

Appendix 1: Summary of Focus Groups

Background

Three focus groups were held for the OpenSpires project; 17 July 2009, 30 September 2009 and 4 November 2009. Invitations were sent out to the podcasters mailing list (c. 300 names) and other academics or departmental staff that the project team were in contact with.

The purpose of the focus groups was to collect 'hearts and minds' views, to provide an open forum for the project team to collect feedback from potential podcasters (positive and negative). This feedback could then inform the approach taken by the project team.

It was very difficult to select a time when all interested parties and members of the project team could attend which affected the numbers attending. In all there were twelve attendees, these were: Lecturer from the Department of Earth Sciences, Communications Officer from the Department of Politics and International Relations, Lecturer from the Department of Education, IT Coordinator and Training Officer from the Department of Inorganic Chemistry, Lecturer from the Department of Continuing Education, Lecturer from the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, Lecturer from the Department of Phonetics, Lecturer from the Faculty of Classics, Professor from the Faculty of Philosophy, Professor from the Faculty of Classics, Lecturer from the Oriental Institute. However, on reflection, smaller groups benefitted the discussion and meant that all attendees had a chance to share their views.

All three sessions followed a similar format: a short presentation about the project introducing the aims and objectives and explaining open educational resources and Creative Commons. Then the discussion was opened up, sometimes prompted by specific questions from the project team.

Feedback received from attendees

The feedback and comments given at the groups is provided below.

01 noted that the research community within their subject area was anything but open. Open publication of academic papers was strongly resisted with much more emphasis going on getting published in journals with a high "impact factor".

02 joked that once they had been recorded performing their entire teaching repertoire they would be obsolete and their contract would not be renewed. Although this was light hearted *02* made it clear that there was a kernel of truth to it - they understood the arguments about collective benefit from greater openness but was keen to hear about any good arguments related to personal benefit for the individual academic being published openly. The project team pointed out the putative reputational benefits, but *02* seemed only partially convinced.

03 responded by saying that much of the digital material (not just podcasts) that academics generate was in fact access controlled within WebLearn [the University's VLE] at the moment, and not generally available to any internet user.

04 noted that research grant funding was frequently accompanied by conditions mandating public dissemination of results and provision of a "public impact assessment" by the academic as part of the outcomes of the project. In this context *04* couldn't see how anyone could object to the podcasting activities, as they were ideal, low effort (for the academic) channels for this kind of required activity.

05 pointed out that Universities needed to make a strong argument to the general populace that they add value to society and enrich life not just for their academics and students but for everyone. Institutions were increasingly being asked to prepare economic impact statements to demonstrate general usefulness. *05* hoped that UK universities would resist becoming more like US universities, which he characterised as being solely concerned with service delivery to 'customers' (students - industrial partners) and not society at large.

02 returned to the subject of the economic effect on the individual academic by asking: "I'm all for giving everyone everything, but what about the mortgage?". *02* also asked what would happen to their material if she left the University. [As things stand, the University has no responsibility to take it down, although the project team indicated that in the past they do take down anything to which the originator objects].

04 pointed out that academics are already paid to create this material and thus are not (they thought) in a position to argue with what the University does with it.

01 noted that there was actually not a particularly clear delineation between the various kinds of material an academic might produce, and so this wasn't an entirely clear cut issue. *01* also observed that generally it was not the undergraduate teaching that was going out under the current podcasting project, and that they imagined that the University would be more cautious about disseminating large chunks of undergraduate teaching material, whether under open content licences or not.

04 returned to the fact that funders nag funding recipients about dissemination plans, and that podcasting gave them a nice bullet for the list.

04 also pointed out that no-one was trying to force release of any material in any case.

03 explained that academics within their department often asked about the IP ownership of their personal research.

01 noted that they get hassled endlessly by people asking to reuse images from their web site. This is annoying as they could be sold, and this is done to a certain extent. Nevertheless the emails almost never offer any kind of remuneration.

05 told us that he had placed some printed materials under a CC licence already, although not sure which one. When asked why they had done this, they explained that other academics in their area had released some of their materials in this way. *05* was in favour of presenting a choice of licences to academic podcast creators; they suspected that academics would be most concerned about the potential for derivative works, while their institutions would probably be more concerned about commercial reuse.

03 asked for an online guide to the revised form that we would be producing.

01 noted that it would be particularly important for external academics to have a good look at what they were being asked to do before they arrived to speak and had the form given them.

05 added that he would be very dubious if - as an external speaker - a long legal document was sprung on them when they arrived to lecture. "Don't surprise them with it". 05 also pointed out that there was a risk that if the Oxford podcast output was too heavily drawn from external speakers, it would compromise the PR benefit to Oxford - which would look just like a nice venue for others' ideas.

01 wondered if the 'open content licensing' portion of the form couldn't be a 'tear off section'.

05 recounted an experience at a different organisation in the 1990s, where the organisation had spent a lot of money rigging up recording equipment to capture lecture series given by external speakers but that they had only been able to get agreement to use the material internally.

06 noted that the best parts of their job involved the points where their research fed back quickly and directly into their teaching - illustrating core principles to students using examples drawn from latest research. Thus they felt that there was not a huge divide between 'research-driven' podcasts and 'teaching' podcasts (or need not be). 06 described their ideal form of podcast as being less like a lecture and more akin to a tutorial in which the tutor has decided to explain a complex issue to one or two students.

01 asked that - if we produced an explanatory site to accompany the form - that we provide examples of material already published by comparable academics under CC licences, noting that this might serve both to illustrate the uses of the licence and reassure that it was not a ridiculous practice.

07 was very keen on podcasting but thought the processes and forms prohibitive. They wanted to wander around with an iPhone and capture podcasts to put on her college website. The project team spoke about the support that is on offer for OpenSpires and the training available to increase the skills for podcasting within Departments. 07 thought that having each form counter-signed by the Department was prohibitive, particularly for spontaneous recordings. Could they have an agreement signed by the Department to last a year for example?

07 also did not like the format of podcasts.ox.ac.uk, because you had to scroll through lots of podcasts to find the one you want (lack of podcast-specific URLs). 07 wanted to have links to the podcasts that they wanted on their college website and didn't seem particularly driven by involvement in iTunes U or podcasts.ox.ac.uk.

08 asked if anyone else was doing this, was it just an Oxford thing? The project team explained MIT, OpenLearn etc., and explained the involvement of other UK Universities in the JISC Institutional Strand and stressed the focus of Oxford's project - research-led content. This indicates that there is a need to increase knowledge of OER generally across the University.

08 asked if Oxford was being generous in sharing in this material. The project team explained the nature of the content that we are including (not complete courses) and the perceived benefits to the University and the individual.

09 highlighted that he was organising two sets of discussions and had approached two people to be involved, one of whom was from the OU. They had asked if the OU would be able to use the material in their courses - YES!

There was a short discussion about the type of content that would be interesting to record: discussions between two people were preferable, listening to one voice can be boring. Also shorter recordings (10-15 mins) rather than one long lecture.

There was some discussion about the acknowledgement on the materials and 07 asked if you can have a watermark on the video (on each frame) rather than 'bumpers'? Obviously it is more difficult to retain acknowledgement with the audio, but a member of the project team pointed out that the sound of the person's voice was a form of attribution.

The project team asked if the attendees would re-use other people's material? One said they would 'love to'. 08 would like to see more lectures for students and quoted an example of a student who has a programme of clashing lectures - this would offer the perfect solution.

The project team also asked if they were searching for something where would they want to find it. The answer was in one place but correctly categorised, keywords were important.

At one focus group the Frequently Asked Questions were discussed at length and more were suggested:

- How can podcasting be made easy? Who can help?
- How can things be removed if people regret what they say in a recording?
- Could people re-use the material commercially if they wanted to? RW said that the licence prevents this, it preserves the open content status of the material.
- In the future people may see the opportunity to produce a 'box set' of the content and charge for it. What would happen then?
- If I invite other people to be involved in my podcast, perhaps from outside the University, what do they have to do? They have to sign the licence in the same way that the Oxford academic does. However, they need to check that they have the right to sign the licence – they may have employment contracts that make their lectures the property of their employer. In these circumstances they will need the permission of their employer to sign the form.
- Could someone use my recording or parts of my recording and somehow misrepresent the content? The licence protects the contributor – any reuse of the material cannot be detrimental to their reputation.
- If I find someone abusing the use of this content, what should I do? You should contact us in the first instance; the University can help the academic through the process.
- Is the University putting the risk on the contributor? In the iTunes U agreement, Apple puts the risk on the University and the University shares the risk with the individual.
- There was some discussion about warranties and liabilities. Whilst the team do their best to ensure that the material is not defamatory, the contributor needs to think if it is defamatory and then consider if it is worth contributing.
- Academics do not know what is defamatory.
- After the question 'What is OpenSpires?' add 'why does it matter?' What is the benefit?

Evaluation

Key themes from the focus groups included:

- Drivers for releasing material as OER include meeting the funder's demands for dissemination, wanting their research to feed back into their teaching, and the purpose of a university to add value to society and not just its students or academics.
- The need for legal documents to be short, clear and to be provided to speakers in advance so that they have time to read them.
- The need to increase the knowledge of OER generally. Academics need to know who else is doing it, not just from their peer group but nationally and internationally.
- Shorter recordings are better; interviews and conversations are more interesting to listen to.