



**2022**

# OER Faculty Survey: Data Conclusions

**libraries**

**YORK** 

OPEN EDUCATION  
STEERING  
COMMITTEE



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# Introduction

Open educational resources (OER) are free to use and openly licensed teaching and learning materials which can include textbooks, course reading lists, assignments, case studies, lectures and other forms of learning materials that have been produced by experts and educators in the field. Educational resources can also include scholarly outputs that are in the public domain and therefore also free to use as part of a course.

The OER Faculty Survey was open to all York instructors, including Teaching Assistants and teaching librarians. It was open for responses from early May until the end of June, 2022. Most questions were optional, so users could skip questions that were not relevant to them. The survey was also branched so respondents who indicated no experience with OER would not be asked more detailed questions about how they used OER in the past.

Questions took multiple formats. Some multiple-choice questions only accepted one answer, while in other cases users could select multiple answers. There were also open-ended questions that allowed respondents to type their responses and Likert questions where users rated their agreement on a scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

## Executive Summary

The Open Educational Resources Faculty Survey (OER) was created by the York University Open Education Steering Committee (OESC) to gather information on current faculty awareness and use of OER in their courses. The OESC also hoped to learn about instructors already engaged with adopting, adapting and creating OER.

### Demographics

Respondents were most likely to be professional stream faculty (61%), have 15 or more years of teaching experience (56%), and to be tenured (41%). A little less than half of respondents came from the Faculty of Health and Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies (LA&PS) with 26 responses each.

### OER Familiarity

Sixty-eight per cent of respondents had used Open Educational Resources (OER) before. A majority also agreed that OER are more accessible and affordable than commercial textbooks. There was less agreement about the reliability of OER and if they impact the income of authors of commercial textbooks.

### OER Experience

Similarly, 68% of respondents reported using OER in their classes. Only 27% said they used one of the trusted OER databases listed, and faculty were much more likely to select Google and YouTube as paths to find OER. Many respondents reported that they did not know where to find high-quality OER. Of those who had used OER before, 54% reported creating their own.

### Promotion & Tenure

Fifty-five per cent of respondents were unsure if OER were recognized in the tenure & promotion policies of their department or faculty, but 15% said OER could count toward "evidence of teaching contribution." "Recognition as teaching contribution towards T&P" was also the most commonly selected incentive to use OER, followed by "Access to expert staff" and "Grant funding."

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

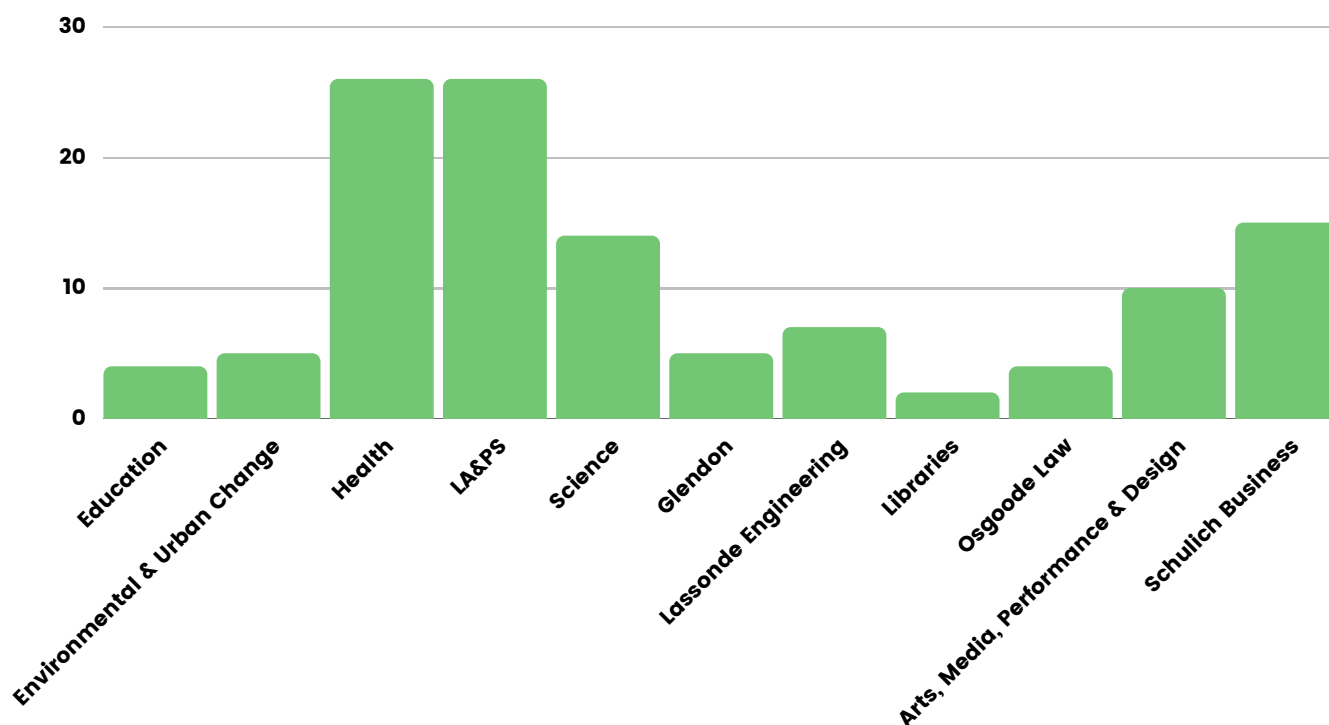
Around 62% per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there is interest at York in contributing to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [OER Mandate](#). In contrast, only 19.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they had created an OER that aligned with a UN SDG. Tenured and tenure-track faculty were much more likely to indicate that they had created an SDG-aligned OER.

### Creative Commons (CC)

While three quarters of respondents were at least somewhat familiar with CC licensing (with a quarter saying they were "very familiar"), only around 40% applied CC licenses to their own work.

## Demographics

Instructors from all York University faculties responded to this survey, though the representation of the various units was not proportional. The survey was answered by 121 people from the teaching (38%) and professional (61%) streams. A little less than half of respondents came from Health (26 respondents) and LA&PS (26), with those from the Schulich School of Business (15) and the Faculty of Science (14) representing about 25%.



The following faculties and departments had fewer than 14 respondents, listed here in order, from most to least: Lassonde School of Engineering, Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, Glendon College, Faculty of Education, Osgoode Hall Law School, and York University Libraries.

Most of the respondents (56%) had more than 15 years of experience in the field, while 16% had 10-14 years, 18% had 5-9 years, and the remaining 10% had less than 4 years. The respondents were primarily tenured (41%), contract faculty (28.2%), or tenure-track (21.4%), with teaching assistants (4.3%), archivist/librarians (1.7%), and others (3.4%) comprising the rest of the sample.

## OER Familiarity

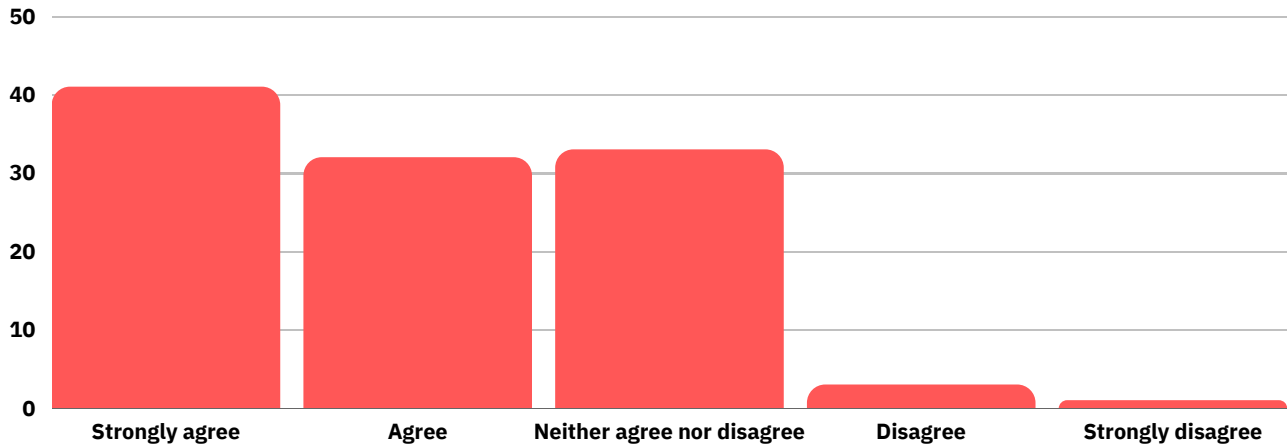
This sample showed a highly motivated group of individuals, as 60-79% agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: “Cost of textbooks/software is a financial burden for students;” “I am interested in creating an OER;” “I am interested in incorporating/continuing using OER in my institution;” “OER are a more accessible/flexible alternative; and OER are a more affordable alternative.” This coincides with the fact that about 68% of those surveyed have used OER in the past, showing that OER is considered important by most of the user base. It is important to note that potential respondents already familiar with OER were more likely to fill out the survey.

The results are nonetheless encouraging as they show an engaged core of OER-aware faculty and illustrate some of the areas where they are already engaged. The cost of textbooks also informs the use of OER. Ninety per cent of the sample respondents agree or strongly agree that textbook costs and/or software can be a significant financial burden for students while 77% agree or strongly agree that OER are a more affordable alternative to commercial textbooks and 66% agree or strongly agree that OER are a more accessible/flexible alternative to commercial textbooks. Seventy-six per cent agree or strongly agree that the cost of textbooks has influenced their decisions about what to include on a syllabus. However, only 30% agree or strongly agree that OER are just as peer-reviewed and reliable as commercial textbooks and only 15% agree or strongly agree that OER do not impact the income of the authors of commercial textbooks. This shows a clear willingness to use OER within classrooms but raises questions about the perception of quality.

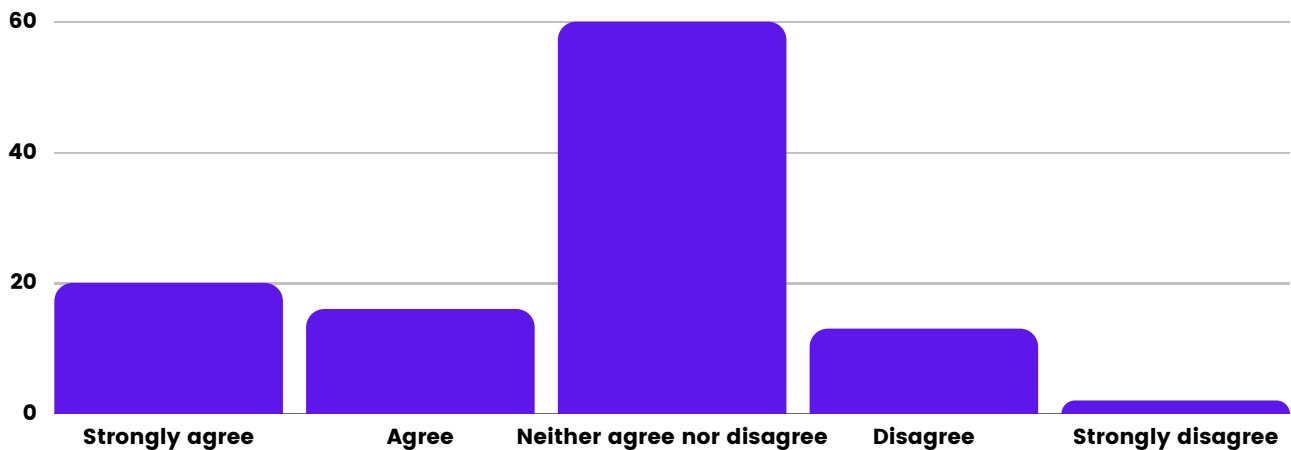
# Perceptions of Accessibility and Reliability

Faculty were asked to react to the following two statements on a scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The results show a gap between perceptions of accessibility vs reliability when it comes to OER.

**OER are a more accessible/flexible alternative to commercial textbooks.**



**OER are just as peer-reviewed and reliable as commercial textbooks.**



**66%**

of faculty agreed or strongly agreed that OER are a more accessible/flexible alternative to commercial textbooks

## OER Experience

Sixty-eight per cent of the sample reported using OER in their classes. Commonly adopted OER include digital videos (57 responses), online activities (35), and open-source handouts (32) and textbooks (30), with digital presentations (28), digital quizzes/testbanks (19), Wikipedia articles (18), and online lesson plans (13) used at lesser frequencies. Thirty-seven respondents indicated that they used OER that did not fall under these categories.

Respondents appeared to have limited awareness of where to search for and find OER. YouTube (50) and Google (51) searches were the most cited sources for OER materials. The eCampusOntario Open Library, a well-known site dedicated to OER in Ontario, was used at lesser frequency (20). Additional OER search engines/databases were used more rarely (e.g., OER Commons: 9; OpenStax: 8; MERLOT: 7; LibreTexts: 2).

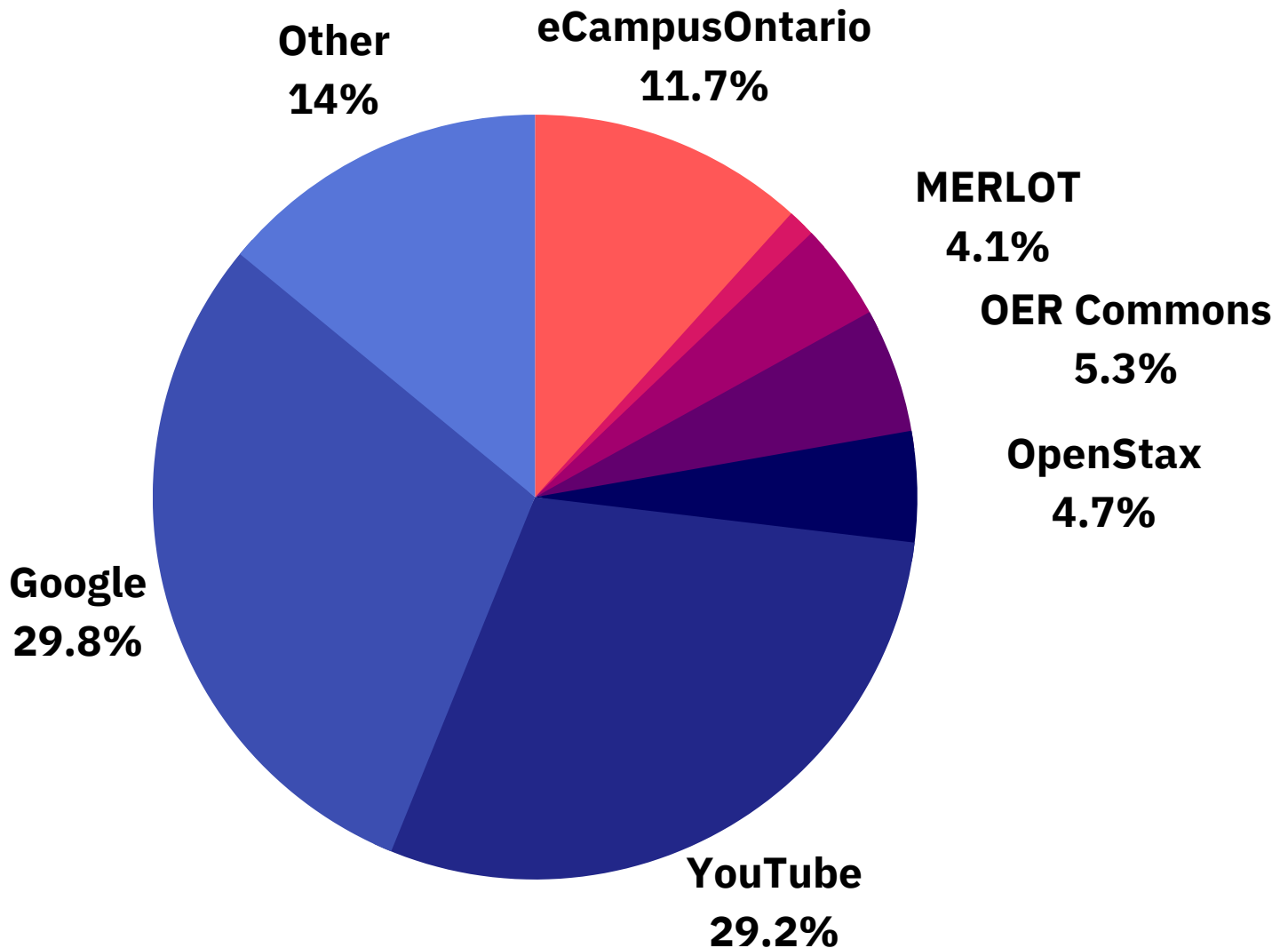
A lack of awareness of how to find high quality OER was also evidenced in responses to several additional questions on the survey. First, of the 78 individuals who had used OER in this sample, 54% had created their own OER. The top reason reported for doing so was "to fill a gap where the right resource didn't previously exist" while other reasons, including "providing low or no cost option for students" (24 respondents selected this), "providing an interactive resource" (20), or "desire to engage with new type of media"(21) were cited less often. Moreover, responses to the open-ended question "what challenges do you experience/anticipate experiencing with using or adapting OER?" focused mainly on issues with finding OER of high quality.

Respondents wrote "the main challenge is finding suitable content" and "Knowing where and how to access them [OER]." Others indicated they were not satisfied with the quality of what was found. Taken together, these results suggest an opportunity to increase awareness of established sources for finding high quality OER. Further, additional clarification of how existing OER can be leveraged or adapted for use would be beneficial.



## Where do you search for OER? Check all that apply.

Respondents were given a range of OER sources to choose from and could make multiple selections. Note: **OASIS** and **LibreTexts** were also options but they received less than 1% of selections.



**27%**

of selections were from the list of trusted OER databases, while the remainder were Google, YouTube or another source

Respondents certainly displayed an appetite to learn more about OER, noting that webinars or modules would be an especially helpful way to do so (74). Working one-on-one with librarians (64) and attending conferences or symposia on the topic (54) were also popular suggestions. When asked what could further encourage them to create, use or adopt OER in their own courses, respondents considered availability of OER addressing specific learning objectives (85), support for finding relevant OER (79), and funding to create or substantially modify OER (67) the most important factors. Thus, either creating the supports or promoting readily available supports could potentially increase use of OER. Similarly, creating or advertising funding sources to support the development or adaptation of OER would spur interest.

Respondents also reported several barriers to adopting OER beyond those related to difficulties in finding quality resources. These include issues with time and workload (e.g., "The issue is sifting through all this stuff online -- this is time consuming!"), lack of awareness of OER ("I need better familiarity with what's out there"), and a lack of disciplinary credibility or recognition of the utility of OER ("I am in a discipline where peer-reviewed educational resources are the gold-standard"). Additionally, more than half of respondents (54%) were unsure of what recognition they would receive for adopting or creating OER.

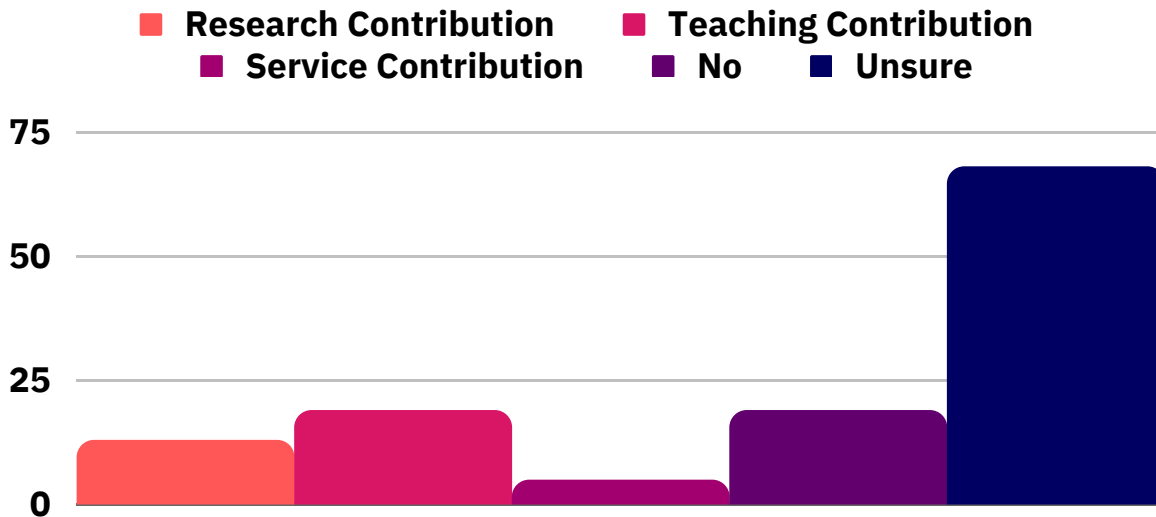
## Promotion & Tenure

This section of the survey sought to understand how the adoption of OER resources and the creation of OER content are perceived and considered within the tenure and promotion (T&P) process, and to discover whether T&P policies regarding OER already exist. Some respondents said OER were part of T&P in their department, with 15% saying OER could count toward "evidence of teaching contribution." Nonetheless, another 15% said "no" and 55% were unsure. These results suggest that there is some inclusion of OER in T&P policies across the university, though it is not widespread and/or widely understood by most units.

## Are OER recognized for T&P in your department/faculty?

Faculty were prompted with the following: "Are OER recognized for the purposes of promotion and tenure in your department/faculty? Select all that apply."

Respondents could make multiple selections and even write in their own answer if needed.



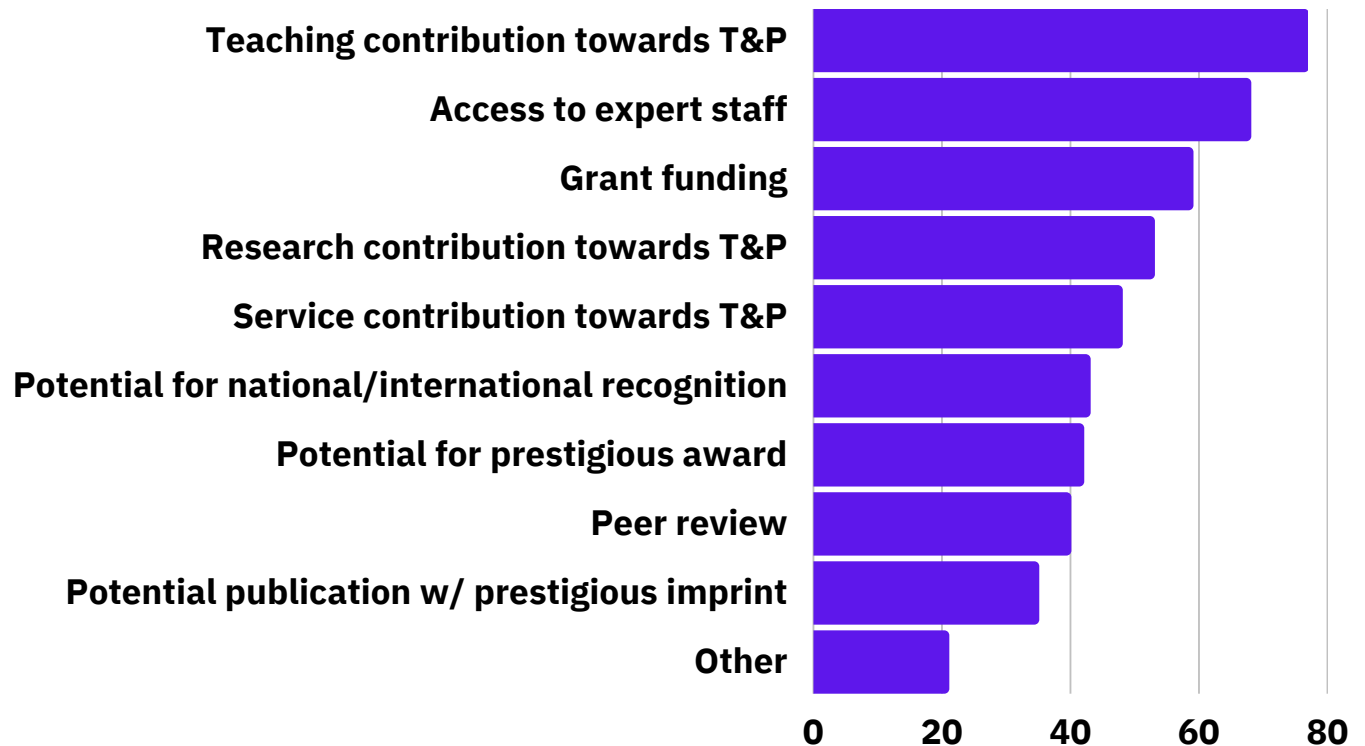
Among those who said yes to considering OER creation and usage as evidence of teaching and research contributions, 87% were tenured professional stream and 72% were tenure-track teaching stream. In addition, respondents were asked what would incentivize the creation of OER in their department or faculty and given an array of possible incentives to choose from, as presented in the table below. They could select multiple answers and were provided the option of inputting their own answer in the "Other" field. Out of 121 responses to the survey overall, 111 faculty responded to this question. The results indicate that T&P could be huge incentives to incorporating OER. Following "Recognition as teaching contribution towards T&P," the most desired incentives were "Access to expert staff" and "Grant funding." Other T&P-related options were also highly selected by respondents.

**15%**

**of faculty said OER could count toward  
"evidence of teaching contribution" in their  
department or faculty**

## What would incentivize the creation of OER?

Faculty were prompted with the following: "Please check all of the following that would incentivize creation of OER in your department/faculty." They were given 9 options, could choose multiple answers, and could also add their own custom answer if needed.



**77**

respondents chose "Recognition as teaching contribution towards T&P"

**68**

respondents selected "Access to expert staff"

**111**

faculty responded to this question out of 121  
total respondents to the survey

## UN Sustainable Development Goals

In our survey we asked 3 questions pertaining to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Faculty were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “There is interest at York in contributing to the UNESCO OER Mandate,” according to a Likert scale. Survey results show a significant interest in contributing to the mandate among York faculty. Nearly 30% of respondents strongly agreed that there is interest at York University, and an additional 32.5% said they agreed.

Tenure-track faculty showed the most enthusiasm regarding this question, with 40% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing. Tenured faculty were also quite enthusiastic, with 33% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing. About 17% of Contract faculty strongly agreed and 41% agreed.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “I have created an OER aligned with a UN Sustainable Development Goal.” The results were more mixed with this prompt: 16.2% strongly agreed, while 13.5% agreed. 33.8% neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting that they weren't sure.

Tenure-track respondents were the most likely to strongly agree at 33%, with 22% for tenured and 12% for contract faculty. Contract faculty were the most likely to strongly disagree at 18.75%, compared to 16% of Tenured faculty and 5% Tenure-track. This suggests that contract faculty may not have experienced as many opportunities to create OER.

## Creative Commons

The respondents were asked about their level of familiarity and engagement with Creative Commons (CC) licensing and whether they assigned CC licenses to their own work. While three quarters of respondents were at least somewhat familiar with CC licensing (with a quarter saying they were “very familiar”), only around 40% applied CC licenses to their own work. Respondents could also choose “Other” and write a more detailed answer in a text box. These responses showed various levels of engagement with open licensing. Some respondents did not have an opportunity to learn more about the topic and make it part of their practice. One respondent was very familiar with licensing but tended to use licenses more common in their field (i.e. MIT licensing and the Affero General Public License).

## Conclusion

The results of the OER Faculty Survey show interest in OER among York faculty, willingness for further training and guidance from library staff, and a potential to nourish OER knowledge among instructors. Many York faculty that answered the survey already use OER in the classroom, and some have already been creating their own. Time and resources are constant barriers to the integration of new practices, but there are promising indicators that enthusiastic faculty will remain engaged if the libraries meet them where they are. While OER are not currently a part of most T&P policies at York University, there is evidence that that they may have been incorporated in a few instances and that there are paths to further incorporation. While there is still much to do, foundations for the future of OER can be seen in the results of this survey.

## Acknowledgements

The 2022 OER Faculty Survey and this report were made possible by members of the Open Education Steering Committee, the Committee's Working Groups, and other members of the York University faculty and staff. These contributors include Chris Ardern, Mary Helen Armour, Helen Balderama, Hilary Barlow, Marlene Bernholtz, Bridget Cauthery, Lily Cho, Sarah Coysh, Lisa Endersby, Rob Finlayson, Mandy Frake-Mistak, William Gage, Violeta Gotcheva, Karthiga Gowrishanger, Mojgan Jadidi, Philip Kelly, Sean Kheraj, Joy Kirchner, Andrea Kosavic, Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier, Jodi Martin, Anjum Nayyar, Stephanie Quail, Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, Robindra Sidhu, Anni Siren, and George Z. H. Zhu

This survey was modeled after the [MSU Instructor Survey](#) on OER conducted by McMaster University and the [UBCO OER Survey](#) conducted by the University of British Columbia Okanagan.

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## Appendix: Survey Questions

1. What faculty are you primarily associated with?
  - Faculty of Education
  - Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change
  - Faculty of Health
  - Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies
  - Faculty of Science
  - Glendon College
  - Lassonde School of Engineering
  - Libraries
  - Osgoode Hall Law School
  - School of Arts, Media, Performance & Design
  - Schulich School of Business
  - Other
  
2. For how many years have you been teaching in higher education?
  - Less than 2 years
  - 2-4 years
  - 5-9 years
  - 10-14 years
  - More than 15 years
  
3. What is the nature of your faculty appointment with York?
  - Archivist/Librarian
  - Contract faculty
  - Teaching Assistant
  - Tenure-track
  - Tenured
  - Other
  
4. Please indicate your stream:
  - Teaching Stream
  - Professorial Stream
  - N/A



5. Have you assigned, recommended, revised/remixed, or created one or more of the following? Open textbooks, freely available lesson plans, editing or creating Wikipedia articles, freely available digital quizzes or text banks, freely available digital videos, animations, or simulations, freely available class handouts, online interactive activities and tools (including apps), freely available digital presentation slides, or a freely available digital resource that does not fall under the above categories.

- Yes
- No or unsure

6. Which of the following have you assigned, recommended, revised/remixed, or created? Select all that apply.

- Open textbooks
- Freely available lesson plans
- Wikipedia articles (edited or created)
- Freely available digital quizzes or text banks
- Freely available digital videos, animations, or simulations
- Freely available class handouts
- Online interactive activities and tools (including apps)
- Freely available digital presentation slides
- A freely available digital resource that does not fall under the above categories
- None of the above

7. What kinds of OER have you used in your courses? Please list courses and the corresponding OER in use.

8. Where do you search for OER? Check all that apply.

- eCampusOntario Open Library
- LibreTexts
- MERLOT
- OASIS
- OER Commons
- OpenStax
- YouTube
- Google
- Other

9. Do you experience any challenges with utilizing or adapting OER and, if so, what could alleviate these challenges?

10. Have you ever created an OER?

- Yes
- No
- Other

11. If you have created an OER, what motivated you to do so? Check all that apply.

- Filling a gap where the right resource didn't previously exist
- Providing a low or no-cost option for students
- Providing an interactive resource
- Desire to engage with new types of media
- Other

12. Would you anticipate any challenges with utilizing or adapting OER and, if so, what could alleviate these challenges?

13. In their OER mandate, UNESCO stated the following: “UNESCO believes that universal access to information through high quality education contributes to peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue. OER provide a strategic opportunity to improve the quality of learning and knowledge sharing as well as improve policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building globally.” Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

- There is interest at York in contributing to the UNESCO OER mandate.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- I have created an OER aligned with a UN Sustainable Development Goal.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

14. If you created an OER aligned with a Sustainable Development Goal (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>), which SDG(s) were represented and how did the OER align with the goal?

15. Are OER recognized for the purposes of promotion and tenure in your department/faculty? Select all that apply.

- Yes – as evidence of research contributions
- Yes – as evidence of teaching contributions
- Yes – as evidence of service contributions
- No
- Unsure
- Other

16. Please check all of the following that would incentivize creation of OER in your department/faculty:

- Recognition as research contribution towards tenure
- Recognition as teaching contribution towards tenure
- Recognition as service contribution towards tenure
- Grant funding
- Access to expert support staff
- Peer review
- Potential for winning a prestigious award
- Potential for publication with a prestigious imprint
- Potential for national/international recognition
- Other

17. How familiar are you with Creative Commons licenses?

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>)

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not familiar
- Other

18. How often do you assign Creative Commons licenses to your own work?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never
- Other

19. Rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. (For each statement, respondents could choose one of the following: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree)

- OER are a more affordable alternative to commercial textbooks.
- OER are a more accessible/flexible alternative to commercial textbooks.
- OER are just as peer-reviewed and reliable as commercial textbooks.
- OER do not impact the income of the authors of commercial textbooks.
- The cost of textbooks has influenced my decisions about what to include on a syllabus.
- The cost of textbooks and/or software can be a significant financial burden for students.
- Time and resources are barriers to the adoption, adaption or creation of OER in my classes.
- My students would like an open-source text.
- I am interested in incorporating OER into my instruction (or continuing my use of OER if I've already used them).
- I am interested in creating an OER.
- I am interested in receiving funding for the creation, use or peer review of OER through an organization such as eCampusOntario.

20. What could assist you in learning about OER and possibly incorporating them into a course or other academic work? Check all that apply.

- Webinar/module
- Working one-on-one with a librarian or other OER specialist
- Conference/symposium or other type of interactive event
- None of the above, I am not interested in learning about OER
- Other

21. What would encourage you to create, use or adapt an OER in your courses?

Select all that apply.

- Availability of relevant OER addressing course learning objectives
- Support for finding relevant OER
- Funding to create or substantially adapt OER for classes
- Minimizing cost burden for students
- Equalizing access to course materials for students

22. If you would like to elaborate on any of your answers, or provide further comments regarding OER, please do so here:

23. If you would be interested in a follow-up interview where you could give feedback and ask questions, please share your contact email here (optional):