

Adopting Open Educational Resources (OER) for Tertiary Education

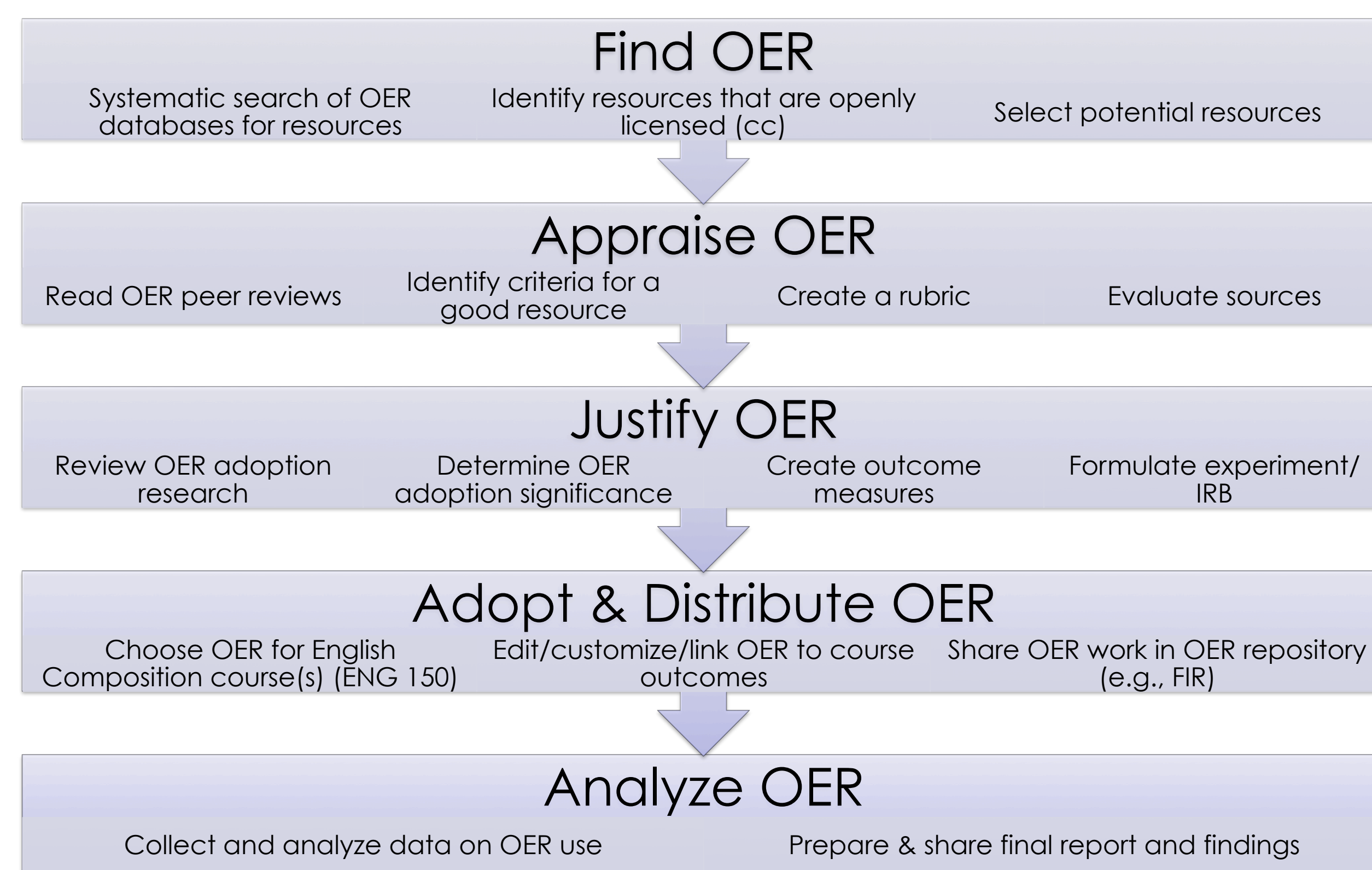
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Introduction

The purpose of the Free the Textbook faculty learning community was to learn about OERs and investigate alternatives to traditional textbooks, including their quality and potential impact on student debt and learning outcomes. To achieve this goal, faculty utilized different approaches for identifying open resources, developed criteria or best practices for reviewing open textbooks in their field, completed a written review of an open textbook and committed to use OER in Fall 2017. Figure 1 provides a visualization of the full OER adoption process.

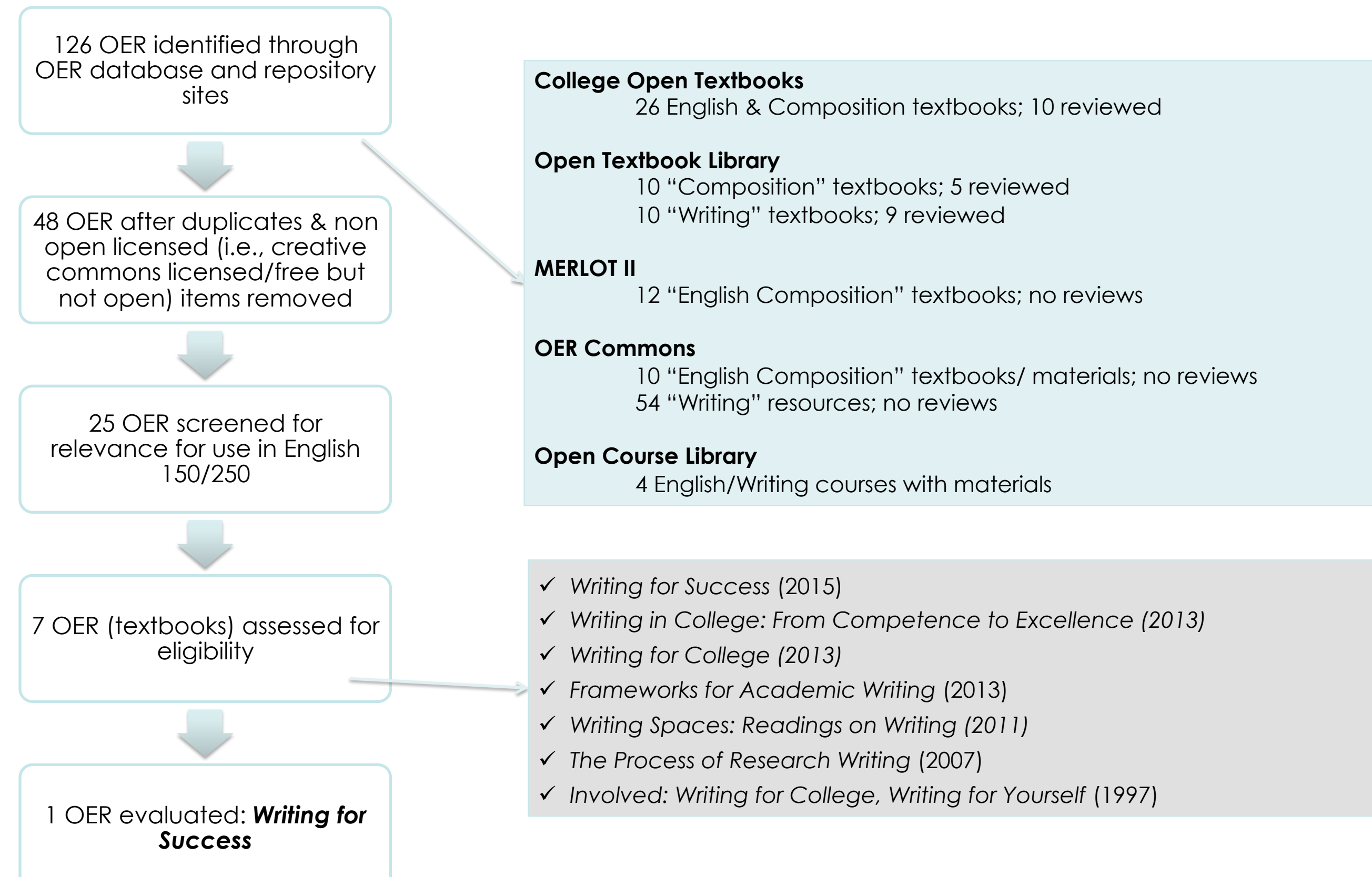
Figure #1. The Adoption Process



Find OER

OERs (including open textbooks, supplemental/course materials, and open courses/course ware) were found using OER specific search engines and repository and directory sites. Resources in these sites are released under a Creative Commons license. See Figure 2 for a sample of sites searched.

Figure #2. Phases of Open Textbook Search



Appraise OER

Instructors have come to rely on the critical reviewing that publishers provide with traditional textbooks. However, many OERs have also been peer reviewed by faculty or subject experts to ensure the quality of these resources. Reading OER reviews on sites such as Open Textbook Library or College Open Textbooks can assist educators in narrowing down appropriate texts for their course and determining effective criteria for evaluating potential texts. Creating an evaluation criteria or using an existing open textbook adoption rubric can assist with the appraisal process. Evaluation rubrics for OER often include the following criteria:

Appropriateness & Alignment Comprehensibility Clarity Inclusion Mechanics
 Relevance to the Socio-Cultural Environment Accuracy Organization & Modularity
 Interface, Design, & Attractiveness Usability & Tech. Functionality Readability
 Supplemental Materials Style & Structure Longevity Consistency

Figure #3. Review: *Writing for Success*



Justify OER

Why use OER? A review of literature on OER adoption at the tertiary level found OERs:

Lower Cost

According to Wiley and Green (2012), "College students spend an average of \$900 per year on textbooks—26 percent of the cost of tuition at a public, four-year university" (p. 83). As a result of these high costs, students may choose not to buy the required course texts (leading to limited learning in the course) or not to take the course (leading to problems with retention and graduation timelines).

In English 150, where information on writing well and rules of grammar and punctuation are relatively fixed, paying for expensive textbooks seems unnecessary, especially when OERs provide the same level of educational efficacy. Many open English texts are similar to traditional textbooks in regard to content; "however, OER have the advantage of being freely available online and have Creative Commons licenses that (among other things) allow for them to be reused [and updated] for free in a variety of contexts" (Hilton et al., 2013, p. 38).

Improve Learning Outcomes

Numerous studies found OER to have positive effects on student performance and learning outcomes. Using OER was often correlated with improved test scores and grades and lower failure or withdrawal rates (Bowen et al., 2012; Feldstein et al., 2012; Hilton & Laman, 2012; Hilton et al., 2016; Pawlyshyn et al., 2013; Wiley et al., 2016).

Increase Active Participation

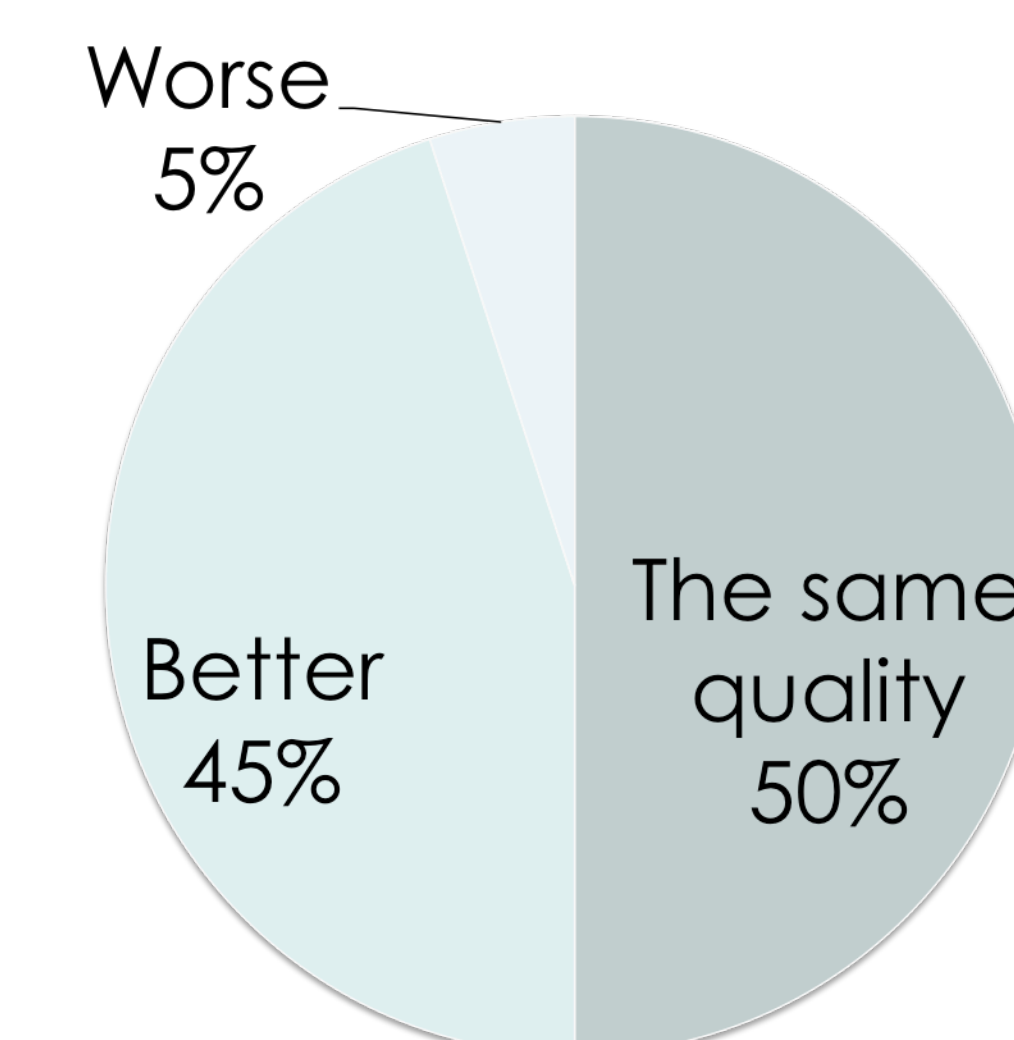
Improving availability of quality, modern and globally relevant learning materials can foster more productive students and educators. In a survey by Bliss et al. (2013), 60 percent of instructors stated their students were equally prepared when OER replaced traditional texts while 30 percent said their students were more prepared. Other instructors reported that using OER helped them meet diverse learners' needs and improve students' interest in class subjects because OER respond to the different learning styles of students and present resources in a number of different ways (e.g., in video format or three dimensionally) (Pitt, 2015).

Furthermore, encouraging creation and contribution through adaptation of OER creates a more active learning environment for students. OER provides instructors free access to the means "to create and adapt high-quality teaching and learning materials. This can be harnessed to develop competence in producing such materials and carrying out the necessary instructional design to integrate such materials into high-quality programmes of learning" (Butcher & Hoosen, 2013, p. 57). Some instructors commented that using OER-type materials "made teaching easier, enabled innovation, and changed their pedagogical approach" (Pitt, 2015).

Reinforce Positive Perception

In a number of studies across various disciplines (see Hilton (2016) for an overview of studies), roughly half of teachers and students found OER to be comparable to traditional resources, and a sizeable number believe OER are better than traditional print resources.

Figure #4. Perceptions of OER Quality



Adapt, Distribute, & Analyze OER

After choosing a potential open textbook (which, in this case, was *Writing for Success*), instructors must decide if the textbook is appropriate for use as is or if the text needs to be edited, modified, or remixed in any way to align more closely with specific course outcomes/goals. After any customization, OERs can be shared with students through multiple formats (e.g., pdf, mobi, wxr, odt, epub).

Next steps: Learning community members will track the use of their OERs and collect and compile feedback on whether the open resources correlate with increased student participation, course completion rates, and improvements in grades and learning objective success. Faculty will also measure the impact of OER adoption on cost, student and faculty use, and on perceptions of OER.

References

See handout.