

**OER Quality Criteria and Checklist**

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## Quality Assurance (QA) Criteria for Open Content.

The Zanzibar Ministry of Education and Vocational Trainings is in the process of setting up a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that will provide educators and students access to open licensed curriculum resources aligned specifically to the requirements of the Zanzibar curriculum documents. A content management system will act as a repository of teaching and learning resources. These resources will include both locally produced materials and internationally accessed materials. While initially the focus is on providing mathematics and physics resources to support teaching and learning in forms 1 and 2 the database of resources will be expanded to include more subjects and additional forms.

This document is designed to provide those individuals tasked with sourcing Open Educational Resources (OER) for the repository a set of criteria to assess potential new resources for their quality and suitability. In addition the criteria have been organised into an evaluation tool to support the quality assurance processes.

## Open Learning Characteristics

According to Wikipedia, Open Learning, “is a term that refers generally to activities that either enhance learning opportunities within formal education systems or broaden learning opportunities beyond formal education systems. Open learning involves but is not limited to classroom teaching methods, approaches to interactive learning, formats in work-related education and training, the cultures and ecologies of learning communities, and the development and use of open educational resources.”

A QA framework that attempts to evaluate ‘openness’ therefore should identify criterion that broaden learning opportunities. Consider these OL characteristics;

#### Flexibility

There is a shift in the student bodies of many global education institutions, with greater numbers of mature students, students with full time jobs or families, and international students attending class. Consequently, there has been a change in student expectations for their education, with a greater emphasis on job preparedness and customizable or self-directed experiences. Flexible learning is one way to address these shifts. Flexible learning gives students choices about when, where, and how they learn.

* **Pace** – This includes both accelerated and decelerated programmes of study, part-time learning and recognition of prior learning and associated credit frameworks.
* **Place** – Refers to the physical location of learning, whether it takes place in a classroom, or is completed at home, while commuting, or as part of a work-based experience.
* **Mode** – Refers to the ways that technologies can be used to deliver learning in fully online, blended, or technology enhanced programmes.

Learners, instructors, and institutions all have a role to play in flexible learning.

* **Learners** must take responsibility for their own learning, taking advantage of opportunities that are presented to them.
* **Instructors** must manage the learning process rather than being the primary provider of learning material.
* **Institutions** must build flexible systems that provide students with choices in their learning, as well as maintaining the frameworks that ensure a quality learning experience.

#### Accessibility

Open Learning suggests that everyone should have access to quality education. Ideally there should be minimal barriers to educational access. Traditionally, however, there have always been barriers to education access. Some barriers include;

* **Cost** - Fees and tuition often act as a barrier to access.
* **Geography** - The requirement to study on campus has traditionally been a barrier to entry to those who did not live close by.
* **Non-recognition of prior learning** - Many students have experienced a problem of transferring credits from institution to another, or simply being recognised as having acquired skills and knowledge outside the formal education environment. Many institutions will not recognise prior learning from different educational settings.
* **Limited course capacity** - Many students find they cannot study their 1st choice of subjects because there is a capacity to how many people a course can accommodate.
* **Formal time limits and timetabling** - Courses are regularly organised to run during formal semesters or terms. For those who have competing responsibilities, such as work or family commitments, access to these courses was not ideal. Also, there is often a time limit to when a study programme should terminate rather than allowing students to learn and develop at their own rate.

Open institutions should embrace strategies that eliminate these barriers.

#### Student-centred learning

Another characteristic of Open Learning is the emphasis on the student, not the teacher. According to Wikipedia[[1]](#footnote-2), “Student-centred learning aims to develop learner autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students. Student-centred instruction focuses on skills and practices that enable lifelong learning and independent problem-solving. Student-centred learning theory and practice are based on the constructivist learning theory that emphasizes the learner's critical role in constructing meaning from new information and prior experience. Student-centred learning puts students' interests first, acknowledging student voice as central to the learning experience. In a student-centred learning space, students choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will assess their own learning. This contrasts with traditional education, also dubbed ‘teacher-centred learning’".

#### Technology mediated learning

In can be argued that technology has made Open Learning (OL) possible because digital devices (computers, tablets and smart phones) are becoming ubiquitous and connectivity costs are slowly becoming more affordable. Technology can be used to improve learning flexibility and access to quality courses and resources. Different technologies are used to support individual learning needs making it more inclusive and allowing learning pathways to be customized to individual strengths and interests.

It is against these open characteristics that the following this QA checklist has been developed.

## How to use the QA checklist

An evaluator’s specific task, to assess individual resources, courses, programmes and/or institutional processes will determine which sets or combinations of QA criteria, described below, to use. If, for example, the evaluator is assuring the quality of teacher generated open educational resources then criteria at the ‘Resource level’ can be used. Alternatively, should the evaluator be tasked with evaluating a course and/or programme the criteria can be drawn from the Course and Programme levels. It is rare that all four QA sets would be used at once. Use the check list rubric to allocate points per criterion.

## Assessment rubric

The table below indicates the rating to be used when using checklist and how to measure the levels of performance for the criterion.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Level of Performance** | **Description** |
| **3** | Exceeds/Always | Criterion evidence is clear, appropriate for the course, and demonstrates "best practices." |
| **2** | Meets/Often | Criterion evidence is clear and appropriate for the course, but there is some room for enhancement |
| **1** | Partially meets/Sometimes | Criterion evidence exists but needs to be presented more clearly and/or further developed. |
| **0** | Does not meet/Rarely or Never | No criterion evidence exists or is present but not appropriate for the course. |
| **NA** | Objective does not apply | It may be something only a fully online course would need and you are teaching a blended course for example. |

## VLE acceptance ratings

The Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE) content curation team decided that for an OER to be accepted into the VLE database the resource would need to score 63/100 or 17/27. However, failure on either the ‘Values and norms’ and ‘Duplicates’ criteria would mean immediate exclusion.

## A] RESOURCE level: Open content QA criteria and checklist

* Quality assurance criteria to evaluate individual Open Educational Resources (OER) developed.
* The criteria can also be used to assess OER found on the internet and the Zanzibar VLE, that will be adapted for new purposes.

| **#** | **Criterion**  The resource ... | **Evidence** | **Yes** | **To a large extent** | **To some extent** | **No** | **Not applicable** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Is relevant and useful. | The resource aligns with either one or multiple specific objectives as stated in the curriculum documents | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 2 | Is accurate and current. | The resource information is up-to-date and correct. There are no omissions. There is evidence that the resource has been peer reviewed. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 3 | Is of a high production quality. | The resource is clear and understandable. It is laid out cleanly. It can be navigated easily. For multimedia resources audio and video are of a high quality. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 4 | Is adaptable. | The resource is available in alternative formats some of which encourage reworking and adaptation. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 5 | Supports inclusive education / accessibility. | Audio and video resources include transcripts and subtitles. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 6 | Encourages interactivity. | The resource encourages active learning and class participation. The resource encourages creativity. There are opportunities for students to test their understanding of the materials. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 7 | Is openly licensed. | The resource displays an open licence that ideally encourages users to adapt and enhance the resource to suit new contexts. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 8 | Is the resource pitched at the right level for the intended learner. | The resource‘s language, scope and content Is appropriate for the learner‘s form and age group | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 9 | Adheres to values and norms | The resource‘s content is aligned to Zanzibar’s moral code? It conforms to the conventional norms of Zanzibar society? | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 10 | Is not a duplication | The resource is not already in the database. | 3 |  |  | 0 |  |

## B] COURSE level: Open content QA criteria and checklist

* Quality assurance criteria to evaluate open courseware (OCW) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) developed.
* The criteria can also be used to assess OCW and MOOCs found on the internet that will be adapted for new purposes.

| **#** | **Criterion**  The course ... | **Evidence** | **Yes** | **To a large extent** | **To some extent** | **No** | **Not applicable** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Can be reviewed before enrolment. | Students access and review the course materials and activities prior to enrolment to determine suitability. Alternatively, prospective students have access to a detailed course prospectus and assessment strategy. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 2 | Objectives and assessment strategy are explicit. | The course objectives and the way the students will be assessed to determine mastery of those objectives is clearly stated before commencement. The course assessment strategy is authentic to the course objectives and outcomes. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 3 | Has a logical structure. | The linkages between course topics and subtopics creates a logical learning pathway for students. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 4 | Has relevant student-centric activities. | There are sufficient, and appropriate, learner activities to ensure that students have opportunities to master course knowledge and skills. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 5 | Has relevant and accurate resources ideally openly licensed. | Students can access course resources that are relevant and accurate (See section A above). Ideally these resources are free or cost effective for the student. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 6 | Has student support strategies in place. | The course has built in student support strategies for academic and technical issues. Contact details of course coordinators, tutors and mentors are in evidence. Peer to peer networks exist to help students help each other. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 7 | Has a facilitation strategy | Students have access to facilitators that provide academic guidance and support either face-to-face, online or both. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 8 | Has opportunities for students to provide input in shaping the course activities and assessment strategy. | Students are consulted and encouraged to shape the course activities and assessment strategy to ensure they are active participants in their own learning. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 9 | Content and activities can be accessed at any time either virtually or in a transportable format. | The course is accessible anywhere and anytime encouraging flexible study time. The course has been mounted on Learning Management Course or MOOC platform that encourages 24/7 access or is available in a format that can be transported off campus. (e.g. paper-based manuals). | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 10 | Offers flexibility in terms of when students engage with the course and activities | Students have flexibility to fit study time into daily schedules that include other demands and responsibilities. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |

## C] PROGRAMME level: Open content QA criteria and checklist

* Quality assurance criteria to evaluate where open programmes have been developed.

| **#** | **Criterion**  The programme ... | **Evidence** | **Yes** | **To a large extent** | **To some extent** | **No** | **Not applicable** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Is compiled of courses that have been chosen by the students. | Students choose any combination of courses to create their study programme. This includes courses selected from across different faculties. Students do not have to provide a second choice when selecting courses for their programme | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 2 | Recognises student prior learning | Students who have completed courses previously, or courses with content that overlaps with components of the programme, or who have professional experience, can opt out of doing specific courses or elect alternative courses to replace them. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 3 | Has flexible completion dates. | Students can study the programme over extended periods of time and do not have to complete their studies within a set time frame, such as a year, semester or term, to graduate. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 4 | Has clear and authentic graduation requirements. | While study methods might be flexible and adaptable the graduation requirements are clearly stated and authentic to the programmes’ objectives and outcomes. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |
| 5 | Credits are transferrable. | Course and programme credits can be transferred to other faculties and/or other higher education institutions so that students can continue studying elsewhere. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NA |

## Attribution

The following Open Educational Resources were adapted and contextualised in the creation of the *Zanzibar VLE: Quality Assurance criteria to review Open Content and checklist*:

* BC OER Librarians. (2015). Faculty Guide for evaluating OER. Available online at <https://open.bccampus.ca/files/2014/07/Faculty-Guide-22-Apr-15.pdf> (CC BY).
* Commonwealth of Learning. (2018). Blended Course Learnability Evaluation Checklist. Available online at <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2941> (CC BY SA).
* Dept. Higher Education & Training (South Africa). (2019). Open Learning approaches in South African TVET and CET Colleges. Available online at <http://lms.nba.co.za/course/view.php?id=81> (CC BY).
* Kawachi, P. (2014). Quality Assurance Guidelines for Open Educational Resources: TIPS Framework. Available online at <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/562> (CC BY SA).

1. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student-centred_learning> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)