



Author guidance for online courses

A comprehensive guide to designing and authoring short courses on OpenLearn and OpenLearn Create

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Introduction to Corporate and Commercial



Corporate and Commercial combine the OU's distance learning expertise with the benefits of a creative agency, to deliver a range of bespoke services.

As specialists in online learning, creative design and interactive solutions, our collaborative team craft outstanding courses and resources, tailored to the needs of organisations and learners worldwide.

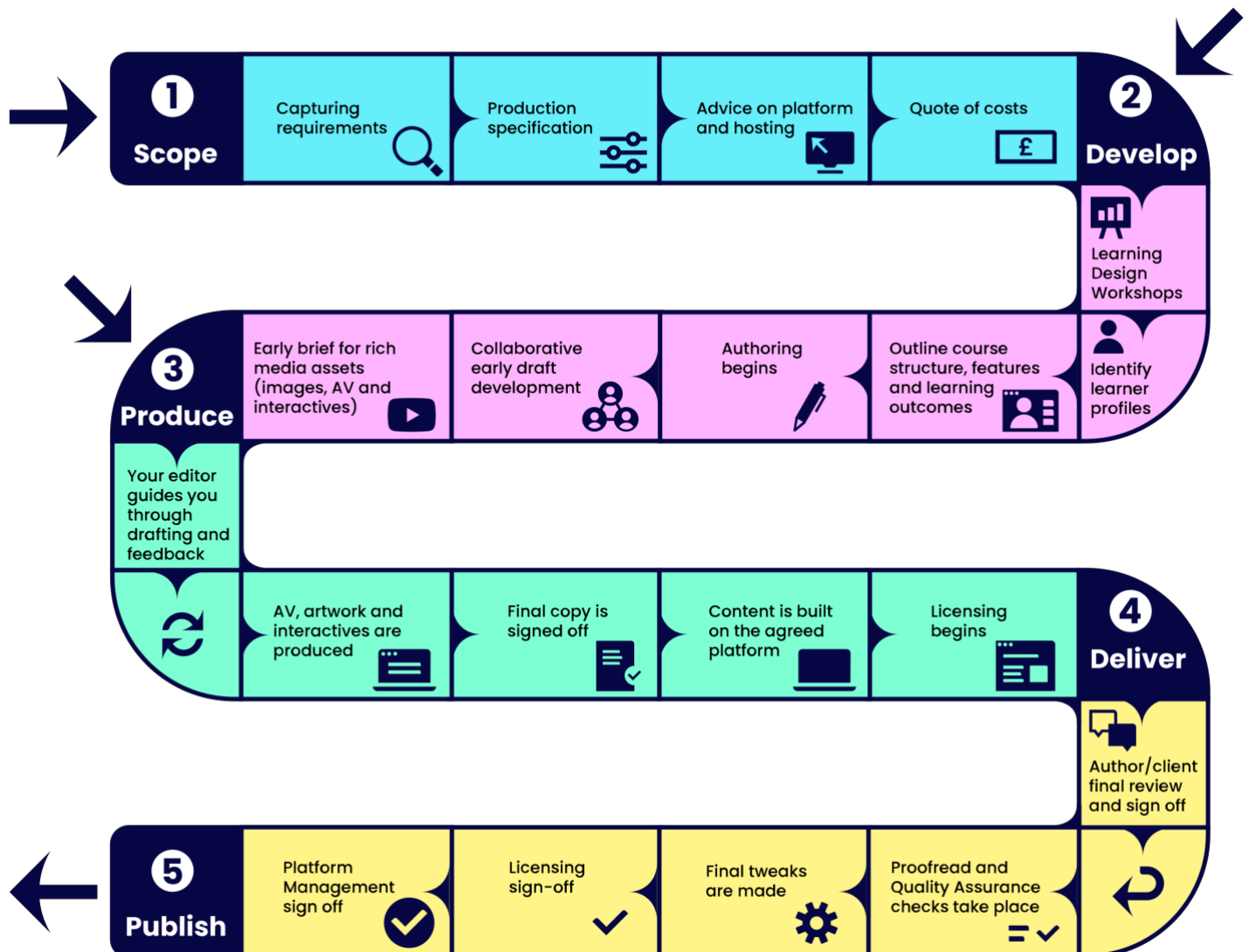
We lead the complete process of course development from learning design to launch: handling the structural and copy edits, sourcing and licensing assets, and providing authoring and assessment guidance, and quiz construction.

Our talented team create rich media assets, from collateral and graphics to animation, video and audio, as well as interactive media and custom-built websites.

Stages of production

Each course is different, and so the stages of production will also vary. However, below is an indicative example of the usual stages a course will go through from concept to publication.

The arrows at the beginning of stages 1, 2 and 3 indicate where some clients come to Corporate and Commercial.



Learning Design

Learning Design is an important early part of course authoring. Corporate and Commercial can arrange bespoke workshops in collaboration with the Learning Design team. These workshops help to shape the course content by getting you to think about aspects such as learner profiles, learning outcomes, activity types and more.

Learner profiles

Learner profiles are a useful way to start thinking about the type of people you expect to study your course – and therefore, help shape and inform who you're writing for, and how.

You can find a learner profile template in [Appendix 1](#).

Learning outcomes

All courses need learning outcomes. These allow the learner to understand what they can expect to learn from a course. Depending on the length of the course, up to five learning outcomes is usually recommended and your course structure should be designed around them.

Categories for learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

Cognitive skills – reasoning abilities

Practical/professional skills

Key skills – e.g., communication, teamwork etc.

Making learning outcomes meaningful

Learning outcomes should be phrased in terms of what the student should know, understand, and/or be able to do by the time they have successfully completed the course.

Effective learning outcomes contain three elements. An introductory phrase, e.g., *'Upon successful completion of this course, learners should be able to...'* should be followed by:

1. An active verb or phrase (see examples below)
2. An object of the verb
3. A clause or phrase that provides context or condition.

In addition to this, they should be:

- Measurable
- Link to the content, activities, and assessment
- Not be over-complicated – less is more.

Example learning outcome:

'Upon successful completion of this course, learners should be able to:

1. *Describe the benefits and disadvantages of using OER in distance education.'*

Verbs like 'understand', 'know', 'reflect' are very difficult to measure. Using **active** verbs enables students to use the activities to measure how well they've met the learning outcomes.

Examples of active verbs include:

describe, define, discuss, calculate, apply, evaluate, compare, identify, discuss, differentiate, implement, write.

Creating a course structure

Once you've worked out your target learner and developed your learning outcomes, the next step is to develop an outline course structure.

Think about each of your learning outcomes, and how and when you'd like to address each one. It can sometimes be useful to dedicate one Session to each. You have flexibility to rename this 'Week', 'Unit', 'Topic' (or something else) as best fits your content, but for the purposes of this guide we will call them Sessions.

No matter what type of course you're creating, the content for each Session should be broken up into sections, suitable for reading on a screen. Each section should be no more than one side of A4, single-spaced lines – ideally with a catchy and engaging title.

The length or number of learning hours for an online course can vary.

A note on word counts:

A typical learner can absorb a maximum of 2,000 words per learning hour. However, **the ideal word count for an online course is between 1,000 and 1,500 words per hour of study.**

This is because non-text elements such as activities, video, audio, complex graphics and graphs etc. will all take thinking time and should be taken into account when writing. You should also consider the quiz as part of this word count.

For example, a 12-hour course with **no** activities, AV, interactives or complex graphics could consist of 24,000 words **maximum**, whereas a 12-hour course with multiple activities and assets may be closer to 12,000 words – or perhaps even less.

Outline structure

Each **Session** of the course should follow the structure for numbering and hierarchy shown below. This is also a useful structure to use as a starting point when creating other types of online course.

Introduction

About this course

Session 1: Session heading

1.1 Section heading

1.2 Section heading

1.3 Section heading

1.3.1 Subsection heading

1.4 Section heading

1.5 Section heading

1.6 Section heading

1.7 Summary

Session 2

2.1 Section heading

2.2 Section heading

2.3 Section heading

2.4 Section heading

2.5 Section heading

2.6 Section heading

2.7 Summary

Session 3

3.1 Section heading

3.2 Section heading

3.3 Section heading

3.4 Section heading

3.5 Section heading

3.6 Summary

Session 4

- 4.1 Section heading
- 4.2 Section heading
- 4.3 Section heading
- 4.4 Section heading
- 4.5 Section heading
- 4.6 Summary

Session 5

- 5.1 Section heading
- 5.2 Section heading
- 5.3 Section heading
- 5.4 Section heading
- 5.5 Section heading
- 5.6 Section heading
- 5.7 Summary

End-of-course quiz

References

Acknowledgements

Creating course content

Course description

This is a specific, short summary which will sit on the homepage for your course. It should act as a 'blurb' to allow the learner to understand what they can expect to gain from the content. You should have:

- Course summary (up to 50 words – this sits alongside the thumbnail)
- A longer course description (up to 200 words)

Course introduction

The introduction to your course should be enticing and interesting. Try to set the scene and outline what learners can expect to gain from studying it. Rather than the first line being 'In this course you will...', or similar, it can sometimes be useful to ask a question, or pose an interesting teaching point. You can then give more of a 'traditional introduction' in the following paragraphs. You may also like to include an introductory video or image. Don't forget to include your learning outcomes as well.

You can find an example of this in Appendix 2.

Session introductions

You should also include a brief introduction to each Session of your course, before getting into the teaching content. For example, the introduction for each Session could end with a bulleted list of 3–5 learning outcomes with the lead line 'By the end of this Session, you will be able to:'.

Sections

In a similar way to the Session introduction, each section should begin with a catchy phrase, paragraph or sentence, and should end by leading the learner on to the next section. A section should not start with an activity or contain only an activity.

Each section will appear on a new screen and should be numbered using the hierarchy described previously.

The text should be broken up into sentences and paragraphs suitable for online reading (see the section on 'Voice'). Use images, tables, videos and interactives to break up the text.

Activities

Activities are an important tool to help facilitate learners' understanding of the subject and should not be viewed as simply a 'filler'. They are also a useful way to integrate formative assessment into your course content. The five activity types are outlined below. Speak to your Editor and Project Manager if you need help shaping activity content.

Activity types

There are several types of activities: assimilative, finding and handling information, communicative, productive, and practice/experiential.

Assimilative

Assimilative

read, watch, listen, think about, observe,
review, consider, study

Assimilative activities involve any kind of learning activity where participants can take in or reflect on information.

It includes reading text, watching video clips, listening to audio clips and reflecting on new or existing experiences, knowledge and insights.

Finding and handling information

Finding & Handling Information

list, analyse, collate, discover, access, use,
order, classify, select, assess, manipulate

Finding and handling information constitutes any learning activity where participants can go out and find their own materials or manipulate existing information in some form or other.

For short courses, it includes simple internet searches, discovering and exploring new information sources, engaging with, manipulating or constructing spreadsheets or databases, or creating or analysing charts.

Communicative

Communicative

communicate, debate, discuss, argue, share,
report, collaborate, present, describe, question

Communication involves any activity where participants communicate with at least one other person, which can be a friend, a family member, a colleague or someone else, or engages in some kind of engagement with a forum.

Communication is a key mechanism to stimulate learning and getting participants to articulate and discuss their views, experiences and course related topics is an effective way to stimulate deeper forms of learning.

Productive

Productive

create, build, write, make, design, construct,
produce, draw, compose, remix

Productive activities are any activity where participants produce an artefact of some sort. In short online courses, this can be a written response to a question or task, a drawing or diagram, a picture, or a table, for example. The key criterion is that there is some digital or physical artefact that is being produced as the result of the learner's engagement with the activity, and links to the 'output' aspect of the anatomy of a learning activity.

Practice/Experiential

Practice/ Experiential

practise, apply, mimic, experience, explore,
investigate, perform, engage, trial, simulate

Practice activities involve participants in direct experiences where ideas, concepts, methods or techniques are applied and where skills are developed.

Practice learning can be incredibly powerful as they experience of how something is done. For short online courses, these most often encourage the learner to reflect on their own context and experience, and consider questions posed in the activity.

These activities can also encourage learners to make changes to their working practice and gain new insight.

A note on Forums:

For open courses, we advise you do not use forums. While some activities may lend themselves to forums, we advise you think of alternatives as students can study at any time and so discussions cannot be facilitated and monitored.

However, forums can be accommodated for closed-cohort courses on OpenLearn Create, with set start and finish dates.

It should be noted that not all learners are comfortable or have the time to engage in social activities like forums or webinars, so this sort of activity should be considered carefully before including in the course.

It is also important to note that even on closed-cohort courses, forums **must be moderated**.

Writing activities

Each activity should have:

- a number and heading
- a suggested and reasonable time the learner should spend on it
- an activity question: i.e., a set of clear, sequential instructions to scaffold the activity task
- an activity comment or feedback in which the author reflects on the issues raised by the question, and gives the correct or example answer (if appropriate). This should refer specifically to the content of the activity, and should not make any new teaching points, which can be developed instead in the main text that follows the activity.

When designing activities:

- consider breaking down general questions into easy stages (learners may need feedback between stages) and offering a relatively straightforward 'first stage' (e.g., a concrete rather than an abstract task, or some simple revision).

- be precise about the task(s) involved to guide learners towards the sort of evidence or comments you are seeking. It is helpful if questions are laid out clearly (e.g., with bullet points).
- it helps if the comment, or feedback, on the activity clearly corresponds to the task design (e.g., sequence of questions).
- avoid activities that require learners to guess what is going on in the author's head (e.g., interpretations/opinions).
- activities that help learners to examine visual data – and to describe what they perceive – give useful practice in analytical skills.

You can see some examples of different activity types in the section on [Interactives](#).

Summary

Each Session should end with a summary. This should finish with a short sentence introducing the next Session.

You should also write a summary at the end of the course to help consolidate the learning before the final quiz.

Writing for online

When writing for online, it is important to consider the context of the learner. To optimise learner engagement, your writing needs to be as clear as possible.

Writing in plain English

Write as simply and clearly as possible. Avoid jargon and acronyms, and define terms when you need to use ones that may be unfamiliar to your learners – or where you are using familiar language in an unfamiliar way.

Key points to keep in mind when writing and editing for online:

- **Brevity** is especially important for reading and learning online.
 - Use **short sentences** and keep to the **active voice** as far as possible.
- Consider having only **one idea per paragraph**. You may feel this is restrictive, but in general it's advisable to reduce the amount of content delivered online.
 - **Avoid long paragraphs**, enabling learners to scan the material to gain a sense of structure and context.
- Some learners become disengaged when faced with too much text on screen. Most will read about 25% more slowly than when reading for leisure.
- Where appropriate, **use bulleted lists** to present text, rather than long-form paragraphs, as they are easier to read on screen.
- Use **graphics and images** to help illustrate important information.
- **'Chunking'** – make clear, distinct divisions in the text to aid readability online. Think about using sections, subsections, subheadings and boxes to help with this.
 - Give each section, subsection and sub-subsection a **concise and meaningful title** as this will be visible to learners on the course navigation menu.
 - Chunks of information must use **common sense**, logical organisation and consider convenience. Sometimes it may make sense to link out to external documents.
- Include **linking sentences** to link from one subsection page to the next and improve logical flow.
- Think about the learner as they work through the materials. Shorter pages may help in some cases, but be careful that the line of the argument is not lost and that learners don't have to flick from page to page too often, or scroll for too long.
 - **Avoid long pages**, which tend to disorient readers and require them to scroll for a long time and remember what is off-screen. Each page

or subsection should be a maximum of about two screens worth, i.e., up to around 700 words in length. At this point, you would expect learners to move on to the next page or engage in an activity.

- Summarise the main points of the topic at the beginning and end of each Session. A good way to do this is to list the **learning outcomes** that will be covered. A summary of **key points** at the end of the Session helps the learner to verify they've engaged with all the necessary content.

A note about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI

An increasing number of authors are using AI/Generative AI to author and edit learning content.

Please make your Project Manager and Editor aware if you have done so as it may impact the editing and rights clearance process.

Voice

The text must be learner-facing throughout. It should address the learner as 'you' and avoid the first person. It must also be friendly, engaging and informal, and move away from the traditional academic voice.

'Talking' to learners

As said previously, ideally you should address learners directly, but without putting yourself into the text (unless otherwise specifically appropriate and discussed with your editor).

For example:

Instead of saying 'we mentioned earlier about...'

Say 'you will have read earlier...'

Emphasise how learners should use the course material. Keep pointing learners to useful evidence to back up their learning, and present alternative perspectives to promote critical thinking, rather than simply presenting conclusions.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Open University is committed to equality in line with the guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. There are nine protected characteristics under this legislation:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

While you are writing your content, it will be useful to consider the following:

- Be aware of the nine protected characteristics.
- Be sensitive to the risk of offending, patronising or excluding.
- Avoid jargon (use plain English and avoid figurative language).
- Avoid instructions with visual or physical connotations/descriptions such as 'tick' or 'you can see below...', and instead use a more generic term such as 'select' and 'below there is...'.
- Avoid instructions that refer to colour or sounds alone.
- Avoid condescending language (such as inappropriate use of the word 'victim').
- Avoid Eurocentric or Anglocentric viewpoints.
- Reflect the diversity of contemporary society and ensure accurate representation of cultures.
- Avoid bias and assumptions.
- Don't assume that everyone belongs to the same family structure.
- Use gender-neutral terms.
- Avoid stereotypical images (e.g., old people as frail).
- Embed links under meaningful text (avoid embedding links under phrases like 'you can find out more about accessibility here').

Accessibility

You don't need to worry too much about accessibility, as this is embedded into production, but you need to consider:

Writing links under meaningful text

Where possible, please write meaningful text.

Instead of writing 'you can learn more in the resource here' and linking to 'here', write 'you can learn more in the Author guidance document' and add the link to 'Author guidance document'.

Writing image and graphics alt text and descriptions

All images and graphics (except for decorative images) will need descriptive text.

Informative images: these images give extra information along with the text. In this case, the alt text should be a short description of the image, capturing the most important elements only.

Example:



Caption: Edinburgh Castle

Alt text: Edinburgh Castle from below. The castle sits on a high rock, under a blue sky.

Complex images: these are graphs, charts and diagrams of all types. These images will require both alt text *and* a long description.

Alt text should be no more than a sentence outlining the main trend of the data.

All data presented in the image should then be recorded in the long description.

Example:

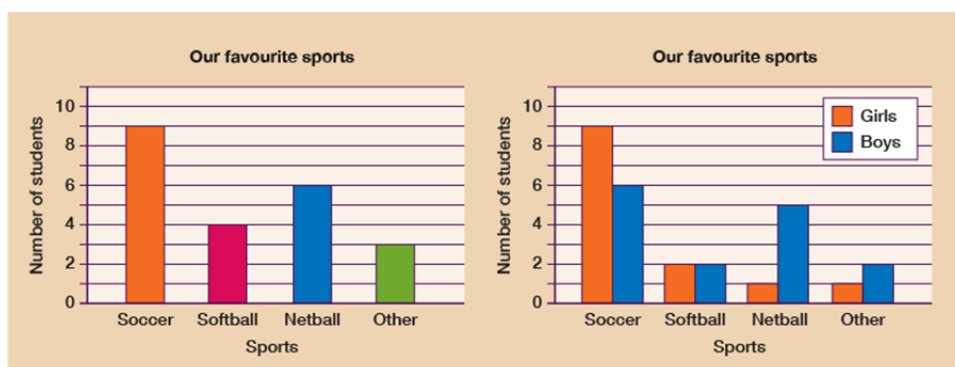


Figure 3 Single and dual bar charts

Caption: Figure 3: Single and dual bar charts

Alt text: Favourite sports broken down into categories on a bar chart. Largest number is Soccer.

Description: Chart 1: single bar chart of favourite sports. Soccer: 9 children, softball: 4 children, netball: 6 children, other: 3 children. Chart 2: dual bar chart with each sport split into girls and boys. Soccer: 9 girls, 6 boys; Softball: 2 girls, 2 boys; Netball: 1 girl, 5 boys; Other: 1 girl, 2 boys.

For further support in writing alt text, speak to your Editor or use the [Accessibility and Usability Evaluation Alt Text guidance](#) (OU staff).

Images and graphics

Images

Using images (photographs) is a good way to show how the learning relates to everyday situations. Images can be purchased from stock photo websites like Getty, Shutterstock and 123rf, all of whom our Content Licensing and Intellectual Property (CLIP) team have accounts with. They will be able to purchase and process the third-party clearances prior to using the images in the course.

Images from other websites can also be used, provided they can be cleared for reuse (either for free or at a cost). However, please bear in mind that the place you find an image might not be the original source and the quality might not be suitable for the platforms (300dpi is recommended). Where possible, please provide the **original** source. If it is unclear who the owner of the image is, it might take some time to find this information and subsequent clearance and purchase

costs, and in some cases it may not be possible to clear the image for use at all. Please advise the production team as soon as possible, who will liaise with the CLIP team to advise if the image can be used.

Graphics

Graphics should be used to both illustrate key points and to break up the text. There is normally no need for more than one decorative graphic per page and a decorative image might not be required if a video, image or informative graphic appears on the page.

Graphics may be redrawn or drawn from scratch; please provide a suitable brief for these. If you would like to use stock images or find images from websites, please include as much information as possible. The CLIP team will then be able to check if they can be used, and if so, advise the cost of clearance.

We can also use graphics under clients' own copyright. If you have images or graphics you would like to use, please provide these with the relevant source information, including URL where found if applicable, name of copyright holder, etc.

If you or a member of your team own the copyright to an image, please provide an email stating we can use it for the purposes of the course to speed up the clearance process.

Complex informative graphics

Corporate and Commercial have a dedicated team of Artworkers and Graphic Designers who can produce informative graphics to help you convey more important and complex information in an engaging way, that also reduces the reliance on text. You will need to provide a brief, sketch or rough idea of any artwork you want the design team to produce.

Please note that redrawing a diagram that already exists elsewhere is not advisable, unless the image is suitably different. There is more information about this in the [rights guidance for authors](#) section.

Figure descriptions should be provided by the author for all artwork (see the section on [Accessibility](#)).

Examples of different types of graphics:

Charts and graphs

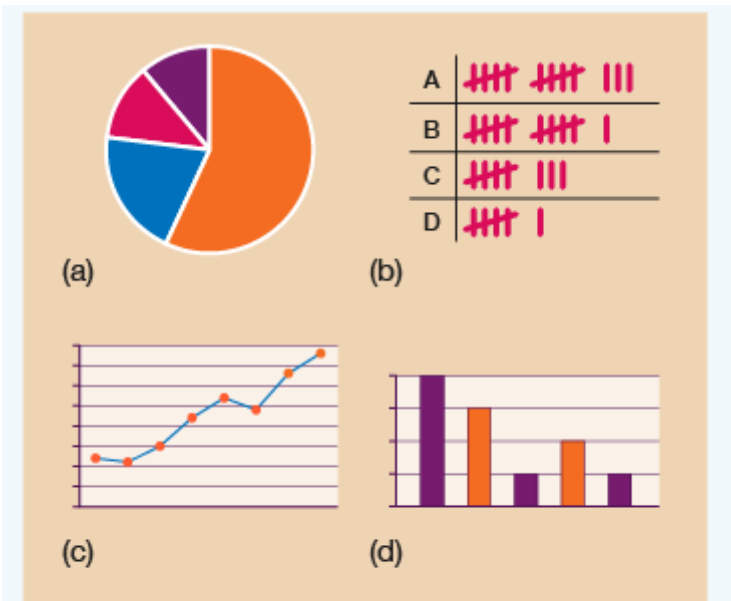


Figure 1 Different types of charts and graphs

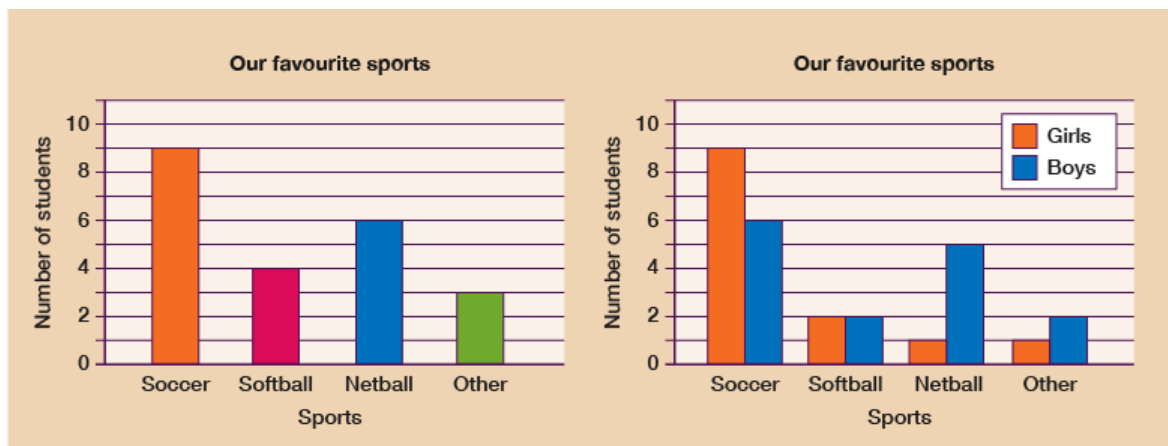


Figure 3 Single and dual bar charts

Cartoons

Cartoons can be an engaging way to illustrate complex issues in a humorous and easily understandable way. A brief will need to be supplied for any cartoons requested, as these are usually outsourced to an illustrator or graphic artist.



Figure 1 Everyday speaking and listening



Figure 1.1 Distractions!



[View larger image](#)

Figure 1.7: Are you listening to local perspectives during programme design?

You can also choose to use cartoons you find online. These would need to be cleared by the CLIP team. The next page shows an example cartoon purchased from an external source.



*"We have an agreement in principle.
The question is, do we all have the same principles?"*

Audio-visual

There are two options for the use of audio-visual (AV) assets: you can either source third-party assets (which would need to be cleared for use by the CLIP team), or you can commission your own pieces.

AV can be used in multiple ways, either as an introduction tool, or as an aid to learning.

AV assets usually take quite some time to produce, either by using the OU V&A team, or by commissioning a freelance production company. Both methods have been used successfully in online courses. You will need to provide a draft script and the Producer will then work with you to finalise the content and ideas for filming/recording.

If you want to commission new pieces of AV for your course, you will need to let the Project Manager know as soon as possible so they can confirm budget and resources are available and engage a Producer.

If reusing AV from another source, it is advisable to purchase the rights to host or embed this rather than linking. Note that linking to online videos can be done, but please be aware that if the video is moved or taken down by the owner, there will be a broken link in your course.

Interactives

Interactive activities help enhance the learning experience by allowing learners to practise and apply what they have learned and get feedback. These should be identified as early as possible to ascertain if they can be done within the normal Structured Content (multiple choice, radio buttons, simple drag and drop) or if they are complex and need to be built by a Digital Production Assistant or an Interactive Media Developer.

Structured Content interactives

Drop-down

The following example shows an activity where learners are asked to complete a sentence by selecting words from a drop-down box:

Complete the sentences shown below by selecting the appropriate word from each drop-down list.

Maximum adsorption corresponds to the formation of a . The surface of the substrate is completely (in other words, the differential heat of adsorption is fractional surface coverage), and the forces of attraction and repulsion between adjacent adsorbed species .

Text box

The next example is asking the learner to write their answer in a text box:

 Activity 3.1: Thinking about 'childhood'

Allow 2 minutes

Take a couple of minutes to think about what 'childhood' means to you. What words spring to mind?

Make some notes in the box below.

Drag and drop

This is an example of a drag-and-drop activity (not all boxes are shown) where the learner drags the image into the correct box (note you can also choose to have draggable text):

Drag each answer (above) into the correct slot (below).

A holiday play scheme worker earns £130.65 per day before tax. How much will they earn for a five day week?

Four packs of glitter pens are purchased for an after school club as a cost of £22. How much does each packet cost?

Multiple choice

Below shows an example of testing learners' knowledge with multiple choice questions:

 **Activity 1.1: Mental health in the ICTA survey participants**

Allow 10 minutes

To find out what participants reported, answer the following multiple-choice questions. Click the 'Check your answer' button to see if you are correct.

Accessing psychology therapy (but not for anything related to gender transition)

1. What percentage of participants said that they were currently accessing psychological therapy through the National Health Service (NHS) (not for anything related to gender transition)?

- ☐ 4%
- ☐ 11%
- ☐ 26%
- ☐ 35%

Check your answerReveal answer

Multi-part activity

Here is an example of a multi-part activity where the learner will watch a video, then type their answer in the box provided:

Activity 4.2: Grant-making plus

Allow 15 minutes

First, listen to why the Food Sovereignty movement is important for the Dalia Association and its partners. Then answer the questions, making notes in the box below.



Show transcript ▾

[Download](#)

- How do you feel the Food Sovereignty Movement counters feelings of dependency on external aid providers?
- How does this Movement help to build confidence and new ways of thinking?
- How does the Movement contribute to maintaining a sense of culture, identity and belonging in a contested society?

Save and reveal discussion

Reset

This is a highly effective way of using AV in an activity rather than a passive 'watch, listen, read'.

Bespoke interactives

Here are some examples of bespoke interactives. You can see these examples working by visiting Corporate and Commercial's ['Interactives' site](#).

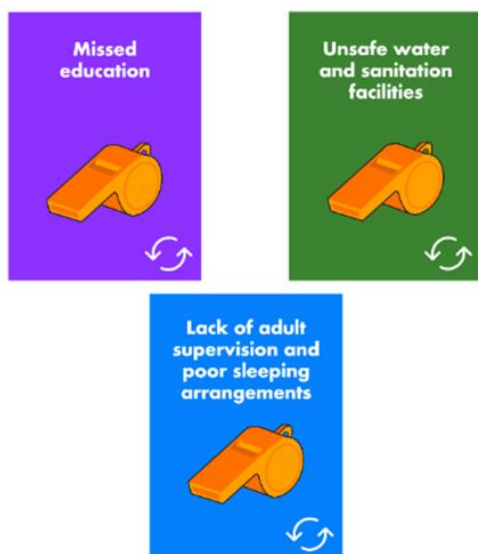
Drag and drop

This is an example of a drag-and-drop interactive, where the learner needs to drag each food item into the correct basket.



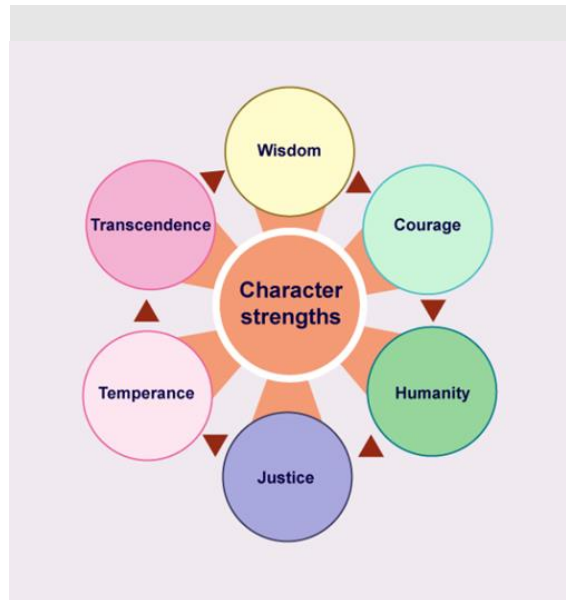
Flip cards

This is a flip-card interactive, where the learner can click on each card for further information to be revealed on the back.



Click-through activity

Below are a couple of interactives that allow the learner to click on certain parts for more detail.



Sliders

Here is an example of an interactive that uses sliders.

Who has been harmed?

Use your mouse to slide the button to yes, no, maybe.

The athletes No

The officials and managers No

The organisation No

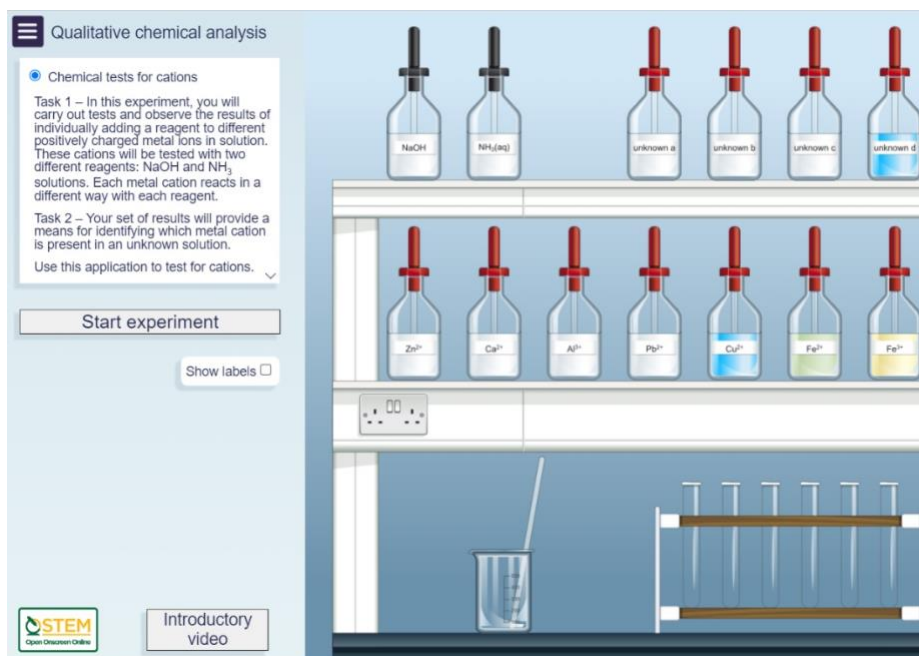
The journalists No

The athlete's family No

Applications

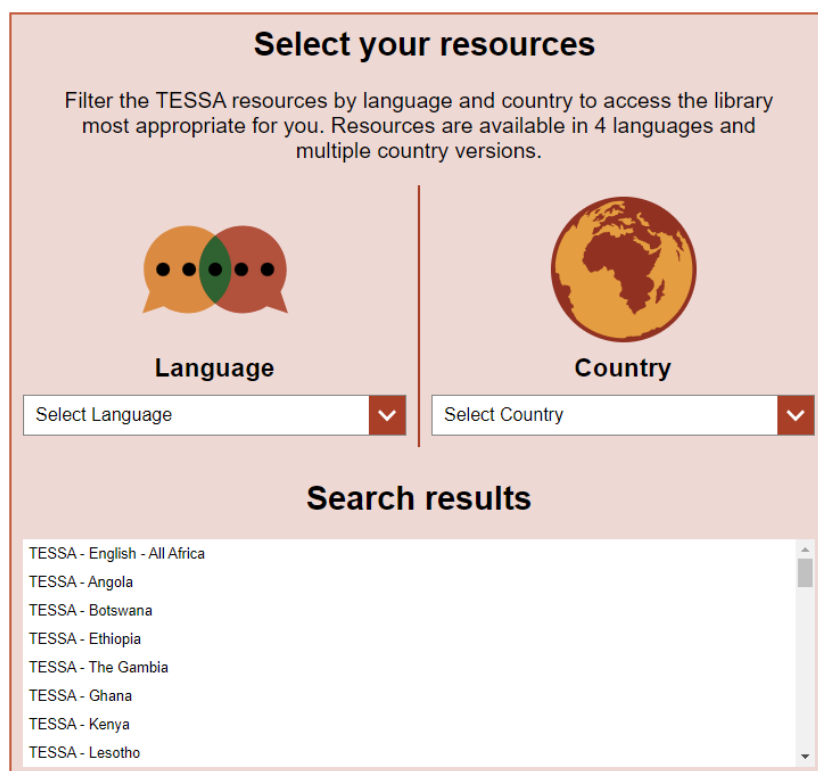
Our Interactive Media Developers can also create complex custom interactives, such as the [OpenSTEM Africa Virtual Laboratory](#).

One app created for this suite is the [qualitative chemical analysis tool](#):



Navigational

Interactives can also be used for filtering of and navigation to resources (see [TESSA](#)):



Assessment

It is important to consider the assessment strategy for the course while the content is being written. It is also important to consider the completion criteria for the course, e.g., does the learner have to visit each page of the course and pass the end-of-course quiz? Course assessment and completion can be set up in different ways and this should be discussed with the Editor and Project Manager prior to course production.

For open courses it is not always necessary to have a quiz at the end of each Session and if you wish, you can just have one final graded quiz to award the badge and/or Statement of participation.

If you need it, the Editor assigned to your course will be able to provide detailed guidance on quiz authoring via our **Quiz authoring guidance** document.

Rights guidance for authors

Third-party material is anything which has not been created by or does not belong to The Open University (OU) or client.

At the OU, third-party content is described as an 'asset'. Assets are logged on our rights management production portal for review by the Content Licensing and Intellectual Property (CLIP) team.

The CLIP team will always try to clear rights for the widest use possible and are the only department insured for risk decisions on third-party material.

This section gives further detail around copyright and how this is applied to clearance and risk decisions.

Basics of copyright

Copyright is automatic and protects your work from unauthorised usage. If you want more information, visit the [Government webpage](#) on how copyright protects your work.

There is no copyright in:

- An idea
- Factual information
- Data
- Headlines
- Research.

The length of copyright depends on the nature of the resource. Copyright laws are complex and there can be multiple layers.

Copyright of a work may have expired, but if someone creates a digital version/photograph/copy then the person who created it owns the copyright of the newly created version.

The creator of a work is automatically entitled to moral rights which include:

- The right to be identified as the author/creator
- The right to object to derogatory treatment of their work
- The right to privacy of certain photographs and films
- The right to object to false attribution of a work.

It is important you don't assume anything when it comes to copyright. All third-party content must be cleared for use by the CLIP team.

Clearance decisions

The CLIP team will assess the proposed use of each asset against the terms of use/licence of the original material. Below is some information about the decisions.

Acknowledgement Only

A risk decision may be taken to use third-party material without obtaining formal permission from the [rightsholder](#), for example, if using a single graph from a book or journal. In this instance, full acknowledgement will be given.

Insubstantial Use

Use may be deemed 'insubstantial'. As a guideline this applies to:

- less than 400 words from a book, or 800 words as discontinuous text (each section no more than 300 words)
- 10% or less of a journal or newspaper article.

The material should always be sourced.

Please note

Insubstantial use is judged by significance as well as quantity. For example, if you only want four words from a whole book, but the book is a murder mystery, and the four words are 'The butler did it!' then it is significant in that it gives away the plot and is therefore not insubstantial.

Licences

Having the correct content licensing attribution is important to ensure legal compliance, maintain ethical standards, increase transparency, add credibility, and facilitate future use of materials.

When available, licences and terms and conditions/terms of use will be checked to establish permitted use. If not outlined by the third-party source, then a risk decision may be taken, or formal permission will be requested.

All Rights Reserved

The author of work is asserting they hold all the copyright to the work and cannot be used without the author's permission.

Creative Commons

One type of licence widely used by third parties is a Creative Commons (CC) licence. The different types of CC licence are outlined below.

Public domain: CC0 (aka CC Zero)

Works are now out of copyright and others can reuse the work without the need to ask for permission. Others can distribute, remix, tweak and build on your work, even commercially.

Credit must be given: CC BY

Others can distribute, remix, tweak and build on the material, even commercially, if they credit the original creation. This is most open licence available.

ShareAlike: CC BY-SA

Others can distribute, remix, tweak and build on your work, even commercially, if they credit you for original creation and license their new creations under identical terms.

This licence allows:

- Re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator.
- Commercial use.
- Remixed, adapted or material built upon the original must be licensed under identical terms.

NonCommercial: CC BY-NC

Others can remix, tweak and build upon the material non-commercially. Their new works must be acknowledged and be non-commercial, but they don't have to use the same licence terms for derivative works.

NonCommercial-ShareAlike: CC BY-NC-SA

Others can remix, tweak and build upon the material non-commercially if they credit the creator and license their new creations under the identical terms.

NoDerivs: CC BY-ND

Others can redistribute **unchanged** and attributed to the creator, commercially and non-commercially.

NonCommercial-NoDerivs: CC BY-NC-ND

Others can only download and share if they credit the creator, but they **cannot change it** or use it commercially.

More information about creative commons licences can be found on the [Creative Commons website](#).

Please note

Some corporate work may not be considered to be non-commercial, so any NC licensed Creative Commons works will require formal permission, and will therefore take longer to clear.

Reuse and adaptation

Redrawn/Adapted

If third-party material is [redrawn](#) or [adapted](#) then both versions will need to be checked to ensure that there is no copyright infringement and/or the original licence allows this treatment.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing can be a useful alternative to using direct quotations from thirdparty material and has the benefit of being able to be written to a 'house style'. Please note that the source must still be cited and referenced, and the meaning or essence of the original work must not be changed.

People/Brands

Images of recognisable people (even if from a free photo library), brands, logos and advertising require details of the [context](#) in which they will be used. This is because they cannot be portrayed in a false or derogatory manner, nor can the OU be seen to be endorsing a product or brand.

If a recognisable person or brand is requested because it is 'nice to have', or the context is contentious, then it may be preferable to source a different image without branding, or where a person is not identifiable e.g., from the back, face in hands, etc.

Original sources

The CLIP team require the original source of any third-party material that is to be used. Please see below information about different sources, and our minimum requirements:

Articles

Articles can take several weeks or more to clear as the publisher must be contacted for permission. Articles often require a usage fee, which can cost thousands of pounds.

Please highlight this type of use early, especially when the use forms part of a task or is considered critical reading.

Required:

- The original source
- If a quote or extract is required, details of the specific text/page numbers.

Books

Permission for usage from books can take up to 12+ weeks and a fee will often apply. Publishers may also have limitations on what they will license from a book, for example, no more than one chapter.

Digital books

Required:

- The original source
- If a quote or extract is required, details of the specific text/page numbers.

Images

Images can be found from numerous sources. The OU have agreements in place with many [picture libraries](#). However, for images that are not held by a picture library, formal permission will be required.

Required:

- The original source (this should be the source where the image was originally found, and not a link straight to the image).

Author-provided images

If you are including your own images, please provide a high-resolution image and written permission for use (either course-specific, or for wider use). An email to the Project Manager or Digital Production Assistant with details of the image, the use and permission will suffice. This will be passed to the CLIP team.

Redrawn/Adapted

[Redrawn](#) and [adapted](#) images need to be checked against the original.

Required:

- The original source (i.e., the place it came from)
- A copy of the original material (e.g., the actual image)
- A copy of the redrawn/adapted version.

Journals

Journal articles can take several weeks or more to clear as the publisher must be contacted for permission and will often have a usage/licensing fee.

Sites like ResearchGate and Open Praxis hold journal articles. However, they tend not to be the [rightsholder](#), nor permit the use required (including through linking). In this instance, CLIP will have to contact the publisher which takes time, and there is often a usage fee.

Required:

- The original source
- If a quote or extract is required, details of the specific text/page numbers.

Reports

When dealing with company reports (even if they are published and seemingly publicly available on their websites) permission is generally needed from the company to include it in course material. The timeframe for this can vary, as can the fee.

Required:

- The original source (this should be the source where the report was originally found, and not a link straight to the pdf of the report)
- If a quote or extract is required, details of the specific text/page numbers.

Weblinks

Links to websites cannot automatically be cleared without formal permission. Many websites prohibit [deep linking](#) and an increasing number of sites are now going behind [paywalls](#), so the page is not accessible without site subscription.

Required:

- Link to the website

Please note

If you are an OU member of staff, when accessing articles, books and journals whilst logged into your OU account, you will have access to a great number of resources due to the Library's subscriptions. Currently, Corporate course students/learners do not have access to the OU digital library subscriptions, so please keep this in mind when sourcing material.

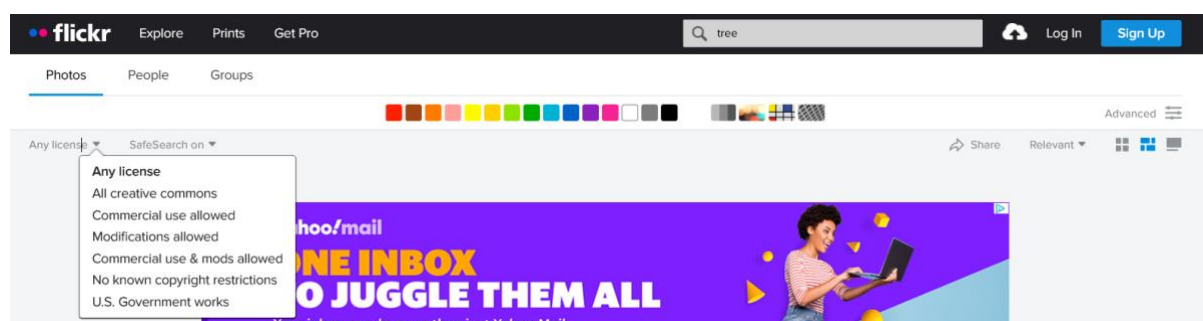
OU-recommended image and text resources

Images

Flickr

<https://www.flickr.com/>

Flickr images are licensed by the creator and will use one of the CC licences or be '© All rights reserved'. Those licensed under a CC licence will be quick to clear. Images under '© All rights reserved' will require formal permission from the [rightsholder](#), and therefore require more time for clearance. When searching for an image, you can select to display only those with a certain licence, for example, this search for a tree:



Picture libraries

There are many picture libraries that hold large numbers images, ranging from free generic stock photos that can be used for any purpose, to very specialised

images that come with high fees and limited use. Below are some picture libraries that we often use, and their indicative costs.

Free to use for any purpose (including commercial*)

[Unsplash](#)

[Pexels](#)

[Pixabay](#)

[Pixahive](#)

[Free Images](#)

*some images within these picture libraries may have limitations on use, but this should be highlighted on the platform.

Image libraries the OU have rates with

Please note

These costs are correct as of 2024. All costs listed are subject to change and have been incorporated to help you budget and plan for photo usage.

[123RF:](#)

- £4.00 (medium image)
- £6 (large image)
- £10.00 (extra-large image)

[Alamy:](#)

- £39 (plus VAT): multiple reuse in any and all Open University editorial, educational productions, print and/or online – worldwide, forever.
- £19 (plus VAT): website (open/social) single placement – worldwide, 12 years.
- £15 (plus VAT): website (password-protected) single placement – worldwide, 12 years.
- £49 (plus VAT): non-teaching, e.g., marketing, posters etc. single placement – worldwide, 5 years.

[Dreamstime:](#) £0.36 per image

[Getty Images:](#)

- £12.72 per image (generally royalty-free images)
- £28.80 per image (generally rights-managed images)

[Shutterstock:](#)

- £12 – digital use, in perpetuity
- £24 – all media, in perpetuity
- £30 – rights-managed (editorial) images – all **digital** media, single-use context, 15 years
- £42 – rights-managed (editorial) images – all media, single-use context, 15 years.

Please note

The OU no longer use iStock. iStock is now owned by Getty Images and iStock assets were migrated to the Getty Images platform.

Text

Please note

These costs are indicative. All costs listed are subject to change and have been incorporated to help you budget and plan for text usage.

The cost of licensing text varies from publisher to publisher, as does the timescale to clear, so the sooner it goes on the portal the better.

Below are some examples of quotes Corporate and Commercial have received in the past, to give an indication of costs:

- Bloomberg article: costed individually – example cost 1,000 students/five years – \$550
- Harvard Business Review article: \$7.85 per copy/per student
- Sloan review article: \$6.95 per copy/per student
- Wiley journal article: costed individually at \$0.25 per page/per student

References and citations

An important aspect of using third-party materials is proper referencing and citation. Where third-party texts have been paraphrased or directly quoted, there

should be an in-text citation, followed by a full reference provided in a reference list.

At The Open University, we follow the Harvard Referencing system. Your editor can help edit your references if you aren't sure how, but you will need to ensure that citations are in place and the basic information is provided. Below are some examples of the most common reference types and the information required for each.

Book:

Surname, Initial. (Year of publication) *Title*. Edition. Place of publication: Publisher. Series and volume number if relevant.

ebook:

Surname, Initial. (Year of publication) *Title of book*. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Journal:

Surname, Initial. (Year of publication) 'Title of article', *Title of Journal*, Issue information, Page reference. Available at: DOI/URL (Accessed: date).

Website:

Organisation/author (Year that the page was published/last updated) *Title of web page*. Available at: URL (Accessed: date).

If you have an OU staff login, you can use [this link](#) to help you.

Appendix 1: Learner profile template

Name:		Subject(s) being studied:	
Age:	First Language:	Level of study:	

Practical Needs (for example, related to accessibility)

Study motivations/career plans

Living Situation

Previous Educational Experiences

Any other
details
you would

Tuition Likes

Study Skills Strengths

Tuition Dislikes

Study Skills/Weaknesses

Expectations for the course

Appendix 2: Course introduction sample text

Quite often, a lot of thought is given to the course content, assets and quiz questions and the course introduction and guidance is left to the last minute. Here is some sample wording which might be useful, taken from a current live course in OpenLearn. However, the text can be adapted for OpenLearn Create courses.

Introduction and guidance

This free badged course, *Everyday English 1*, is an introduction to Level 1 Functional Skills English and Level 1 Essential Skills Wales Communication. It is designed to inspire you to improve your current English skills and help you to remember any areas that you may have forgotten. Working through the activities and learning the tips and techniques outlined in this course will help you to communicate more effectively in everyday life and make progress in your career.

You can work through the course at your own pace. You may find it helpful to have at hand a notepad and pen, although you can make and save notes online within the course material.

The course has three sessions, with a total study time of approximately 48 hours. The sessions cover the following topics: speaking and listening, reading and writing. There are plenty of examples to help you as you progress, together with opportunities to practise your understanding.

The regular interactive quizzes form part of this practice and the end-of-course quiz is an opportunity to earn a badge that demonstrates your new skills. You can read more on how to study the course and about badges in the next sections.

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- understand how to make a range of relevant and extended contributions to formal and informal discussions
- read and understand the main points and ideas in a range of straightforward texts
- utilise information contained in various texts and identify suitable responses
- construct a range of texts to communicate information, ideas and opinions

- utilise accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar to communicate clearly in writing.

Moving around the course

The easiest way to navigate around the course is through the 'My course progress' page. You can get back there at any time by clicking on 'Back to course' in the menu bar.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page (including links to the quizzes), to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

What is a badged course?

While studying Everyday English 1 you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's mission to promote the educational well-being of the community. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning.

To complete a course, you need to be able to find about 48 hours of study time. It is possible to study at any time and at a pace to suit you.

Badged courses are all available on The Open University's OpenLearn website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University courses because you do not receive support from a tutor. But you do get useful feedback from the interactive quizzes.

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a way of demonstrating online that you have gained a skill. Schools, colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media.

Badges are a great motivation, helping you to reach the end of the course.

Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course should encourage you to think about taking other courses, for example enrolling at a college for a formal qualification. (You will be given details on this at the end of the course.)

How to get a badge

Getting a badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

read all the pages of the course

score 70% or more in the end-of-course quiz.

For all the quizzes, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false type questions you usually only get one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the end-of-course quiz, it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 70% and so not be eligible for the OpenLearn badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will often receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

If you're not successful in getting 70% in the end-of-course quiz the first time, after 24 hours you can attempt it again and come back as many times as you like.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge – so you should see getting a badge as an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned rather than as a test.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, look at the OpenLearn FAQs. When you gain your badge, you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in My OpenLearn within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge.

Now get started with Session 1.

Back to [Course overview section](#).

Appendix 3: Copyright glossary

Acknowledgement Only

A risk decision to use the material without formal permission, but we provide a full acknowledgement.

Adapted

A new work is created but is essentially the same as the original work. For example, a theory model that has been updated with modern terminology.

Context of use

This is required for any assets containing images or details of identifiable people, brands, logos and advertisements. Context is required to ensure that The Open University does appear in a way that is either derogatory or seen to be promoting.

Deep link

A link that goes directly to a webpage, instead of to a website homepage. Some websites require that traffic is only directed to their homepage.

Embedded

When material is made available on our platform, rather than linking through to its original source.

Optional reading/further reading

A source is given for further reading around a subject; however, students are not required to view it as part of the course.

Out of Copyright

The period by which the material is protected by copyright has passed. Please note that copyright law may differ in different countries – we check and abide by UK law.

Paywall

Access on a website is restricted unless users have a subscription, or membership to the site.

Public Domain

The material belongs to, or is available to, the public and is not subject to copyright or legal restrictions. The Rights team will also check that the content has

been made available in the Public Domain legally. Some public domain content will still have copyright.

Redraw

This applies if a work is being reproduced as per the original, with no substantial adaptations, for example into house style.

Reference only

This applies when a source or document is given, however students are not directed to it as part of the course.

Rightsholder

The person/entity that owns the work or has the right to issue copies by lending, licensing, selling, allowing adaptations of the work for use by others.

Rights managed

We pay-per-use for the material. The fee depends on the usage.

Royalty free

We pay a one-off fee for the material, which can be reused across projects, in perpetuity. Restrictions may still apply, for example, non-commercial use only. There is still copyright in a Royalty Free material.