

NEW ENGLAND BOARD
of HIGHER EDUCATION



Building Consistent Reporting Frameworks Across Institutions

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"Building Consistent Reporting Frameworks Across Institutions" by Tamara Stein-Botteri is an adaptation of "[Promising practices for course marking at independent institutions](#)" and is shared under a [CC-BY 4.0](#) license



Why NEBHE is supporting course marking

Course marking provides students autonomy to select courses that fit their financial situation and creates a transparent infrastructure that enables institutions to assess and analyze student success metrics associated with OER, which the field is still lacking.

OER At a Glance



Benefits of Course Marking

Amplifies distributive justice (Rawls, 1971; Lambert, 2018) and student agency (Dewey, 1922; Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986, 2001) by creating transparent systems that allow students to easily identify at the point of registration which course sections utilize OER or other no cost learning materials.

Benefits of Course Marking

Documents which course sections use OER and other no-cost learning materials, creating opportunities to examine how open education and its associated practices might contribute to better and more equitable learning outcomes for students.

What institutions are doing

UMaine at Augusta

- Implementation Guide



St. John Fisher University

- Faculty spreadsheet



Three Steps for Choosing Your Course Markings

For Each Course You're Teaching in Fall 2026...

1

Research Textbook Costs

The PSU Bookstore has provided a link to their book adoption site that you can use to find the new purchase cost for each textbook you use.



go.plymouth.edu/aip

Click the "SEARCH" link in the left-hand navigation on the BNC site and enter the title of the book. You may narrow the results by adding the author's last name. The cost you should use for Course Marking decisions is the new list price.

Add up the costs for all the textbooks in your course. If it is under \$50, your course should be marked LTCO.

If you are not requiring ANY textbooks that cost money, your course should be marked ZTCO.

NOTE: Remember that for LTCO and ZTCO markings, we only care about textbook costs, not other course supplies such as calculators, lab equipment, or art supplies.

repeat for your next course...

2

Determine If You Use OER

Review all the learning materials for your course. If ALL of them are commercially provided textbooks, the course is NOT OERC.

If you are using a resource that is free but is not openly licensed (for example, a free article on the NYT site), it does not count as OER and does not mean your course should be marked OERC.

However, if ANY of your materials are in the public domain or are licensed through Creative Commons, the course IS OERC.

NOTE: Remember that if you use ANY OER in a course, it counts for the OERC marking.

repeat for your next course...

3

Share Your Course Markings with Your Scheduler

You will need to share your course marking with the admin staff that enter your course schedule. This process will vary among AUs and may change with the school restructuring in spring 2026. As we learn more about new structures and admin support, we will share any updates we hear about!

Plymouth State University –
Faculty Communications,
handout

Figure 6: Faculty handout explaining how to determine course markings.

Plymouth State University – Faculty Communications, all campus newsletter

Course Marking is coming to PSU!

Course Marking is a process of associating information about textbook costs with course data so students can make informed decisions about the financial implications of taking particular courses.

Thanks to a grant from NEBHE, starting in Spring 2026, PSU students will be able to search for courses with zero or low textbook costs. We'll also be using markings to collect data about OER usage.

Faculty and staff can learn more now about how this project will impact and benefit them. We've [created a SharePoint site](#) with lots of information, and below we've provided links to specific sections of the site.

As the project continues, we will provide updates, additional information, and resources on the SharePoint site. Meanwhile, if you have any questions or concerns about the Course Markings project, feel free to contact Martha Burtis, director of the CoLab, at mburtis@plymouth.edu



Learn the Basics

What is Course Marking and who will it impact on campus?

[Learn More](#)



What are the Benefits?

Learn who Course Marking benefits at PSU

[Learn More](#)



Understand the Markings

Find out the meaning of the three Course Markings that PSU is adopting: ZTCO, LTCO, and OERC

[Learn More](#)



When Does it Happen?

Review the project timeline of what needs to happen between now and Spring 2026 registration

[Learn More](#)



Get Support & Funding

Learn what steps you need to take to mark courses at PSU and find out about OER grant opportunities

[Learn More](#)



NEBHE Resources

Course Marking Road Map



10 Recommendations



Promising Practices

- Form a cross-functional team that includes representation from all relevant departments, including senior leadership and DEIB or equity-focused roles.
- Implement robust documentation and communication strategies (e.g., shared digital workspaces) to mitigate the impact of team changes.
- Develop clear definitions for no-cost and low-cost course materials and ensure anyone involved in marking or reviewing tagged courses is on the same page.
- Engage faculty early in the process, offering professional development and addressing concern directly to foster buy-in.
- Leverage existing workflows and/or systems to collect, update, and communicate course marking data.

- Develop a change management workflow to maintain data accuracy, such as assigning specific roles for data verification and/or creating automatic reports.
- Use a variety of tailored outreach and communication methods to engage different stakeholders.
- Prioritize student awareness of how to effectively navigate course marking features in the registration system.
- Prioritize the use of funds for faculty development and stipends, which can drive the adoption of OER and support the successful implementation of course markings.
- Seek additional funding opportunities or reallocate existing resources to sustain and expand the initiative over time.



Enabling alignment and scaling state-wide

- Look to how institutions in our region are currently tackling course marking and adopt relevant processes and resources
- NEBHE course marking grant is designed to require institutions to have a front-facing "no-cost" marker but on the back end we ask for an additional OER tag
- Regional institutions are majority independent (private) but with systems, aligned processes could allow for state-wide data and research

FAQs

Additional resources

- Video of Alex Lattner, Registrar at NEC explaining how she set up a running report in Banner that helps with change management in course marking: https://nebhe.org/wp-content/uploads/NEC_change-management-clip.mp4
- It can also be found under the course marking section of our Resources page titled “Managing Instructor Changes” - <https://nebhe.org/open-education/resources/>