action (see final report, 2016).

1. Approve a national strategy to leverage contemporary information technology for improving productivity of higher education through use of Open Educational Resources.
2. Fund a national body to drive the strategy development.
3. Engage relevant national organisations in implementation of elements of the strategy as per the OpenEdOz National Roadmap.

## **Case Study Analysis**

In order to better target the types of case studies that would be of benefit to the project, a Theme Matrix was developed and continuously modified as case studies were developed (see theme matrix: <http://openedo.org/case-study-themes-2/>). The initial themes were derived from international literature and projects on OER policy including 2012 Paris OER Declaration (2012), Commonwealth of Learning (2015), Policies for OER Uptake project (POERUP, 2014), and Open Education Quality Initiative (2011). The top 11 OER themes that emerged from this analysis were: (a) Student Voice; (b) Institutional Strategy; (c) National Policy; (d) Student Co-creation; (e) Course offered as OER; Degree design based on OER; (f) Module based on OER; (g) Credit Transfer; (h) Accreditation of informal & non-formal learning; (i) Open Licensing and (j) Open Textbooks. The Case Study Theme Matrix in Figure 1 shows the themes and sub-themes by case study institution. It is available on the project website (<http://openedo.org>).



	Charles Sturt University	Charles Sturt University	University of Tasmania	University of Tasmania	University of Technology Sydney	University of Technology Sydney	University of Technology Sydney	Higher ED Standards Project	Swinburne University	University of Southern Queensland	Western Sydney University	University of Wollongong	BCampus	Thompson Rivers University	HEA/ISC	Canterbury University	Otago Polytechnic	University of Rwanda	Africa Nazarene University	University of Cape Town	Tacoma Community College
<b>STUDENT VOICE</b> Lower costs, Access to university																					
<b>INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY</b> Access to content expertise, New markets, Staff training																					
<b>NATIONAL STRATEGY</b> Province/state policy Lower cost of entry to low SES students																					
<b>STUDENT CO-CREATION</b> Authentic learning experience, Student Voice																					
<b>COURSE OFFERED AS OER</b> Philanthropic mission, New markets, Teacher voice																					
<b>DEGREE DESIGN BASED ON OER</b> Lower costs for university Staff training, Role of Libraries																					
<b>MODULE BASED ON OER</b> International curriculum Teacher voice																					
<b>CREDIT TRANSFER</b> Standards & Quality Transnational Accreditation Framework																					
<b>ACCREDITATION OF INFORMAL &amp; NON-FORMAL LEARNING</b> Standards & Quality, Competency-based assessment, RPL																					
<b>OPEN LICENSING</b> Moral position Role of Libraries																					
<b>OPEN TEXTBOOKS</b> Lower costs for students																					

Figure 1. Case Study Theme Matrix

## National Roadmap

Twenty-five individual strategies that could contribute to national action are provided in the OpenEdOz National Roadmap which has ten signposts: Awareness, Students, Teachers, Standards, IP & Copyright, ICT Infrastructure, Research, Discoverability, Collaboration and Sustainability.

The National Policy Roadmap is intended to directly support the Australia federal government to take advantage of the full potential of Open Education for the Australian higher education sector. The project team hope that this Roadmap will further inform national level decision makers of the issues to consider while engaging with Open Educational Practices. We also hope this roadmap will encourage the development of OEP focused policies and regulations at national levels, so that the Australian higher education will be able to fully take advantage of the already globally recognised opportunities of OEP. In addition, national education bodies need to be fully engaged as the drivers of Australia's an Open Education Strategy for universities. We have invited them to place OEP firmly on their agenda but to do so with a practical and deep understanding of what constitutes "open".

Table 1: Excerpt from National Roadmap

Signpost	Contributing Strategies
Advocacy	1. Organise Australian summits, conferences, workshops and develop/collect resources to raise awareness of the importance of open education at the intersection of university business models and university knowledge transfer/social justice commitments
Students	2. Define new Open Education Literacies as part of Digital Literacies and Information Literacies
	3. Research and evaluate student real use and understanding of open resources and open courses in particular their expertise in creation and their understanding of academic integrity in acknowledgment of open sources
Teachers	4. Review foundation teaching courses for university teachers to facilitate understanding of open educational practice and model best practice by using open content in the courses
	5. Weight awards and grants towards teachers' adaptation and use of OER (versus development of new OERs)
	6. Encourage and reward the diversity of academic teaching-related roles that flow from potential disaggregation of university services e.g. assessment and RPL expertise
	7. Foster community of practice for open resources developers and build their understanding of Open Design
Standards	8. Review institutional strategic plans, course policies and RPL policies in light of impact of open content and student-driven degrees on degree pathways, course coherence, evidence of meeting standards
Intellectual Property, Licensing & Copyright	9. Intellectual property in education and widely disseminate understanding of the reform
	10. Facilitate wider use of Creative Commons licensing – refer universities & academics to forthcoming OLT Toolkit
	11. Promote and prepare for libraries role in curating both open and closed resources, in particular student-created open resources
	12. Promote development and adoption of open textbooks
	13. Establish national support for peer review of open educational content
ICT Infrastructure	14. Accelerate roll-out of broadband access to regional areas in order that no learner is disadvantaged in open use of high quality digital resources by university courses
	15. Provide access to a free open platform for delivering open courses
	16. Underpin portfolio degrees and student mobility by confirming national collaboration on Digital Student Data Project as per Groningen Declaration
Research	17. Facilitate on-going educational research and benchmarking on open education and open design in conjunction with international projects
Discoverability	18. Build on Australia's progress with Open Access for research outputs by adding mechanisms, metadata and rewards for sharing educational resources
	19. Create <i>open librarian</i> roles and <i>open educational developer</i> roles for working with academics to discover, evaluate and adapt OERs
	20. Build on past experience nationally and internationally that discoverability is best enhanced via discipline-based approaches
Collaboration	21. Foster national and international partnerships for open education and revisit potential broader role for Open Universities Australia
	22. Support collaboration across professional groups e.g. librarians, educational technologists, academic developers
	23. Foster OEP as a platform for Regional Development
	24. Establish productive partnerships with museums and galleries in curating content for openness
Sustainability	25. Promote OERs as supportive of universities' sustainability goals including efficiencies in production of digital learning resources

## References

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2. Wills, S., Alexander, S., & Sadler, D. (2016). *Students, Universities & Open Education, Final report 2016*. Sydney, Australia Australian Government Office for Learning & Teaching. Retrieved February 4, 2017, from <http://openedoz.org/resources/>

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