Open Content Syndication Online Standard

Version 1

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This document forms part of The Open University’s suite of web standards, available online at www.open.ac.uk/about/web-standards.
1. **Summary**

1.1. This standard describes which open data and content types by The Open University (OU) that can be syndicated onto internal and external websites, and the supported methods for doing so.

1.2. This standard refers solely to open content; that is, OU-branded, educational content that is produced, commissioned or acquired by the OU and then released, for no fee, into the public realm via major branded OU media channels (OpenLearn) or third-party channels (e.g. the OU’s channels, on; iTunes U, YouTube, Audioboom, Faculti, Bibblio, SlideShare, etc.).

1.3. Most open content created by The Open University is made available under one of the Creative Commons licenses. The requirements of these licenses supersede any of the requirements below where there is a conflict.

1.4. This document should be read in the association with the Open Educational Media Policy published by OMU (http://www.open.ac.uk/about/open-educational-resources/what-we-do/open-media-unit)

2. **Who is this document for?**

2.1. You should refer to this document if:

- You are an internal web development team that wishes to syndicate content from an OU site onto another internal site, or any third-party sites/channels; or
- You are an external organisation interested in commissioning or making use of existing OU materials on a non-commercial basis.

3. **What is online syndication?**

3.1. Online syndication is a form of syndication in which website material is made available to multiple other sites and channels. Previously, online syndication referred to making web feeds available from a site in order to provide other people with a summary or update of the website's recently added content (for example, the latest news or forum posts). Most recently the term is used in the syndication of individual or collections of assets and courses via feeds, embed codes, or the uploading of content (by agreement only) to third party platforms and applications. The term can also be used to describe other kinds of licensing website content so that other websites can use it.

3.2. For further details about the OU’s policy on syndicating content and its benefits, refer to [Syndication Policy Document which will be published in due course].

3.3. For a more detailed description of online syndication in general refer to Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_syndication].
4. **General principles**

4.1. The OU is keen to syndicate its open content onto internal and third-party websites provided it is managed correctly. Free learning resources are core to the OU’s social mission (as outlined in our Royal Charter), but be aware that the return on investment in this area is linked to reputation building, brand recognition, new marketing opportunities, technology innovation, partnership formation, and the triggering of new student registrations.

4.2. Any requests for significant content syndication MUST be approved by the Director of Open Media and the Senior Producer: Social & Syndication (Open-Content@open.ac.uk).

4.2.1. ‘Significant’ is deemed to be where 5% or more of the original content is syndicated.

4.3. All requests regarding the publishing to new channels or significant syndication requests are time limited and reviewed by the Open Media Advisory Group.

4.4. All content MUST retain OU brand association. This includes (but not restricted to) the use of OU digital on-screen graphics (DOGs), OU front and endboards as provided on the original content, the retention and abidance of the relevant Creative Commons licence without modification, and for the syndicating organisation NOT to use their brand in association as a co-brand with the OU, unless formally agreed otherwise.

4.5. All content MUST retain proper attribution to the OU along with links back.

4.6. All content MUST have ‘canonical referencing’; that is, a natural search for syndicated content will deliver the user to The Open University, not the third-party who has provided a potentially high profile but additional platform for OU content.

4.7. Access to all content syndicated from the OU MUST be provided on a non-exclusive basis unless otherwise agreed with the Open Media Unit.

4.8. All syndicated openly licensed OU content must be made openly available on third-party sites, without requiring users to log-in in order to access it, unless explicitly agreed otherwise.

5. **Guidance by type**

5.1. This section provides guidance to consumers of OU content about how the different syndicated content types are made available and what changes, if any, can be made to them once they are included on a website.

5.2. **Headlines**

5.2.1. A headline is typically up to 40 words long, and denotes the content of the related article text.
5.2.2. Headlines are syndicated using RSS and can be used by consumers without the OU’s prior knowledge.

5.2.3. Licence type: Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial, Share Alike ([http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB)).

5.2.4. Headline content that is available for use by consumers is displayed in conjunction with the RSS icon and often in association with the text ‘subscribe’.

5.2.5. You MUST NOT alter the content of this feed in any way.

5.2.6. You MAY make changes to the format and presentation of headline content to integrate with your site theme.

5.2.7. You SHOULD include a note saying that *This content is provided by The Open University* along with The Open University logo. This is in addition to maintaining the link in the RSS feed (via the title text) to the original article.
   - The Open University logo can be found in the
     ```xml
     <channel>
     <image>
     <url>
     ```
     element of the RSS.

5.2.8. Where the content is made available under a Creative Commons licence ([http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB)) a link to this license should be made available in the relevant RSS field.

5.2.9. If you include the logo you MUST NOT make any changes to the shield and you SHOULD reference it on your site using an absolute URL; for example `<img src="http://www.open.ac.uk/includes/headers-footers/oulogo-56.jpg" alt="The Open University">`.
   - Alternatively you can contact the Digital Engagement team at digital-engagement@open.ac.uk and request an Open University logo to use with the correct code for inclusion.

5.2.10. If you carry advertising on your site you MUST NOT claim, or give reason for readers to infer, that The Open University either endorses those products or your site.

5.2.11. You MUST NOT claim any exclusivity in relation to the OU assets or in relation to its association with the OU.

5.2.12. Syndication feeds are provided “as is” without warranty of any kind. The Open University reserves the right to cancel this service at any time, without notice.

5.3. Articles

5.3.1. An excerpt is deemed to be either:
• Up to 40% of the original article; or
• The full content of the article, where an article created on an Open University site is reused by an external organisation in full.
• Whereby the referencing or full content of the article is used, the citing of and linking back to the full article on the OU’s site MUST be done.
• Whereby an article is licenced under Creative Commons, the licence MUST be retained and abided by (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB).

Separate guidance is provided in clause Error! Reference source not found.5.4 below for OpenLearn study units.

5.3.2. Excerpts are syndicated using RSS if syndicating a series of articles, or text/HTML if reusing a single article, and MAY be used by consumers without the OU's prior knowledge.

5.3.3. Licence type: Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial, Share Alike (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB).

5.3.4. When receiving the content using RSS you MUST add a canonical link attribute to the <head> of the page that carries the content. The destination of this link can be found in the <item>'s <link> element of the RSS feed.
• Please discuss specifics if the content appears on a page with multiple other stories.
• If you receive the content as a text / HTML file this canonical reference will be included.

5.3.5. You MUST give full attribution to both the author and publisher in a prominent position on the page.
• The text will be similar to: <academic name> is Professor of X at The Open University. This article was originally published on <date> as <story name on OU site as a link to original article>. To find out more visit <Open University site name as a link>). “<license type> [year of publication] The Open University.”
• Where you are consuming this content as an RSS feed the attribution text will be included in the <item>’s <description> element. You will also need to render the OU logo within the RSS feed or reference one from the OU brand asset bank.
• If you receive the information as text the code for embedding an iFrame containing the above will be made available to you.

5.3.6. Navigation pages of the partner service displaying OU promotional assets MAY show advertising provided there is no implied association between the OU and such advertising.
5.3.7. You MUST NOT display any advertising on screens displaying OU content, unless the license associated with the content expressly permits this.

5.3.8. OU content MUST NOT be used to secure business from advertisers.

5.3.9. You MUST NOT claim any exclusivity in relation to the OU assets or in relation to its association with the OU.

5.3.10. You MUST NOT claim or imply any OU endorsement of the partner service or its business activities.

5.3.11. Syndication feeds are provided to consumers "as is" without warranty of any kind. The Open University reserves the right to cancel this service at any time, without notice.

5.3.12. If you are a Content Partner involved in the creation of the content any significant or breaking changes will be discussed in advance.

5.4. Open Media Unit Content

5.4.1. Open Media Unit (OMU) content can consist of, but not restricted to, the following: open online courses (including MOOCs and BOCs), study units, reading units, AV material (videos, images, audio, slideshows, etc.), interactives, articles and applications.

5.4.2. OpenLearn content can be syndicated using RSS, XML, SCORM, or Moodle backup.

5.4.3. Licence type: Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial, Share Alike (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB).

5.4.4. You SHOULD provide a link back to the original source, in addition to the appropriate attribution that is automatically given to The Open University.

5.4.5. If you use, amend or incorporate any OMU content provided under a Creative Commons licence, you MUST use the following attribution: 

'(content name). OpenLearn content used/reworked by permission of The Open University copyright © (Year).' If your use is online the content name should be a link back to the original source.

5.4.6. If content has a named author then you MUST add the following citation: ‘Written by (name)’ with a link back to their MyOpenLearn profile.

5.4.7. If your use is online, you MUST also include a link to the Creative Commons ‘Attribution; Non-commercial; Share Alike’ licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB).

5.4.8. If your use is offline you MUST include the web address of the Creative Commons licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB).
5.4.9. We aim to make OpenLearn content freely available for non-commercial educational use in all media worldwide. The content in which we own copyright are licensed for you to use under the Creative Commons licence 'Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share-Alike'. This means that you MUST meet the following requirements to use the materials:

- Your use is ‘non-commercial’.
- You always cite The Open University and retain the name of any original authors.
- You ‘share-alike’; that is, make any original or derivative works available under the same terms as our licence to you. Derivative works MUST be redeposited in the OpenLearn Works.
- Content MUST retain OU brand association
- Content MUST retain proper attribution to the OU along with links back.
- Content MUST have ‘canonical referencing’; that is, a natural search for syndicated content will deliver the user to The Open University, not the third-party who has provided a potentially high profile but additional platform for OU content.

5.4.10. We grant you the right to make use of the materials as they are or in modified form. You MAY translate, modify, print, network, reformat or change the materials in any way providing that you meet the terms of The OU’s Syndication Policy and Creative Commons licence.

5.4.11. You MAY use content in which we do not own copyright, but which we have licensed for use from other rights holders (as identified in the acknowledgements of the content and in the article information of other OpenLearn content) freely as part of your use of the website providing that you meet the terms of OMU’s Syndication Policy but you MUST not modify them or use them as stand-alone items.

5.4.12. You MAY modify any OpenLearn content surrounding unit materials that we have licensed for use from other rights holders, and retain the extract for use within the modified version providing that you meet the terms of OMU’s Syndication Policy.

5.4.13. Full and authoritative information on this is available on the OpenLearn website [http://www.open.edu/openlearn] or by contacting the Open Media Unit (Open-Content@open.ac.uk).

5.4.14. If you are not repurposing content but are simply representing it in a public environment (i.e. it is not on an intranet or otherwise not available to search engines) you SHOULD add a canonical link attribute to the <head> of the page that carries the content. The destination of this link will be provided along with the text. Please discuss specifics if the content appears on a page with multiple other stories.

5.4.15. You MUST include an Open University icon when reusing content. To obtain the correct logo contact the Open Media Unit Director of Open
5.4.16. Navigation pages of the service displaying OU promotional assets MAY show advertising provided there is no implied association between the OU and such advertising. Please include this information as part of the syndication request.

5.4.17. You MUST NOT display any advertising on screens displaying OU assets.

5.4.18. OU assets MUST NOT be used to secure business from advertisers.

5.4.19. The partner MUST NOT claim any exclusivity in relation to the OU assets or in relation to its association with the OU.

5.4.20. The partner MUST NOT claim or imply any OU endorsement of the partner or its business activities.

5.4.21. Please refer to the Open Educational Media Operating Policy for further information (http://www.open.ac.uk/about/open-educational-resources/open-media-unit/open-educational-media-operating-policy).

5.5. Quotations

5.5.1. Quotations are syndicated as text. This clause is to be used in reference to clauses 5.2 and 5.3 accordingly.

5.5.2. Licence type: copyright is retained by The Open University unless otherwise stated.

5.5.3. Appropriate attribution is given to authors and The Open University in a form similar to <academic name> is Professor of X at The Open University or for Drs we would say Dr Name Surname, Senior Lecturer / Lecturer in Discipline at The Open University.

5.5.4. You MUST NOT claim any exclusivity in relation to the OU assets or in relation to its association with the OU.

5.5.5. You MUST NOT claim or imply that you or any of your business activities are endorsed by the OU.

5.6. Images

5.6.1. Images are provided as assets by The Open University.

5.6.2. Licence type: Copyright is retained by The Open University unless otherwise stated.

5.6.3. You MUST correctly attribute the image to either The Open University as the rights owner, or to the owner of the image from whom the OU has received distribution permission.
5.6.4. You MUST NOT alter the license terms of the image.

5.6.5. You MUST NOT alter the image in any way unless license terms permit this.

5.7. Audio / Video

5.7.1. We provide embed code for all videos on our third party channels.

5.7.2. Licence type: Copyright is retained by The Open University unless otherwise stated.

6. Usage Scenarios

6.1. This section describes some common usage scenarios when syndicating OU content.

6.2. I would like to make use of your RSS feeds on my site.

6.2.1. Refer to clauses 5.2, Error! Reference source not found.5.3 and Error! Reference source not found.5.4 in this standard for information on how to use OU RSS feeds on your site.

6.3. Who do I speak to about advertising on an Open University site?

6.3.1. The Open University does not permit advertising on any of its sites.

6.4. Who do I speak to about securing comment from an Open University academic?

6.4.1. Contact Media Relations: Media-Relations@open.ac.uk

6.5. Who do I speak to about the OU / BBC relationship or OU / BBC co-productions?

6.5.1. Contact OMU Broadcast: OMU-Broadcast-Media-Sales@open.ac.uk

6.6. Who do I speak to about marketing opportunities that The Open University may wish to take advantage of?

6.6.1. Contact Marketing: Marketing-Enquiries@open.ac.uk

6.7. Who do I speak to about using some OU course material 'as is' or repurposing and changing the material for commercial use?

6.7.1. For commercial use you should contact the Business Development Unit at ouwenq@open.ac.uk. For all other enquiries you should contact the Senior Producer: Social & Syndication (Open-Content@open.ac.uk).

6.8. An external party has approached me regarding the reuse of OU content / creation of new content by Open University employee(s). What should I do?

6.8.1. In the first instance you should contact Head of Intellectual Property at I ts-rights@open.ac.uk to discuss this. The external site will be assessed to
determine whether it is suitable and whether it fits with The Open University mission. Where appropriate a content sharing partnership will be agreed and content will be made available to them in a manner consistent with their needs and the methods detailed in this document.

6.9. I am the owner of an Open University site and would like to reuse content from an existing Open University site (e.g. OpenLearn, Open.ac.uk, etc.).

6.9.1. This is not permitted without explicit permission from the business owner of the site whose content you wish to use. In the first instance you should contact the Senior Producer: Social & Syndication [Open-Content@open.ac.uk] to mediate this.

6.9.2. The Open University goes to great lengths in order to deliver a coherent user experience and clear pathways through its content; therefore, it is preferable that material is not duplicated across various OU sites.

6.9.3. If content is shared across OU sites, in order that it remains consistent it will be shared in a format that is capable of reflecting updates to the original.

6.9.4. If you are an Open University employee and wish to include creation, reuse / use of Open University Open Media in a research bid you must have agreement from the Open Media Unit (Open-Content@open.ac.uk).

6.10. I run an external site but am an Open University employee. I have created content for publication on an Open University platform and would like to make use of this content on my own site.

6.10.1. The Open University owns the Intellectual Property of all content created by Open University employees in the course of their employment. If you are an author of Open Media content and wish to use this content on your own external (non-OU) website or platform (e.g. iTunes) you must talk to the Senior Producer: Social & Syndication [Open-Content@open.ac.uk]. It is preferable that a link is made to the OU site, or the content is embedded, instead of replicating the content. However a case for reuse can be made where the external site reaches significantly more people, or different audiences than the OU site, and where the site can comply with the Terms of Use.

6.10.2. As per clause 6.9 above, please contact OMU to discuss.

6.11. I would like to share video/audio content with my blog readers or on my channel/site.

6.11.1. Any content that you share (uploads, comments, favourites, likes, playlists etc.) will be posted to your feed and seen by your subscribers on their homepage (dependent on platform functionality). There is no need to download the video and re-upload to your channel.
6.11.2. If you wish to show the content on your blog or website please use the embed code made available by the platform on which the content is hosted.

6.12. I would like to reuse a significant portion or all of an Open University piece of content on my site.

6.12.1. Refer to clause Error! Reference source not found. 5.3 above for advice on reusing part or all of an OU article.

6.13. I would like to reuse some OU images that I have seen on one of your websites.

6.13.1. Refer to clause 5.6 above for advice on using OU images.

6.14. I would like to reuse part of a video / audio podcast that I have seen on iTunes / iTunes U or podcast.open.ac.uk.

6.14.1. With agreement from Open Media Unit the original source files can be provided and broken into smaller sections. The contact for this should be the Senior Producer: Social & Syndication [Open-Content@open.ac.uk].

6.15. An external site wishes to reuse OU content but cannot work to a syndication model or embed. Can we give the site owner the original files/ assets?

6.15.1. Yes, as long as the site has agreed with the Open Media Unit that it can host the files on its own servers. Full details are provided in the OU Syndication Policy.

7. Document history

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>12-10-2012</td>
<td>First draft created based on appendices 2 and 3 of the Open Content Syndication Policy. Distributed to the Syndication Working Group for comment.</td>
<td>Victoria Jolliffe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>16-11-2012</td>
<td>Revised based on comments from the Working Group.</td>
<td>Victoria Jolliffe</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>28-03-2013</td>
<td>Minor amendments and clarifications. Distributed to Working Group for final review before sending to the Standards Reference Group.</td>
<td>Victoria Jolliffe</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>10-04-2013</td>
<td>Amendments made to contacts at the Open Media Unit, based on feedback from Hannah Gore.</td>
<td>Victoria Jolliffe</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6/11/2014</td>
<td>Comments included from Faculty group mostly concerning issues of how these guidelines interact with the rights / requirements of Creative Commons license.</td>
<td>Stuart Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>29/01/2015</td>
<td>Updated due to changes in platforms and licencing</td>
<td>Hannah Gore</td>
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8. **Working Group Membership**

Matthew Culnane (Digital Engagement)
Alma Hales (LTS)
Katie Meade (LTS)
**Simon Budgen (OpenLearn) (Chair)**
Anna Page (OMU)

9. **Contacting the group**
In the first instance enquiries should be directed through the [Digital Engagement team](#).