

Open Educational Resources (OER) and Seneca: A Quick Update

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by **Kevin Pitts, Professor in the Teaching & Learning Centre**

You may have come across the acronym OER in your travels previously, or you may be hearing it for the first time. What you might not know is that Seneca has been involved in developing and using OER for some time.

So, what exactly is an OER?

Formally, “Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others.” ([UNESCO](#), n.d.)

Any educational materials, such as texts, videos, audio files, images, lesson plans, tests, simulations, books, etc. (or any combination thereof) can be considered OER, provided they are distributed under an open license.

The benefits of OER are many. Students benefit from no cost, immediate, continued access to learning materials. Faculty benefit from the ability to customize and repurpose content for their needs.

What’s happening at Seneca?

Lots of great OER work has already happened at Seneca due to a coordinated [OER Initiative](#) inspired by the efforts of Seneca librarian Jennifer Peters and supported by former VPA Laurel Schollen.

As part of the initiative a [Faculty Guide to Open Educational Resources and Other Alternatives to Textbooks](#) was created. Contained within are many [OER examples](#) created, curated, and/or adapted by Seneca colleagues. We invite you to explore the great work that

is highlighted there.

And the work continues. Some current OER projects include:

- A revamp of the [Organizational Behaviour open text](#) originally adapted by Melissa Warner and Nadia Bedok for use at Seneca, and now undergoing revision with help from Hubert Rau and Deepak Bajaj. It is housed on Seneca's own instance of Pressbooks (an open publishing platform) called [Seneca College Pressbooks System](#).
- An open [Guide to Mathematics of Business and Finance \(1st edition\)](#) by Maksim Sokolov has now been published to complement the existing resources in the MBF100/101 courses. Additional complementary video resources are also being created and made freely available via the [Mathematics of Business and Finance website](#).
- An OER version of the Introduction to Mathematics (Algebra): MTH158 course is being piloted in the winter 2023 semester. An open text has been sourced from [eCampusOntario's Open Library](#), an [Introduction to Mathematics website](#) is being built (work in progress) to house customized, complementary open content, and additional lessons and labs hosted at [myOpenMath](#) (a free and open platform) are being used to replace existing proprietary content.

How can I get started?

The good news is that there are many, many resources available (open and freely available, of course ☺) to help you get started with OER.

You may want to

- peruse [Seneca's Faculty Guide to Open Educational Resources and Other Alternatives to Textbooks](#) and/or explore [the OER Toolkit from the Learning Portal](#) to familiarize yourself with the comprehensive OER tools and information available.
- check out [eCampusOntario's Open Library](#) to locate a potential open text for your course.
- chat with a colleague who has implemented OER to find out what's involved.
- reach out to [The Teaching & Learning Centre](#) (teaching@senecacollege.ca) to find out about future OER initiatives and supports that are available.

And you can start small. You don't have to create an entire open text or a complete OER course – unless you want to! You might create a small “how to” video and publish to YouTube under an open license. You might create or curate a small online activity (see [eCampusOntario's H5P Studio](#)) and embed it in your Learn@Seneca course.

Regardless of the extent to which you want to get involved, we welcome you to come and join our growing Seneca OER community.

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