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## Deliverable 4.3.1UKW

### Options Brief Pack – Wales

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## Contents

0. Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction .....	5
1.1 The brief .....	5
1.2 POERUP .....	6
1.3 Sero and Wales .....	7
2. Current state of open education in Wales.....	8
2.1 Open education initiatives in Wales .....	8
3. Open education policies and recommendations in Wales .....	8
3.1 Policies .....	8
3.2 Influential reports .....	9
4. POERUP recommendations for Wales .....	10
4.1 Higher education.....	10
4.2 Further education .....	15
4.3 Schools .....	20

## 0. Executive Summary

This report is **Deliverable 3.4UKW, Options Brief Pack – Wales**. It makes the following recommendations and suggestions.

### *Higher Education*

POERUP commends the policy recommendations already made by Higher Education Wales that are now being put into practice in collaboration with HEFCW.

In addition it recommends the following policies:

1. HEFCW should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education
2. HEFCW should recommend to universities that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various sub modes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits.
3. HEFCW with HEW should continue to consider whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.

### *Colleges*

POERUP supports many, but not all, of the recommendations made by the Online Digital Learning Working Group. In particular:

1. It supports all recommendations on licensing and sharing resources (ODLWG Group 7)
2. Online learning should be integrated into the approach for programmes funded through the European Social Fund (ODLWG Group 2 item 3)
3. It strongly supports the development of a Welsh language skills MOOC (ODLWG Group 3); but in addition, it recommends consideration of a second version of this MOOC which might have a wider scope and in particular cover pre-higher education Welsh language needs.
4. It supports improving the skills of further education staff (ODLWG Group 6): in more detail, the Welsh government should establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing.

POERUP considers that some topics in ODLWG Groups 1 and 2 require further study and then piloting before full implementation. In particular such studies should cover:

- scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consideration of the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications. (from POERUP FE group 2)
- research into standardised syllabi country-wide for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for national action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks. (from POERUP FE group 3)
- research into the benefits of OER and sustainable business models, integrating this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy. (from POERUP FE group 8).

The piloting should take account of best practice in nearby countries and the EU and take into account the following principles:

- Support educational institutions in developing new business and educational models and launch research and policy experimentations to test innovative pedagogical approaches, curriculum development and skills assessment. (from POERUP FE group 8).

### *Schools*

POERUP regards it as premature to make specific policy recommendations for OER in schools, given the current foci of OER in Wales, but suggests that the following topics need further study:

1. Consideration of how an OER policy and plan for schools could address the issue of low scores in the OECD Pisa tests.
2. Consideration of greater use of OER in Welsh-medium education in schools.
3. Consideration of the techno-pedagogic/financial case for more standardised syllabi and the materials to support the teaching of these
4. Consideration of the value of online material including OER in teaching and learning at GCSE and at A level
5. Consideration of increased use of OER to support homeschooled children in Wales.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The brief

This is Deliverable 4.3UKW, the **Wales** sub-deliverable of Deliverable 4.3 of Work Package 4 of POERUP. The overall Deliverable Title from the proposal is:

*Options Brief Pack*

and the sub-deliverable title is

*Options Brief Pack – Wales*

The Work Package title is:

*The role of National and International Policies and strategy*

The revised brief (taken from the Amendment, approved February 2014) for the Deliverable states:

*Options briefs packs on proposed policies will be prepared in the relevant language for:*

- *England, Wales and Scotland (Sero)*
- *Ireland (Sero)*
- *Netherlands (RdMC-OUNL)*
- *Poland (EDEN)*
- *France (Université de Lorraine) and*
- *Canada (Athabasca University).*

*Each options brief pack will have a general introduction, a section for schools, a section for universities and a brief section on other sectors. However, the detailed structure will be consistent with the structure of relevant ministries in the country (for example in Scotland there is one ministry covering both colleges and universities). Furthermore, the language of each document will be consistent with the terms and concepts that the country's education policies are conceived within – noting that in some countries there is no specific mention – or only marginal mention – of ICT in the education policy.*

This is the options brief pack for **Wales**.

UK-wide issues are picked up in the document on **England**.

#### *The style of this Policy Brief*

We have aimed to write these policy briefs so that they are relevant not only to the specific country being discussed but also helpful for those readers from other countries trying to learn lessons for their countries. Consequently we have given rather more background information on the target country than “locals” will need – we hope that they will forgive our apparent prolixity.

Another key issue is the use of *footnotes*. Policy briefs are not supposed to be scholarly outputs so it is not usual to use the standard research apparatus of Harvard referencing. Indeed, some experts take the view that even footnotes break up the narrative and logical flow to an unacceptable extent. However, in the area of OER and MOOCs much of the evidence is little known and much of what passes for “known” is contested or has evidential flaws. Consequently we have taken the view that for POERUP policy briefs, in particular the ones written by the Sero team covering Britain and Ireland, we shall use footnotes, hopefully mostly in moderation.

The final point is *timeliness*. Many of the policy briefs could not be finalised until quite late in the project as there were slow-burn but vital developments under way in many of the countries. In some cases, such as Scotland, there were developments such as the Independence Referendum in September 2014 where we could not wait to hear the result; in others, such as Wales, the key developments occurred in good time (March 2014 being a key date for Wales).

However, any document of this sort dates quite rapidly. This is an inevitable outcome of such projects. All we can say (and more is said in Deliverable 6.2 on Exploitation) that the Sero team who wrote this group of policy briefs remains in place and indeed are working on other OER-related study projects. Our wish would be that we could carry out, or at worst advise on, an update of these policy briefs every six months or so, if there is interest.

## 1.2 POERUP

The overall aim of POERUP is to carry out research to understand how governments can stimulate the uptake of OER *by policy means*, not excluding financial means but recognising that in the ongoing economic situation in Europe the scope for government financial support for such activities is much less than it was in the past, or is now in some non-EU countries such as US, Canada and Australia.

POERUP does not formulate policies based on informal discussions. POERUP wants the policies to be *evidence-based policies* – based on looking *beyond* one's own country, region or continent, and beyond the educational sector that a ministry typically looks after.

POERUP also aims to provide education authorities, the research community and OER initiative management with *trustworthy* and *balanced* research results, in which feedback from all stakeholder groups is incorporated and which can be used as standard literature. A specific objective is to help readers in charge of OER initiatives to foresee hidden traps and to find ways of incorporating successful features of other initiatives.

*POERUP is about dispassionate analysis, not lobbying – it strives to take a balanced view within an overall positive orientation, in respect of OER specifically, and opening up education, more generally.*

POERUP aims to provide policymakers and education authorities *above institutions*, but also OER management and practitioners *within institutions*, with insight into what has been done in this area, plus a categorization of the different initiatives (major and minor) and the diverse range of providers. The POERUP studies provide practical and concrete information in order to contribute towards a more informed approach in the future.

POERUP achieves this by:

- studying a range of countries in Europe and seen as relevant to Europe, in order to understand what OER activities and initiatives are under way, and why they are continuing (or stopping, or more starting) – and taking account of reports from other agencies and projects studying OER in other countries;
- researching case studies of the *end-user–producer communities* behind OER initiatives in order to refine and elaborate recommendations to formulate a set of action points that can be applied to ensuring the realisation of successful, lively and sustainable OER communities;
- developing informed ideas on policy formulation using evidence from POERUP and (the few) other policy-oriented studies, POERUP staff's own experience in related projects, and ongoing advice from other experts in the field.

Finally, these results are disseminated and are being maintained in a sustainable way. The project has a web site [www.poerup.info](http://www.poerup.info) and a wiki [poerup.referata.com](http://poerup.referata.com) on which country reports and other outputs were developed and are being updated. This wiki is still active and will be sustained well after the formal end of the project, as OER, under a Creative Commons license (CC-BY-SA 4.0). In

addition various OER Maps have been and are being developed – in particular [www.poerup.org.uk](http://www.poerup.org.uk) – and will be maintained.

### 1.3 Sero and Wales

#### *Sero Consulting Ltd*

Sero is an education consultancy specializing in assisting institutions and government agencies with the exploitation of IT including learning resources (libraries) and e-learning. Formed in 2004, Sero has 20 staff and associates, with a specific business arm *SeroHE* focussing on Higher Education. Sero has many years' experience in working with non-profit organisations and foundations – including the European Commission (and its agencies and research labs), national, regional and local governments, JISC (now Jisc), and the UK Higher Education Academy.

Sero is the Project Manager for the EU project POERUP – Policies for OER Uptake – and was the Project Manager for the project VISCED – Virtual Schools and College Education – <http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info>. Both these projects developed large wiki databases of educational initiatives at the institutional and programme level. They also leveraged on the prior project Re.ViCa (2007-2009), in which Paul Bacsich played a key role, which created a large wiki of virtual campus initiatives – <http://www.virtualcampuses.eu>.

#### *Wales*

Sero supplied a member to the Higher Education Academy Benchmarking Team who assisted in benchmarking Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities in 2007, using the eMM methodology.<sup>1</sup> Sero also assisted a study on funding models for further education, *Defining Open, Distance, Drop-In and e-Learning for Funding Purposes*, in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, Paul Bacsich carried out many years of studies for the Higher Education Academy, beginning in 2005 with the Higher Education Academy/JISC Benchmarking of e-learning Exercise, culminating (in Wales) with the Gwella Programme – all focussing on benchmarking e-learning and managing the organisational change needed to foster e-learning. His BELA benchmarking team benchmarked e-learning at Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff, Glamorgan, Glyndŵr, Newport, Swansea, and Swansea Metropolitan universities. In Gwella Phase 2 he was the advisor to Aberystwyth and Glamorgan universities; and he also advised Trinity St David and Glamorgan under JISC Building Capacity grants. Later he became a consultant to Aberystwyth on aspects of e-learning research and during 2009-14 he was the external member of the TEL Steering Group at Glamorgan (now part of the University of South Wales) supplying general advice and specific studies including advice on aspects of OER u (USW via Glamorgan was the first UK member of OER u).

In 2012 Paul carried out months of market research for a US-EU-based venture fund looking into market possibilities for online learning in the UK HE and international markets. This involved reviewing every single major UK HE institution for the scale and scope of their online offerings: a specific report was commissioned on Wales.

Specifically for POERUP, Paul co-presented a webinar (with Lou McGill from Scotland) on *Open Educational Resources and Practices: moving forwards, looking outwards*,<sup>3</sup> hosted by JISC RSC Wales on 24 May 2013. He made several visits to Wales in connection with POERUP including attending as

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<sup>1</sup> See for example <http://blog.lsl.ecs.soton.ac.uk/benchmarking/2007/07/11/emm-cohort-meeting-bangor-july-2007/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://funding-model.pbworks.com/f/Funding+Project+Report+Final+Draft.doc>

<sup>3</sup> [http://moodle.rsc-wales.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/6966/mod\\_resource/content/2/Slideshow%20from%202024.05.13%20pdf.pdf](http://moodle.rsc-wales.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/6966/mod_resource/content/2/Slideshow%20from%202024.05.13%20pdf.pdf)

a guest the 24 March 2014 session of the Higher Education Wales OER group and the associated seminar by Professor Martin Weller at the Open University headquarters in Wales.

On 23 June 2014 he co-presented a webinar (with Terese Bird, the OER/MOOC expert from the University of Leicester) with a more UK-wide focus (but several delegates from Wales) on *Institutional Open Education and OER Policies*<sup>4</sup> – this is the very last presentation from POERUP within its funded period. Paul is also on the organising committee for the OER15 conference to be held in Cardiff on 14-15 April 2015.

## 2. Current state of open education in Wales

### *A note on Wales and the United Kingdom*

The education systems of the four home nations of the United Kingdom are run by the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with the UK national government responsible also for England. However, copyright legislation and some aspects of industrial policy are controlled by the UK government. There are, therefore, no national OER policies for the UK as a whole. However, quite often initiatives funded for or targeted at England spill over, to a greater or lesser extent, to adjacent home nations – and the other home nations can buy into certain initiatives. For more on the situation in England and the residuary powers of the UK government as they affect such matters, see the companion report on England.

### 2.1 Open education initiatives in Wales

(Policies for open education will be discussed in the next section.)

In higher education, there were until recently no national initiatives. However, Cardiff University is a member of FutureLearn (the only Welsh member) and the University of South Wales is a member of OER u (the only UK member until the OU joined recently): it also has an active iTunesU site. There is as yet no penetration of the main US and European MOOC initiatives (Coursera, EMMA, OpenUpEd) into Wales.

*Hwb* is the schools-level repository of open educational material.<sup>5</sup> There is also the *Y Porth* portal of Welsh-language material.<sup>6</sup>

## 3. Open education policies and recommendations in Wales

### 3.1 Policies

Policies and national strategies for e-learning have had a long history in Wales. Taking the time frame from when Sero staff were first involved in Wales, in 2008 the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) published its policy report *Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology: a Strategy for Higher Education in Wales*.<sup>7</sup> This document ambitiously outlined “a ten year strategy for the enhancement of learning and teaching through technology for higher education (HE) in Wales from 2007/08 to 2016/17”.<sup>8</sup> Rather than vague aspirations, the document listed *short*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.alt.ac.uk/civicrm/event/info?id=111&reset=1>

<sup>5</sup> <http://hwb.wales.gov.uk>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.porth.ac.uk/cy/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars\\_2008/W08%2012HE%20circ.pdf](https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2008/W08%2012HE%20circ.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, paragraph 1.1

term indicators (2010/11) and longer term indicators (2016/17) so that institutions could assess their progress towards the goal of embedded e-learning. One indicator in particular was:

*Technology has been used to increase flexibility and accessibility of provision, including for students studying through the Welsh language and the diverse student body*<sup>9</sup>

This set the scene for the Gwella Programme where a team funded by HEFCW via the Higher Education Academy benchmarked all Welsh universities not already benchmarked and put in place a change management programme, in two phases.<sup>10</sup>

Thus by the time that OER was coming on to the mainstream agenda, the idea of strategic recommendations and the measurement of progress was to some extent embedded in the Welsh higher education culture. Largely as a result of the Gwella Programme (including an analysis by external consultants) the strategy was “refreshed” in 2011.<sup>11</sup> It was too early to expect any mention of MOOCs in the refreshed strategy but there were signs that open educational resources were now being taken into consideration:

*Collaboration has become increasingly important in terms of the regional agenda, the establishment of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and opportunities offered by cloud computing, shared services and open educational resources* (Objective ix, page 5)

Moreover, institutions were expected to use “an evidence-based approach to derive appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative evidence for the achievement of these indicators by 2016/17” (page 6) and in particular to cite:

*increased collaboration within and between institutions in Wales, the UK and globally, including open educational resources, shared services and cloud computing as appropriate;* (page 7)

The Welsh scene was now set for more OER-specific reports and policies.

### 3.2 Influential reports

From early 2013 a specific OER policy agenda began to appear in Wales, both within higher education and looking out to the wider educational sector.

In higher education, after the usual months of quiet discussions behind the scenes among senior staff in Higher Education Wales, the higher education OER agenda in Wales leapt into prominence with the declaration in September 2013 by all Welsh universities of their commitment to OER.<sup>12</sup> (Details in section 4.1.)

In February 2013, after some months of discussion, the then Minister of Education set up the Online Digital Learning Working Group.<sup>13</sup> In March 2014 this produced a thorough report *Open & online: Wales, higher education and emerging modes of learning*.<sup>14</sup> The report drew on a substantial

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, paragraph 9.4

<sup>10</sup> <http://wales.heacademy.ac.uk/wales/gwella>

<sup>11</sup> *Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology: refreshing the strategy*, HEFCW, 21 September 2011, [http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars\\_2011/W11%2032HE%20Enhancing%20Learning%20and%20Teaching%20through%20Technology.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2011/W11%2032HE%20Enhancing%20Learning%20and%20Teaching%20through%20Technology.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.jiscsc.ac.uk/wales/news/2013/september/welsh-universities-commit-to-upload-lectures-and-research-online.aspx>, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/welsh-universities-commit-to-sharing-course-material-online/2007451.article> and a bit later, <http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/welsh-universities-sign-declaration-of-intent-embedding-open-education-at-the-heart-of-their-strategies/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2013/onlinedigitallearning/?lang=en>

<sup>14</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/140402-online-digital-learning-working-group-en.pdf>

background paper *Open and online resources: implications for practice in higher education institutions in Wales* by Dr Paul Richardson, reproduced as an appendix to the main report. The report has its focus as higher education but it is set in a broader context of vocational training and widening participation. It will be discussed in section 4.2.

One could have a long debate about whether these two reports are “policies” or “recommendations”. Certainly the HE ones are now being implemented by the universities with facilitation and some funding from HEFCW; the more general ones are at an earlier stage of embedding into funded strategies.

## 4. POERUP recommendations for Wales

### *A note on politics*

Under the current constitutional rules, the next election in Wales is on 5 May 2016.<sup>15</sup> This leaves plenty of time for any policy recommendations made in reports such as this one to be put in practice. (In contrast, the next general election in the UK will be on 7 May 2015.<sup>16</sup> However, education is a devolved matter, and so, apart from cross-border effects, the UK election has very little relevance in Wales, for education.) It is generally agreed that there is a greater degree of policy continuity in Wales on education matters than there is in England. At this time of writing, little can be said about the educational direction of any post-2016 Welsh Assembly government, likely to be a Coalition of two parties.<sup>17</sup>

On the economic situation, while the UK economy is at last growing quite strongly by EU standards, by around 3% and likely to continue at this sort of rate,<sup>18</sup> the pressure on UK budgets will still be intense, whatever party/parties are in power and whatever is the precise balance between tax rises and budget cuts.<sup>19</sup> This is one area where edge effects can occur, as ultimately the total Wales budget is set by the UK government – under current arrangements at least.

*As said several times before, POERUP is a study project not a lobby group for OER; and Sero is a consultancy company with a track record of providing realistic advice to governments, agencies and educational institutions over many years.*

### 4.1 Higher education

There are eight universities based in Wales: Aberystwyth University; Bangor University; Cardiff Metropolitan University; Cardiff University; Glyndŵr University; University of South Wales; Swansea University; and University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

The Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama is part of the University of South Wales. In addition the Open University is active in Wales and has a Wales office in Cardiff. In the last few years there have been a number of university mergers in Wales. It would be invidious and unhelpful to our argument

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<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Assembly\\_for\\_Wales\\_election,\\_2016](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Assembly_for_Wales_election,_2016) and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-welcomes-elections-agreement>

<sup>16</sup> This is because of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011 – for more information see <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/elections-and-voting/general/general-election-timetable-2015/>

<sup>17</sup> Intriguingly discussions on coalition issues have started already – <http://www.clickonwales.org/2014/02/coalition-politics-after-the-2016-assembly-election/>

<sup>18</sup> *HM Treasury: Forecasts for the UK economy: a comparison of independent forecasts*, no. 326, June 2014, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/321052/201406forecomp.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321052/201406forecomp.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> “Ed Balls: Labour will run a budget surplus”, 24 January 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/24/ed-balls-labour-will-run-budget-surplus>

to delve into issues of future mergers, but many would say that the current number and spread of universities is “more or less right”.

### *Key Policy Recommendations*

#### **Existing HEW recommendations**

Within the country, Higher Education Wales issued a declaration of intent in September 2013 with 11 recommendations:<sup>20</sup>

1. Promoting and using OER to widen access to higher education for non-traditional learners, to contribute to social inclusion and engage the rich diversity of the learner in Wales and across the world
2. Providing flexible virtual pathways for learners across the globe to access learning and teaching materials
3. Improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes and enhancing the partnership between Welsh universities and students as co-creators of OER materials in an OEP environment
4. Working with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to support the publication and distribution of learning and teaching materials through the medium of Welsh in order to increase access to quality material in the Welsh language, regardless of geographic location
5. Ensuring that any designated teaching and learning material released under open licence can be adapted and redistributed without cost or restriction
6. Encouraging the introduction of open educational practice into every part of the university to promote the creation, use and re-purposing of OER becoming embedded and that the development of specific policies for the production and use of OER will enable further enhancement of the learning experience in the future
7. Encouraging, enthusing and supporting staff at all levels within the university to interact with high-quality, accessible educational resources in an OEP environment, taking into account local needs and the full diversity of learners
8. Promoting quality assurance and peer review of learning and teaching materials that will facilitate new collaborative ways of working with students and staff across geographical boundaries
9. Ensuring that educational materials developed with public funds are made available, where appropriate, under open licences, to maximise the impact of the investment by the Welsh Government and Research Councils UK
10. Promoting the quality of Welsh higher education to the nation and internationally
11. Demonstrating further the collaborative nature of higher education in Wales

We discuss the Online Digital Learning Working Group recommendations in the next subsection (4.2).

#### **POERUP general HE recommendations**

From the POERUP standpoint, Deliverable 4.2U produced in September 2013 a comprehensive and (in our view) well-researched and thoroughly piloted set of recommendations to foster OER in higher education across the EU. These recommendations have been presented at many conferences and discussed in many meetings, including meetings of the POERUP International Advisory Committee. There have been very few comments suggesting anything more than minor revisions to these. Hence we shall take the POERUP HE recommendations as the other source of our recommendations. The

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.hew.ac.uk/wp/media/OER-Declaration-of-Intent-Sept-2013.pdf>

POERUP EU-level recommendations have been adapted to the Wales context and were briefly presented to the Higher Education Wales OER Group meeting in March 2014:

1. HEFCW should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education
2. QAA should, with reference to the Wales context: Continue to develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition; Engage in debates on copyright within the Wales legal context; Consider the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition as they impact on Wales HEIs and the specific delivery regime in Wales (including Welsh language and bilingual); Ensure that there continues to be no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting new providers (if relevant in the Wales context) and inspecting institutions/programmes.
3. HEFCW and QAA should contribute to the debate about a more flexible approach to measuring credit ratings of modules, less based on study times, drawing on the Welsh experience with credit transfer, WBL, flexible learning and APL (both APCL and APEL): leading to the development of a Bologna-bis framework based primarily on competences gained not duration of study.
4. HEFCW should recommend to universities that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various sub modes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits.
5. HEFCW, HEW and other interested parties should consider whether the specific Welsh context needs an Open Accriterator<sup>21</sup> to assist small and specialist institutions to handle APL for students entering these institutions and seeking to accredit prior study.
6. HEFCW with HEW should **continue to consider** whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.
7. HEFCW and related Welsh funding bodies should **continue to ensure** that any public outputs from their funded programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license.
8. HEFCW should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in both traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding.
9. Wales HE should adopt a standard license for all openly available educational material.
10. HEFCW should mount an initiative to upgrade the level of knowledge of university staff on IPR issues, perhaps as part of some wider initiative e.g. on MOOCs so as to give context and applicability for the knowledge.
11. HEFCW with HEA should encourage Welsh institutions to keep their continuous professional development programmes up to date in terms of newer modes of teaching and learning, including not only campus-based online learning but distance learning, OER, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and to move such programmes online and increasingly open and collaborative between institutions.
12. HEFCW should encourage institutions to consider the use of incentive schemes (and reconsider the issue of non-incentives) for academics engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.

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<sup>21</sup> Wales might not, whereas England might, with its wide range of sizes of institutions and many specialist small providers (many of them private providers).

13. HEFCW and related bodies should fund research into the benefits of OER in the Welsh HE context, with greater efforts to integrate this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy, and with wider research on OER in and beyond Wales.

Since Higher Education Wales (HEW) has made and is implementing its 11 recommendations (listed on page 11 of this report) already, we feel that our most useful contribution is to propose a small number of *additional* recommendations (from our POERUP general HE list of 13 immediately above) that in our view are most useful in further advancing open education in Wales HE in areas of business and pedagogic relevance and are not covered by recommendations to UK-wide agencies such as QAA, Jisc or HEA. For each of these we provide some additional detail and commentary.

### **Additional recommendations for Wales (the numbering is from the above POERUP list)**

#### *1. Innovation*

*HEFCW should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education*

- This is happening already with the OER Wales Pilot Student Survival sMOOC offering advice on preparing for university<sup>22</sup> but in our construction such recommendations should be ongoing, year on year, and within a wide remit.
- The success of FutureLearn,<sup>23</sup> with a Welsh partner, Scottish university partners, and also one partner from each of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic – shows that on-the-ground collaboration can go on despite limited government funding.
- The FutureLearn development owes a lot to the support of BIS, the UK Department of Business, Innovation & Skills; even though BIS no longer has any UK-wide remit in education, it still has a UK-wide remit in business, competition and technology development.<sup>24</sup> The recent competition *Learning technologies – design for impact* from the UK Technology Strategy Board (soon to become Innovate UK) is designed to support “exploratory studies into the design of technology-based products and services that will improve learning outcomes”.<sup>25</sup> It notes that proposals must demonstrate “how the technology could lead to better learner outcomes and also offer a sustainable, commercial business model”. Moreover, projects “can be specific to any curricular subject or group of students, including childhood and adult learning, private learning, work-based learning and continuous professional development”.<sup>26</sup>

#### *4. Accreditation of Prior Learning*

*HEFCW should recommend to universities that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various sub modes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits.*

*Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), also called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – and in US and Canada Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) –*

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.oerwales.ac.uk/smooc/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.futurelearn.com>

<sup>24</sup> Similar non-education federal powers have been deployed in Canada in the past to engender multi-province collaboration in e-learning since the days of Telelearning NCE in the late 1990s – [http://auspace.athabasca.ca/bitstream/2149/722/1/telelearning\\_research\\_and.pdf](http://auspace.athabasca.ca/bitstream/2149/722/1/telelearning_research_and.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.innovateuk.org/-/learning-technologies-design-for-impact>

<sup>26</sup> Focussing on training and professional development are other standard approaches to work with devolved education powers.

describes a process used by universities, colleges, etc to assess the skills and knowledge acquired outside the formal education process for the purpose of recognizing competence against a given set of competencies (or standards or learning outcomes). *Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning* (APCL) focuses on assessment of previous formal education qualifications and is really a part of Credit Transfer and Accumulation; in contrast, *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning* (APEL) focuses on assessment of previous experience, including informal education outcomes from OER and MOOCs.

One recent study, in fact a companion study to the HEA Flexible Learning research described below, noted that “more than 90% of HEIs in the UK both recognise and award credits, yet there has been significant variation in the ways that such schemes are applied”. The author further describes the UK-wide situation:<sup>27</sup>

*However, information and guidance, the first step towards an effective credit accumulation and transfer system, requires improvement. Information is often presented in a technical non user-friendly way, not sufficiently informative and/or difficult to find. In addition, little evidence was found of active marketing of APEL by the institutions.*

*While national guidance on the recognition of prior learning exists in the UK on the ground, the application of APL varies and it can be said there is little practice on which to base generalised patterns of activity in the UK. Variation refers to aspects such as the volume of credit that can be claimed on admission to a programme, time limitations for credit claiming, methods of assessment and costs.*

The Higher Education Academy has over the last two years carried out an extensive programme of research into flexible learning (including part-time and distance learning).<sup>28</sup> As this report was closing, it released a long-awaited synthesis report and recommendations *Conditions of flexibility: securing a more responsive higher education system*.<sup>29</sup> The report contained an extensive set of recommendations (pp. 69-71) which on the whole could be seen as rather unthreatening, yet if implemented seriously some could engender systematic change. For example, apropos of our Recommendation 1 it suggested:

*Funding Councils might consider, as a lever in promoting more experimentation in the system, adopting an initiative – with a limited but dedicated tranche of monies deliberately aimed at sponsoring initiatives from institutions with a view to increasing flexibility*

This is rather similar in tone to the POERUP recommendation on innovation. More pertinently to APL, although there was little direct discussion of APL, it recommended that the Higher Education Academy might:

*work alongside other sector bodies and relevant credit networks to encourage and help embed a UK-wide credit framework and a more even take-up of credit accumulation and transfer*

If taken seriously by all institutions in all four home nations, this could be truly transformative.

(Note that we do not at this stage feel that the linked Recommendation 5 on the Open Accrerator is a key recommendation for Wales.)

<sup>27</sup> *Review of credit accumulation and transfer policy and practice in UK higher education*, Manuel Souto-Otero, for the Higher Education Academy, 2013,

[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Review\\_of\\_Transfer\\_of\\_Credit\\_Report.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Review_of_Transfer_of_Credit_Report.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/flexible-learning>

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/FP\\_conditions\\_of\\_flexibility.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/FP_conditions_of_flexibility.pdf)

## 6. Shared resources

HEFCW with HEW should **continue to consider** whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.

This recommendation is deliberately designed to be wider than Welsh-language, STEM or pre-university: in fact it covers much of the territory of POERUP HE recommendation 8:

*HEFCW should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in both traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding.*

We feel that this is particularly important given the current HEFCW approach to ensuring an affordable (to students) fee regime.

## 4.2 Further education

Due to a considerable number of mergers in recent years, there are now just 13 colleges in Wales, a number not much greater than the number of universities. The colleges are: Coleg Gwent; St David's Catholic College; Cardiff and Vale College; Coleg y Cymoedd; The College Merthyr Tydfil; Bridgend College; Grŵp NPTC Group; Gower College Swansea; Coleg Sir Gâr; Pembrokeshire College; Coleg Ceredigion; Grŵp Llandrillo Menai; and Coleg Cambria.

The link to the number of universities may seem gratuitous but what it means is that the "typical" college is now large enough to have substantial capacity to make its own informed decisions – assuming that it is allowed and has the budget to do so.

ColegauCymru/CollegesWales is the national organisation representing all further education (FE) colleges and institutions in Wales. This means that the group has good representation upwards to policy levels.<sup>30</sup>

*Through CollegesWales, colleges are represented on various committees, working parties and other groups that influence and shape policy in post-16 education and life-long learning. In the main, CollegesWales' senior staff serve as the representatives on these groups. Individual board members, principals, and senior staff from member colleges may also be nominated by the CollegesWales board, chief executive, or by a CollegesWales network to represent colleges on particular areas of policy or committees.*

In general terms, many of the recommendations made, at least initially, in a university context, can be adapted for colleges.

### Key Policy Recommendations

#### Existing ODLWG recommendations

The Online Digital Learning Working Group report *Open & online: Wales, higher education and emerging modes of learning* made seven groups of recommendations in March 2014 (overleaf). Although in theory (and in the title of the report) the Group had as its focus higher education, in reality it took a wider view.

The bold is our emphasis. (Not all the detailed recommendations are given.)

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/en-GB/who\\_we\\_are-6.aspx](http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/en-GB/who_we_are-6.aspx)

- 1 *Widening access to higher education to those with low participation backgrounds*
  - Fund the development of O&O [open and online] resources for use in **schools and colleges, with the aim of raising aspirations of learners from low participation backgrounds.**
  - Investigate the use of Hwb as a host for the O&O resources developed, with the intention of establishing a central repository where all schools and colleges may access these resources.
  - Liaise with NIACE Dysgu Cymru, Agored Cymru, and others to align O&O resource production with the needs of **adult learners** pursuing agreed progression routes, including CQFW.
- 2 *Developing skills for the workplace and the Welsh economy*
  - Develop a strategy, working with other agencies, to raise awareness of the potential for online learning to support **economic development.**
  - Use the Welsh Government's sector panels to foster dialogue between stakeholders (including educational providers and employers) in order to identify **opportunities to develop skills using online resources.**
  - Examine how online learning should be integrated into the approach for **programmes funded through the European Social Fund.**
- 3 *Developing Welsh language skills for employment*
  - Develop a **Welsh language skills MOOC** at higher education level so that students and work-based learners can develop their professional Welsh language skills and potentially seek certification for those skills
- 4 *Reviewing institutional policies, monitoring developments and exploiting opportunities*
  - Agree what the institution's overall approach to open and online resources should be, monitor external O&O developments, and exploit opportunities to produce and use resources.
- 5 *Strengthening institutional reputation and brand*
  - Exploit open and online resources in appropriate circumstances to showcase the quality of learning opportunities.
- 6 *Improving the skills of higher education staff*
  - Institutions should provide academic staff with the skills and support they need to make most effective use of open and online approaches to learning.
- 7 *Licensing and sharing open educational resources*
  - The Welsh Government should encourage the **systematic adoption of open licensing for open educational resources** produced by HEIs in Wales
  - Where possible staff and institutions should release open educational resources using an appropriate **Creative Commons licence**
  - Institutions should make open educational resources widely available, including via the **Jorum** repository.

It should be noted that the recommendations (at the time of writing this report) are still just recommendations, not Wales government policy – though they are recommendations from a government-appointed committee, not just an ad-hoc group.

## POERUP general FE recommendations

POERUP Deliverable 4.2C produced in October 2013 a comprehensive set of recommendations to foster OER in further education (VET) across the EU.<sup>31</sup> These recommendations have been presented at many conferences and discussed in many meetings, including meetings of the POERUP International Advisory Committee and workshops in several countries across Europe. Hence we shall take these as the source of our draft FE recommendations. However, the recommendations in Deliverable 4.2C are formulated in a complex multi-level way (EU and member states and then to institutions) so that for this discussion we shall use a simpler version focussing purely on Member States.

### 1. *Communications and awareness raising*

- Mount a campaign to educate lecturers, teachers and trainers on IPR issues.
- Promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through the European Commission's cultural sector programmes and national cultural sector programmes, to make these available across the country.

### 2. *Funding and resources*

- Ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.
- Increase scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consider the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications.
- Fund research into standardised syllabi country-wide for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for national action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks.

### 3. *Reducing regulatory barriers*

- Reduce any regulatory barriers against new non-study-time-based modes of provision in further education.

### 4. *Quality issues*

- Establish a national quality assurance standard for OER content produced in the country.
- Ensure that OER is allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists.
- Require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.
- Consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. (This panel should include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts.)
- Consider establishing a specialist OER function to undertake a cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy.
- Consider in the relevant quality agency the effects of OER and other new modes on quality assurance and recognition and ensure that there is no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting institutions both public and private including for-profit (if relevant), accrediting programmes (if relevant) and assessing/inspecting institutions/programmes.

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<sup>31</sup> An early version of these was revealed to public gaze on 19 September 2013:

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/169380658/Proposed-EU-OER-Policies-for-the-FE-Sector-Rel-1>

#### 5. *Teacher training and continuous professional development*

- Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers, teachers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support teacher / trainer / lecturer CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.
- Develop incentive schemes for lecturers, teachers and trainers engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.

#### 6. *Certification and accreditation*

- (for larger Member States, but potentially applicable to Wales) Set up an Open Accrutor to accredit a range of studies which could articulate into a route to an undergraduate degree. In the first instance the Accrutor should focus on qualifications in the ISCED 5B area as this is most correlated with high-level skills for business and industry.

#### 7. *Infrastructure issues*

- Continue a focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that learners are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER in their further education activities.
- Where institutions are providing digital devices, ensure that all considerations have been taken to maximise the effectiveness (economically and pedagogically) of devices, support and strategy with regards to OER.

#### 8. *Further research*

- Foster research into the benefits of OER and sustainable business models, integrating this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.
- Support educational institutions in developing new business and educational models and launch research and policy experimentations to test innovative pedagogical approaches, curriculum development and skills assessment.

### **POERUP specific recommendations for Wales**

Taking these two sets together, and bearing in mind the educational and financial situation, we recommend the following as priorities for the further education sector. These should be taken in the wider approach of supporting many of the recommendations from the Online Digital Learning Working Group. For clarity we take the ODLWG recommendations in a somewhat different order, but the numbering used is from the ODLWG list (on page 16 of this report).

#### 7. *Licensing and sharing open educational resources – all supported*

- The Welsh Government should encourage the **systematic adoption of open licensing for open educational resources** produced by HEIs in Wales
- Where possible staff and institutions should release open educational resources using an appropriate **Creative Commons licence**
- Institutions should make open educational resources widely available, including via the **Jorum** repository.

#### 2. *Developing skills for the workplace and the Welsh economy*

- Examine how online learning should be integrated into the approach for **programmes funded through the European Social Fund**. *Strongly supported.*

### 3. *Developing Welsh language skills for employment – strongly supported*

- Develop a **Welsh language skills MOOC** at higher education level so that students and work-based learners can develop their professional Welsh language skills and potentially seek certification for those skills

Moreover, we suggest that a second version of this MOOC might have a wider scope and in particular cover pre-higher education Welsh language needs. It would also be useful for Welsh experts to discuss such matters with the EU *LangOER* project.<sup>32</sup>

### 6. *Improving the skills of higher education staff*

- Institutions should provide academic staff with the skills and support they need to make most effective use of open and online approaches to learning.

In more detail, we recommend that the Welsh government should:

- Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers, teachers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support teacher / trainer / lecturer CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.

### **Needing further discussion in our view**

While supporting recommendation groups 1 and 2 from the Online Digital Learning Working Group

1. Widening access to higher education to those with low participation backgrounds
2. Developing skills for the workplace and the Welsh economy,

we feel that these need further discussion within an analytic framework; and in our view it is unlikely that all are realistic in pedagogic and financial terms.

We suggest an analytic phase and then a piloting phase. The analytic phase should in our view take note of the POERUP FE recommendations:

- Increase scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consider the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications (from POERUP FE group 2)
- Fund research into standardised syllabi country-wide for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for national action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks (from POERUP FE group 3)
- Foster research into the benefits of OER and sustainable business models, integrating this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy (from POERUP FE group 8).

The piloting phase could in part draw its methodology from existing Welsh practice but also take note of EU practice (including the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+)<sup>33</sup> as well as the UK-wide practice exemplified by the Technology Strategy Board competitions.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> <http://langoer.eun.org>

<sup>33</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm)

<sup>34</sup> The recent competition *Learning technologies – design for impact* from the UK Technology Strategy Board (soon to become Innovate UK) is designed to support “exploratory studies into the design of technology-based products and services that will improve learning outcomes”. It notes that proposals must demonstrate “how the technology could lead to better learner outcomes and also offer a sustainable, commercial business model”. Moreover, projects “can be specific

The specific POERUP recommendation is:

- Support educational institutions in developing new business and educational models and launch research and policy experimentations to test innovative pedagogical approaches, curriculum development and skills assessment. (from POERUP FE group 8).

### 4.3 Schools

For those less familiar with Wales, the following information may be useful.<sup>35</sup>

The Welsh Government has overall responsibility for the education system in Wales but responsibility for the provision of education is decentralised, lying with local authorities, voluntary providers including churches, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES)<sup>36</sup> is responsible for funding and administering education across all phases. Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, is responsible for inspecting pre-school education, schools and further education (FE) institutions.<sup>37</sup> At local level, the responsibility for organising publicly-funded school education lies with 22 local authorities: these have a statutory duty to secure the provision of primary and compulsory secondary education. They are also responsible for promoting high standards of education for pupils of school age in their area. Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 years.

By comparison with England, US, Sweden and several EU countries, Wales has a rather uniform style of school-level education. Almost all schools are state-funded and overseen by local authorities. By general UK standards, there are very few private (independent) schools, less than 2% at the last survey.<sup>38</sup> Some 25,000 children and young people across Wales attend a Church in Wales school<sup>39</sup> (Protestant Church) and there are also schools run by other denominations such as the Catholic Church: interestingly these schools are more diverse ethnically than the state schools.<sup>40</sup> However there are not the various types of autonomous schools (Academies, Free Schools) or specialised providers (UTCs) found in England, and their analogues (Charter Schools, Kunskapsskolan, Folk High Schools) in the US, Sweden, New Zealand, etc.

This uniformity and control (by the local authority or religious school board) should make it easier in Wales to bring about the kind of systemic change engendered by OER – in theory, at least.

However, in Wales, as in many other EU nations, the main government attention to OER matters has gone mostly to universities (as in Netherlands after Wikiwijs ended),<sup>41</sup> with some spill-over to vocational education (note that a focus on OER in vocational education is not common in EU nations).

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to any curricular subject or group of students, including childhood and adult learning, private learning, work-based learning and continuous professional development". See <https://www.innovateuk.org/-/learning-technologies-design-for-impact>

<sup>35</sup> For more on this see Eurydice: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-Wales:Overview> – and POERUP: [http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/UK#Education\\_in\\_Wales](http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/UK#Education_in_Wales)

<sup>36</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/independent-schools-census/?lang=en>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/life/schools/>

<sup>40</sup> "24% of pupils from Catholic primary schools are of minority ethnic origin. This figure stands at 17.5% for Catholic secondary schools." (<http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/images/Catholic%20Education%20EW.pdf>)

<sup>41</sup> <http://openpraxis.org/index.php/OpenPraxis/article/view/116> describes the Wikiwijs programme

Given this focus we do not feel it is useful to make **specific recommendations** for fostering OER uptake in schools. As and when it is useful to policy-makers in Wales, the public POERUP Deliverable D4.2S *Policy advice for OER uptake in schools* is available for consideration and mapping into the Wales environment.

However, we shall make some *suggestions* of fruitful areas to investigate in due course. In all these suggestions it is taken as axiomatic that Hwb and in some cases Jorum<sup>42</sup> would play key roles.

### Suggestions

1. Consideration of how an OER policy and plan for schools could address the issue of low scores in the OECD Pisa tests.<sup>43</sup>
2. Consideration of greater use of OER in Welsh-medium education in schools.<sup>44</sup>
3. Consideration of the techno-pedagogic/financial case for more standardised syllabi and the materials to support the teaching of these<sup>45</sup>
4. Consideration of the value of online material including OER in teaching and learning at GCSE and at A level<sup>46</sup>
5. Consideration of increased use of OER to support homeschooled children in Wales.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.jorum.ac.uk>

<sup>43</sup> See for example <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-26962501>

<sup>44</sup> LangOER may have useful input – <http://langoer.eun.org>

<sup>45</sup> The geographic distance of Wales from the main headquarters of publishers may help. Consideration of the situation in British Columbia, Poland and other countries would be useful. See the POERUP country and policy reports – <http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/Countries>

<sup>46</sup> In our view the SCHOLAR programme in Scotland merits attention – <http://scholar.hw.ac.uk>

<sup>47</sup> Around 1000 students per year in Wales are educated at home – <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/home-schooling-wales-becoming-popular-2026672>. Interestingly one of the best known UK virtual schools is based in Wales: Interhigh – [http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/The\\_InterHigh\\_Story](http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/The_InterHigh_Story)