Dear Professor [Professor's name],

I hope you're doing well. My name is [your name], I am a [Xth] year student studying [your program]. I am emailing you today to express my support for the adoption or creation of Open Education Resources in your classrooms in the following semesters. The following outlines what OERs are and why they are important to students and our campus.

Now, more than ever, post-secondary students in Canada are facing financial hardship. Many of us have lost our incomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while those of us who did not work have been left out of government subsidies like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. International students are especially vulnerable at this time due to their ineligibility for many of the government programs. Students are going to have to make some tough decisions in the coming months: whether to buy groceries or textbooks; going further into debt or putting our education on hold.

In the spring of 2021, StFX Students responded to a survey about how the cost of textbooks had impacted them. 1654 of our students engaged in the survey, and it found that 14% of students had not bought groceries or adapted what food they chose to buy because of the cost of textbooks. 10% of StFX students said they hadn't paid a bill, or paid it late, and 25% said that they chose to complete courses without the textbook because of the cost.

The use of OER is important to me as a student because I don't think one in four students on StFX campus should have to forego a learning material essential to a course because of its cost.

The fastest and least expensive way for post-secondary institutions to reduce students' financial barriers is to increase the usage of no- and low-cost course materials, including open educational resources (OERs). OERs are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. OERs are not limited to textbooks, and can take the form of workbooks, online teaching modules, articles, informational videos, and so on.

Students at StFX are urging faculty to consider switching to free or low-cost materials where possible. Many quality resources that are published under open license exist, and we ask professors to search for these for their classes, and prioritize their use. Many professors across the Maritimes and Canada have already made the shift towards OERs, saving students hundreds of thousands of dollars and adding improved accessibility to post-secondary learning.

Advantages of OER for faculty

There are advantages to using OER for faculty as well! OERs use a Creative Commons license, which allows users to share and adapt the content, as long as appropriate credit is given. Instructors can then adapt OERs to their individual teaching needs and update content live throughout the course as new research emerges.

OERs give the opportunity for better representation of marginalized voices. Its unique personalization allows for the addition of unique perspectives through community-relevant case studies. Personalized learning allows students to engage in real world activities that promote content learning, set goals and monitor progress to reflect on their learning. Studies have shown higher engagement in classes where professors use OER. Their dynamic and interactive nature make them incredibly useful classroom resources for both students and faculty.

How can you implement OERs in your classrooms?

AtlanticOER is our local repository of OER and includes OER written by faculty across maritime Universities. It also has access to many other repositories such as BCcampus and offers professors the Pressbooks platform where they can edit existing OER. If you are considering switching to OER, it can be a good place to begin your search. https://atlanticoer-relatlantique.ca/

You can also contact our Scholarly Communications Librarian, Meghan Landry at mlandry@stfx.ca for support related to copyright, intellectual property, where to find OERs.

Thank you,
[Your name]