



Open Education in Ireland:

*Capabilities, Collectivities &
Co-creating Just Futures*

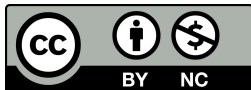
Catherine Cronin

HEA Open Education event

20 May 2026 | MTU Cork

Link to slides:

<https://bit.ly/HEA-Cronin-2026>



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Today...

HEA National Forum & Irish higher education sector

affirming the power & promise of

Open Education to enhance:

Access · Equity · Teaching & Learning



Today's keynote

- Supporting open education
- Capabilities
- Collectivities
- Co-creating just futures



Activity: “Wild Tea”

(Liberating Structures)



- *Talking in pairs, for 1 minute*
- *Complete the following statement:*

“One of my biggest Open Education hopes is...”

Introduction.

Supporting open education

Supporting Open Education

[Home](#) / [Our Priorities](#) / [Teaching and Learning in a Digital World](#) / [Supporting Open Education](#)

www.teachingandlearning.ie/open

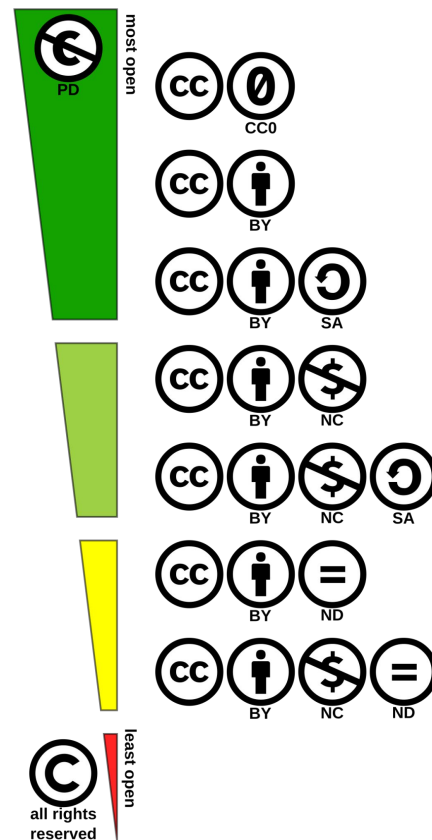
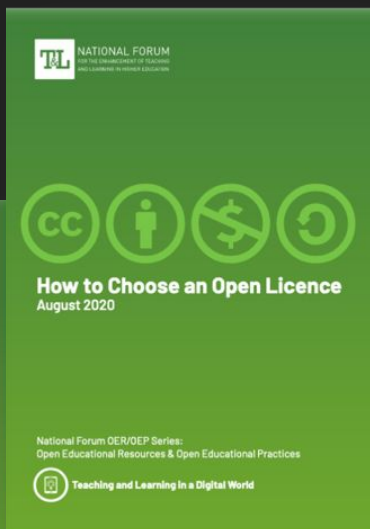
The National Forum is a leader in the area of open education, actively modelling and supporting open education principles, practices and policies in Irish higher education. We recognise that the development of open capabilities across the sector requires support for individual open practice as well as a commitment to openness at programme, institutional and national levels.

All National Forum resources are openly licensed using a Creative Commons licence (CC BY). Our open resources include a suite of professional development courses linked to the National Forum Professional Development Framework (see [Open Courses](#)). In addition, the National Forum requires that all resources arising from National Forum-funded projects be published openly; we actively support project teams in accomplishing this goal and coordinate the [National Resource Hub](#) where OER for teaching and learning can be searched and shared.

HEA National Forum commitment to Open Education

principles, practices & policies

- 2015 **Research report:** [Learning Resources & Open Access in HEIs](#)
- 2017 **Professional Development:** [OpenCourses.ie](#)
- 2019 **Forum Insight:** [Supporting Open Education in Irish HE](#)
- 2019 **Guide:** [National Forum Open Licensing Toolkit](#)
- 2020 **Guide:** [How to Choose an Open Licence](#)
- 2021 **Guide:** [Developing Enabling Policies for Digital/Open T&L](#)
- 2021 **Online resource:** [Using OER and OEP for Teaching & Learning](#)
- 2021 **OER platform:** [National Resource Hub](#)
- 2026 **Open course:** [OER and OEP](#) *(to launch in October 2026)*





NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Using OER and OEP for Teaching and Learning

Welcome to 'Using Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) for Teaching and Learning'. This National Forum open resource was developed in partnership with colleagues across the Irish higher education sector. We invite you to explore the materials and to share your comments and feedback.



Photo: Open Is Welcoming by Alan Levine, licensed CC0 (Flickr)



1. Understanding open

Introduction to open education, OER and OEP

[More info](#)



2. Using OER

Open licensing; finding, evaluating and attributing OER

[More info](#)



3. Creating OER

Licensing and sharing your own OER

[More info](#)



4. Using OEP

Using open pedagogy and OEP

[More info](#)

www.teachingandlearning.ie/open



Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital and Open T&L

(CC BY, National Forum, [2021](#))

- Defines ‘enabling’ policies
- Outlines 5-step guide to developing **enabling policies**
- Includes case studies & examples from Irish HEIs, Univ of Edinburgh, KPU (Canada)
- Remixed for UNESCO *Guide to Developing Enabling Open Education Policies* ([2022](#))

www.teachingandlearning.ie/open

Section One.

Capabilities

Supporting Open Education

Home / Our Priorities / Teaching and Learning in a Digital World / Supporting Open Education

www.teachingandlearning.ie/open

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UNESCO Recommendation on OER

5 Areas of action

- Build **capacity** of stakeholders to access, use, adapt, create, share OER
- Develop supportive **policy**
- Support/enable **inclusive & equitable** quality OER
- Nurture creation of **sustainability** models for OER
- Facilitate international **collaboration**

UNESCO (2019)





NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sectoral approach to supporting OER & OEP

- Build **open capabilities** nationally across HE sector
- Develop **enabling policies** for digital & open education
- Support/enable **inclusive & equitable** quality OER & OEP
- Promote **sustainability** via funding & support
- Facilitate national & international **collaboration**

Cronin ([2022](#))



Department of Education
Dáil Éireann

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tAhtas na n-Árd-Oideachas

Capabilities Approach

Capabilities are the real freedoms people have to achieve wellbeing — a matter of what people are able **To Do** and **To Be**.

*Capabilities are not abilities that reside within a person... but freedoms/ opportunities created by a combination of a person's abilities and their **political, social, economic, educational** context.*

The **Capabilities Approach** changes the focus from *means* (resources) to *ends* (capabilities) for individuals

“Resources alone are not enough”

OER + **OEP**

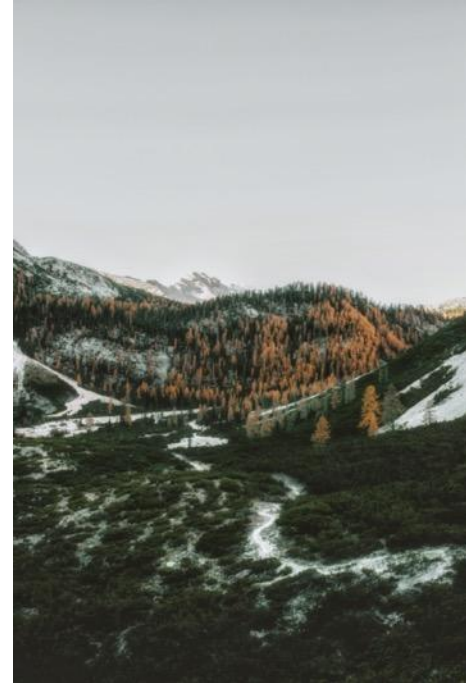
Open Educational
Resources

(e.g. RLR, RLO)

Open Educational
Practices

(e.g. open pedagogy, open policies)

Building open capabilities...



Images: CC0 (L to R) by [Hedi Alija](#), [Mihail Ribkin](#), [David Kovalenko](#), [eberhard grossgasteiger](#)

Section Two.

Collectivities



**Open Education
Network**



OE GLOBAL

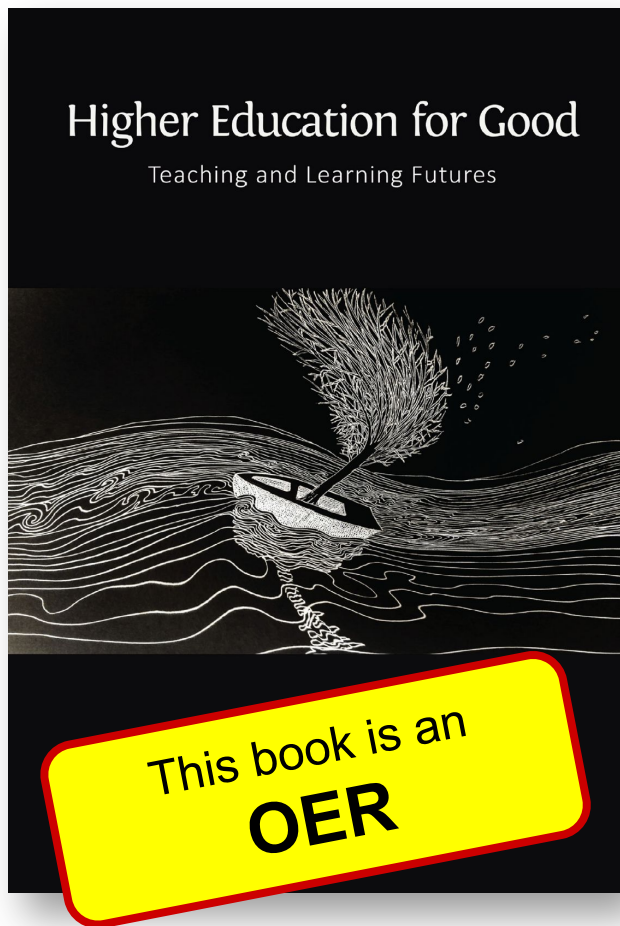


**European Network
of Open Education
Librarians**



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

OER
Dynamic Coalition
Initiative



Higher Education for Good: Teaching & Learning Futures (2023)

Explores what **better futures** for higher education could look like across a range of contexts, focusing on HE futures that are **just, humane**, and **globally sustainable**



[Link to book](#)



Open education for better futures

**NAME &
ANALYSE**
troubles of OE

**CHALLENGE
& RESIST**
hegemonies

**MAKE
CLAIMS**
for just, humane
& globally
sustainable OE

Courageously
IMAGINE
& share fresh
possibilities

**MAKE
POSITIVE
CHANGES**
here and now

Section Three.

Co-creating just futures



Levels of social inclusion through OER use, adaptation & creation

Source: Arinto, Hodkinson-Williams & Trotter ([2017](#)) OER and OEP in the Global South

Conceptualisations of open education

OER for Access & reuse

free resources,
with permissions

- open licensing
- find, adapt & reuse
- OER repositories

OER/OEP for Social inclusion

empowering educators
& students as creators

(Arinto et al., [2017](#))

- OEP / open pedagogy
- student co-creation & partnership
- co-creating enabling policies

OER/OEP for Social justice

participatory parity:
economic, cultural, political

(Bali et al., [2020](#); Fraser, [2005](#))

- equal participation
- education as transformative
- OE as a strategy, institutional, sectoral

Capabilities Approach to open education

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- equal participation
- education as transformative
- OE as a strategy, institutional and sectoral

wrapping up

Polycrisis



Image: Niamh McArdle, used with permission

The business model of Big Tech is **surveillance capitalism**, i.e. the collection & commodification of personal data, often without explicit consent.

(Shoshanna Zuboff, 2019)



Image: www.johnholcroft.com



Technologies restructure time, space,
and society over periods of time
longer than a human lifetime.

Ursula Franklin ([2006](#))

Though freedom is the quality
of a single life,
it is the **work of generations.**

Timothy Snyder ([2024](#))



Thank you,

Catherine Cronin

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Building better, more open HE futures

- Supporting **systemic change**, i.e. policy, strategy, culture
- Enhancing **access & equity** via social justice approaches
(Fraser [2005](#); Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter ([2019](#)); Bali et al. ([2020](#)))
- Working **collaboratively** and in **coalitions**
- **Boundary crossing** (e.g. discipline, role, sector, geography)
- **Connecting** the ‘opens’
- “Recognise **your power**” (Maria Ressa, [2024](#))

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