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## UCT doctoral research examines lecturers' stance on open educational resources

A thesis by recent University of Cape Town PhD graduate, Glenda Cox, aims to explain the choices the institution's lecturers make regarding whether or not to release selections of their teaching materials for use as open educational resources. Open educational resources can potentially extend the use of teaching materials beyond the classroom to a global audience yet in practice few lecturers make their lectures available.

The result is a framework for explaining lecturers' understanding of sharing within the higher education sector. Dr Cox's model offers a means for achieving a unique understanding of the relations between culture, structure and agency within an institution - where the balance of power is held in a system and, in the case of UCT, how a culture of academic autonomy grants lecturers the power of choice as individual agents.

Dr Cox says: "Open educational resources are freely-available teaching materials (ranging from entire courses to images and models) that can be accessed by anyone, usually online. These materials are licensed with an Open license, such as Creative Commons."

Creative Commons is a copyright management tool that protects the author's right to attribution while allowing users permission to use the resources under the conditions specified by the author.

"Academics who contributed their teaching materials could see the value of sharing their materials outside the classroom with anyone in the world. They believed in and were concerned about education for all and most were especially concerned with education in the Global South," she continued.

Working for UCT's Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, Dr Cox is both an advocate for Open Education and the manager of the university's initial Open Content directory, which forms part of Open UCT. Open UCT is an institutional repository where anyone can access some of the institution's research and teaching materials.

"I believe that sharing teaching materials gives lecturers, students and self-learners access to content that was previously behind closed university doors," Dr Cox states.

She believes that Open Education is imperative for affordable access to education, particularly in the socioeconomic context of South Africa. Understanding why some academics are willing to share their research and teaching materials while others are not can be useful for future advocacy work and recommendations for how to encourage those who do share to do so even more.

The Open Educational Resources shared on open repositories like UCT's (<http://open.uct.ac.za/>) are there for anyone in society to use. "More people in South Africa need to be made aware of this rich source of knowledge that is freely available," concludes Dr Cox.

**ENDS**

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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