UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MAKING COURSE READING LISTS OPEN ACCESS

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

   This paper proposes that course reading lists held in the Leganto system, currently only accessible through VLEs, be made publicly available.

   UEC is asked to discuss and approve this proposal.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

   UEC is invited to approve making online course reading lists publicly available.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 In 2019, the Library’s management system underwent a substantial upgrade, from legacy Aleph software to Alma, a powerful new system which included a reading list module (Leganto). Following this upgrade, the Reading List project was initiated in 2019, and this work was accelerated in 2020 as part of the transition to blended learning. With Library support, academics have been able to embed reading lists into University VLEs for students to access.

4.2 At present, a course reading list can only be viewed through MyAberdeen by students enrolled on the relevant course. However, it is technically possible to place a link on a public page to permit external users to search for titles linked to courses. This will provide bibliographic information only. Full access to online content and the availability details of print items remain accessible only to registered University staff and students.

4.3 The benefits of making course reading lists publicly available are:

   - To support pre-registration students in making course choices and preparation for study. Access to title information in advance of registration will help students understand the course and make decisions about book purchases and preparation before teaching begins.

   - In support of Aberdeen 2040, and our commitments to openness and inclusion. Easy sight of information as early on as possible to support preparations will be particularly valuable where there are accessibility needs.

4.4 It should be noted that a number of reading lists, across all Schools, are already available via the Blackwell’s online store as a result of Blackwell’s own engagement with academics. The Library and Blackwell’s are working together to ensure efficiency and to reduce duplication as both seek to provide the right titles for students and provide options to borrow or to buy.

4.5 There are several examples of this approach to open reading lists. The University of Edinburgh makes the following commitment:
Resource Lists are published using a Creative Commons licence and are openly accessible by default, allowing access to pre-entry and prospective students and supporting the University’s wider commitment to open access. Resource Lists can be restricted to staff and students at the University on request.


These lists can be seen via:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/research-teaching-staff/resource-lists

The University of Glasgow provides open lists at https://glasgow.rl.talis.com/index.html?browse

Similarly: Lists, once published, can be viewed by all on the Web, or you have the option to make your list accessible only to University staff and students

https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/staff/readinglists/

4.6 It is notable that both universities offer an option to restrict access on request. It would be possible to the same, but as an institution that is ‘open to all’, our mission is best served if our lists are open by default.

4.7 This approach to reading list publication appears to be widespread. An informal poll has revealed a number of other universities who operate in the same way (Exeter, Lancaster, Leicester, Manchester, Royal Holloway, Sheffield, Southampton, Sussex, UEA).

4.8 It is recommended that this proposal to make our lists open be approved. Following this approval, practical work will be done to achieve it and clear communications provided. Information and support will be incorporated into reading list guidance and documentation.

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Simon Bains, University Librarian, simon.bains@abdn.ac.uk

15 February 2022

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status:** Open