



Open and Affordable Course Materials

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning materials that have been released either in the public domain or under an intellectual property license permitting free use, modification, and redistribution by others. These can include textbooks, videos, quizzes, lesson plans, and more. OERs often use open licenses, such as Creative Commons, or exist in the public domain, to grant permissions for tasks like copying, modifying, and redistributing the material.

Affordable course materials are textbooks, readings, and other learning resources that are low-cost or free for students to access. The University System of Georgia defines low-cost materials as \$40 or less per student per course. These materials help reduce the financial burden of education while still supporting high-quality teaching and learning. This may include:

- OER, which are free through open licenses
- Library-licenses content, including eBooks or articles that are free for students to access through library subscriptions
- Low-cost publisher materials and negotiated discounts
- Faculty-created content that has not been released under an open intellectual property license (see OER, above)

It's important to note that something can use a traditional copyright and still be affordable, and that not all affordable materials are OERs. A librarian can help with differentiating the two if needed!

WHY OER?

OER are typically licensed to allow free use and modification. This flexibility empowers instructors to adapt, combine, and update materials to fit specific course goals, incorporate current research, and even collaborate with students to co-create resources.

Faculty also turn to OER because they help offset the steep and rising costs of traditional textbooks. Textbook expenses place a significant burden on students, especially Pell Grant recipients, part-time learners, and others, and these financial pressures can directly undermine academic success.

Beyond affordability, OER adoption has measurable academic benefits. A large-scale University of Georgia study involving over 21,000 students found that courses using OER led to higher grades and reduced rates of D, F, and Withdrawal across the board, with especially strong gains for students most at risk of not completing their degrees.¹

¹ Colvard NB, Watson CE, Park H. (2018). The Impact of Open Educational Resources on Various Student Success Metrics. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 30(2), 262-276.

CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSES

OERs often carry Creative Commons licenses to clearly indicate how they can be used, shared, and adapted. Creative Commons licenses are free, standardized copyright licenses that allow creators to grant others permission to use their work under specific conditions (see the different licenses below). With these licenses, users don't need to request permission each time they want to reuse the material.

CC BY (ATTRIBUTION)

You can use, share, and adapt the work (even commercially) as long as you give credit to the creator.

CC BY-SA (ATTRIBUTION-SHARE ALIKE)

You can adapt and share the work (even commercially) but you must credit the creator and license your new work under the same terms.

CC BY-ND (ATTRIBUTION-NO DERIVATIVES)

You can reuse the work (even commercially) but you cannot make any changes, and you must credit the creator.

CC BY-NC (ATTRIBUTION-NON-COMMERCIAL)

You can use and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes only, with credit to the creator.

CC BY-NC-SA (ATTRIBUTION-NON-COMMERCIAL-SHARE ALIKE)

You can adapt and share the work non-commercially, but you must credit the creator and license your new work under the same terms.

CC BY-NC-ND (ATTRIBUTION-NON-COMMERCIAL-NO DERIVATIVES)

You can share the work non-commercially, without changes, and with credit to the creator. This is the most restrictive license, and many in the OER community do not consider materials with this license to be true OERs, as they cannot be adapted/modified.

UGA'S AFFORDABLE LEARNING GEORGIA (ALG) CHAMPIONS

ALG Champions are specialists and advocates for affordable learning at each USG institution. They collaborate to help their campus community learn about open and affordable resources, understand open licensing, and explore ways to enhance instruction through open pedagogy. If you would like more information, here are the people you can reach out to:

Faculty Champion: Faculty Champions work to inform faculty, staff, and students about ALG and the benefits of OER.

Megan Mittelstadt, megan.mittelstadt@uga.edu

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Library Champion: Library Champions collaborate with Faculty and Design Champions to identify, evaluate, and provide access to affordable, library-subscribed, and open educational resources. They also help inform faculty, staff, and students about ALG and OER.

Melody Rood, melody.rood@uga.edu

Design Champion: Design Champions partner with Faculty and Library Champions to share information about OER-enabled pedagogy. They assist in identifying ways to implement OER in courses and also support outreach about ALG and OER.

James Castle, jcastle@uga.edu



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