



Refugee Education Initiatives (REIs)

Open Learning Initiative (OLive)

Best Practices Manual v.1



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK
3. OLLive UP
 - 3.1 OLLive UP Syllabus
 - 3.2 OLLive UP Administration
 - 3.3 OLLive UP Budget
 - 3.4 OLLive UP Pastoral Care
4. OLLive WP
 - 4.1 OLLive WP Syllabus
 - 4.2 OLLive WP Administration
 - 4.3 OLLive WP Budget
 - 4.4 OLLive WP Pastoral care
5. University Administration

1. Introduction

The Refugee Education Initiatives (REIs) runs education programs for refugees and asylum seekers in Austria, Hungary and the United Kingdom. The programs are designed to assist the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into higher education, national and European job markets and society in general.

Through classroom based learning, the REIs programs aims to provide people with refugee or asylum seeker status the skills or step-up needed to enter into higher education or skilled employment in Europe. The curriculum of the REIs programs also aims to give refugees and asylum seekers tools and skills to contribute to and question national integration agendas. REIs educational programs are potentially far-reaching - the programs recognise and build on the previous learning and experience of refugees and asylum seekers while also providing them with knowledge and advocacy tools to make active contributions to European public life.

REIs programs address the difficulty refugees and asylum seekers often have in accessing higher education and the job market in Europe. Through intensive education and training programs, and in cooperation with national asylum and recognition systems, REIs aims to recognise, valourise and build on the previous learning and experience of refugees and asylum seekers. REIs contributes to a project of integration where refugees and asylum seekers are given knowledge, tools and confidence to actively contribute to public life to the benefit of not only themselves but host societies too.

REIs programs are run through **Open Learning Initiatives (OLive)** - faculty and student led offices at the Central European University, the University of Vienna and the University of East London. OLive offices in the three universities all run two programs - the OLive Weekend Program (OLive WP) and the OLive University Preparatory Program (OLive UP). The Refugee Education Initiatives has to date reached altogether over 400 refugee students across Europe through its OLive programs. These programs are developed from learning at CEU where the programs were first started and based partly on the university's successful Roma Access Programs which increased opportunities to enter higher education for Roma students. OLive WP and OLive UP are adaptable to many different national contexts. This Best Practices Handbook contains curricula and teaching tips that can be implemented in other universities.

2. How to use this Handbook

OLive programs are, we think, quite portable and adaptable to different national contexts. The Handbook presents learning from implementing OLive programs since January 2016 and should be taken as general and adaptable guidelines for universities to adopt and adapt such programs.

The target audience of this Handbook is university staff, faculty and students. OLive programs, as currently implemented, do require institutional support and backing of a university. To be most effective, OLive programs should be recognised in some form as a university unit, one offering non-degree programs, or its equivalent. OLive program students should also be registered as students (as non-degree students or visiting students). This involves a certain commitment from universities, including ongoing administrative support.

OLive UP programs require a budget for staff and teachers, and in some cases for students too. Some of this may be provided by in-kind support, or existing university courses or programs may be adapted to serve the goals of OLive programs.

The Handbook begins with information on two OLive programs focusing on curriculum and administrative issues. It then ends with a focus on university administrative issues.

3. OLive-UP

Open Learning Initiative - University Preparatory Program

OLive-UP is a university preparatory program for refugee students run by Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, the University of East London (UEL), and the University of Vienna. The aim of the program is to prepare students for BA and MA studies through intensive tutoring in an academic subject, Academic English study, and tailored individual support when applying to BA or MA programs across Europe. OLive UP is a strategic response to a situation where a number of refugees in Europe have had to interrupt study or have had difficulty in getting their previous learning or qualifications recognised.

OLive-UP is a 10-month program with three program components:

1. **The Tutoring component** focuses on intensive small-group learning in a specific subject to BA or MA level depending on student experience and qualifications. This involves up to 120 hours of classroom learning plus around 140 hours of homework and classroom preparation per 10 month program.
2. **Academic English and Academic Skills teaching** prepares students to continue studying in their countries of residence, where many will turn to English-medium universities. Others will benefit from learning English to an academic level, a prerequisite not only for successful

university entry but also for the international job market in most of Europe. This involves up to 360 hours of classroom learning per 10 month program.

3. **Advocacy and Rights training** offers the students intensive preparation in human rights and advocacy work for up to 16 hours per academic year, with the aim of increasing rights awareness as refugees and third country nationals in Europe. OLive-UP has a particular focus on rights education as civic knowledge, and assists students to contribute to and influence public life in their countries of residence.

OLive UP programs may be adapted to existing university calendars. At CEU the program is a stand-alone 10 month program following the university academic year. At UEL the program connects to an existing foundation year program, leveraging existing structures and incorporating existing classes with added specialised classes to cater for OLive UP students' specific needs.

3.1. OLIVE-UP syllabus overview

The syllabus at OLIVE UP builds on knowledge developed at CEU over a decade in university preparatory programs for Roma. The syllabus has two key components: academic tutoring and academic language (for this particular project, the emphasis is on Academic English or Academic German) with academic skills (academic writing and argumentation).

The syllabus overview below should be read as a series of recommendations that may be adapted to individual universities' needs. In particular, universities with existing foundation programs may find it useful to develop UP programs in cooperation with these, with some adaptation, as UEL has done.

a. Tutoring

The tutoring method outlined here centres on a learning method tailored to individual students' abilities. Students at OLIVE UP tend to come from varying educational backgrounds with different experiences of higher education. Their command of the language of learning in the particular university is also varied, students conversant in the language may not always have an academic command of the relevant vocabulary. It is important that tutorials go at a pace appropriate to individual students' abilities and that students do not become discouraged. The tutorial method at OLIVE UP centres on gradual and progressive learning by individual students.

Tutoring aims to introduce students to the fundamental concepts, authors and methodological insights of a particular discipline at either BA or MA level. The ultimate objective is to prepare students for university studies at the relevant level, including by assisting them in developing university applications. Tutoring classes are held in small groups and usually revolve around academic reading and class discussion. The syllabus should be built so that the students' reading and writing load increases gradually over the course of each term and the overall year. Examples of syllabi used in OLIVE-UP feature in the Annex.

In the first term, as a general guideline, we recommend that tutors start by assigning between 15 and 20 pages of reading for each session. However, the workload can be adapted depending on each student's level, including by requiring less reading for students initially unable to perform at this level (and building up to more reading throughout the term) and by recommending additional reading for more advanced students. The readings selected should also take into consideration that students may have different academic and disciplinary backgrounds. The key aim is to teach students critical reading, and to encourage them to think in theoretical and analytical terms.

Over the course of the UP program, the core introductory themes and concepts initially taught should be further developed. The reading load should be gradually increased (while taking into consideration variations in students' level). During the last term of the academic year, students should conduct a small research project on a topic that they choose in consultation with their tutor. This project helps to cultivate the independent research skills required for tertiary study. The syllabus for the last term should therefore also include discipline-appropriate methodology training to support students develop and conduct their research projects. Tutors should also aim to include readings on topics relevant to the students' research projects. For social science disciplines, a 4,000-word essay presenting research results as well as a presentation at the end-of-year conference are expected from each student. This assignment may differ for students tutored in other disciplines for which essays are not an usual requirement.

Besides the end-of-year essay and presentation, we usually recommend that students submit between two and four response papers each term, as well as a mid-term paper or essay, and a final paper or exam. The type of assignment required will vary depending on disciplinary traditions, and may include such assignments as policy briefs, take-home or sit-in exams, and so on, depending on the discipline.

Students are given a final grade for their tutoring performance at the end of each term. The grade will include assignment scores but we also recommend that it includes other components such as class attendance and participation. The breakdown will depend on the discipline and the way the class works. It may be relevant to put more emphasis on oral work in the first term of the year and put an increasing focus on written assignment as the year develops.

b. Outline of English teaching and Academic skills -

Experience gained from working with CEU's university preparatory program for refugees indicates that 12 hours per week of language classes is required for students to move from intermediate or upper intermediate knowledge to academic proficiency required for tertiary study. In addition to English classes, students receive around two to four hours of Academic Skills including academic writing.

Academic language classes play a key part in preparing students for the rigours of an international BA or MA program. As such they focus heavily on developing listening skills, reading, writing and speaking skills in the context of academic study.

As students typically range in language level from proficient to intermediate, individual study plans should be developed, allowing certain students to plan library study time instead of class, when the theme of a particular lesson is not relevant to them.

The Academic Skills classes, however, were mandatory at all times and were designed to challenge all students by giving them a taste of university level writing requirements. They

focused primarily on reading skills, critical reading and writing, use of sources, structuring academic papers and making effective seminar presentations.

Disparities in language levels may require two groups. Students with a lower level of English may find that they do not make progress in a group that moves at too fast a pace. It should be kept in mind however, that experience has suggested that a student with a language level lower than upper intermediate may struggle to reach the level required for academic study.

c. Advocacy skills -

Advocacy workshops at OLlive-UP are designed to help students participate actively in public life. The aim of the workshop is to provide students with the skills and practical knowledge to develop advocacy projects for themselves and others. Advocacy workshops are developed in cooperation with REIs partners the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and, in Hungary, Menedek: Hungarian Association for Migrants and the School of Public Life. The number of hours of workshops vary from university to university, a recommended number is 8 hours per term.

The advocacy workshop curriculum varies according to needs in different societies. Broadly speaking, the curriculum begins with studies on citizen participation exploring typologies of citizen involvement and repertoires of action. The curriculum then moves to developing advocacy campaigns through concrete examples. Students are asked to work in groups and to imagine how they would build an advocacy campaign on a chosen topic: which tools and strategies would they use? How would they design their campaign? Whom would they try to involve or reach? Other topics examined over the course of the program include social movements and the role of intellectuals in society.

Experience gained from running the program at CEU indicate a qualified success. Students actively participated and felt they learnt important skills. However, students also indicated that they were at OLlive-UP to prepare for MA or BA studies and that this workshop did not fit into that goal. We believe otherwise: education is not simply about training for individualised study, but it is also about the realisation of common responsibilities, particularly towards those less advantaged. An important aim of the advocacy workshops is learning to advocate for others.

3.2. OLlive-UP administration

OLlive UP is a full-time program. Students should be registered as students in the university with the rights and privileges of all other students. OLlive UP at CEU is able to use that university's existing 'non-degree student' category to enrol its students and within that frame, OLlive UP students receive the same rights and privileges as other students.

While OLIVE UP is a relatively small program (numbers range from 8 to 15 in the three different universities), the administrative load is relatively high. A full time administrator is a requirement. OLIVE UP programs will likely be unique in the university, posing a number of challenges to offices dealing with student registration, degree administration and financing. Universities will need to learn how to manage and cater to the program's needs in the process of its implementation.

(i). Student issues

In order to attend the full-time OLIVE UP program, students may require a scholarship.

This depends on national support structures in existence for refugees and asylum seekers. In Hungary, no financial support is given to refugees neither are there explicit programs to encourage their entry to higher education. To facilitate students' participation in a full-time program, CEU OLIVE UP successfully sought funding for scholarships (from the Open Society Foundations). By contrast, students in OLIVE UP programs in Vienna and London are able to rely on some form of state support.

Students entering into OLIVE UP may show signs of recent trauma. It is important that OLIVE UP staff and teachers receive adequate training from experts in the field on how to respond to trauma-based situations. Students may or may not have access to therapeutic help, it is important to ensure that they have access to this. Often university based counsellors or therapists may not have experience working with people in post-trauma situations. It is important that expert help from relevant organisations is sourced. CEU OLIVE UP will work with Cordelia Foundation, an NGO with experience providing therapeutic help for people with refugee status, to ensure support for students and training for staff.

3.3. OLIVE UP Budget

There are three core expenses for an OLIVE UP program: administrative, teaching and student costs. As noted earlier, given the structure of the program and the need to work closely with university offices, one full time administrator is crucial. When it comes to teaching costs, OLIVE UP programs vary. UEL OLIVE UP has been able to combine some of its classes with existing university courses saving on teaching costs. English teaching in particular requires hiring people with experience of teaching people with diverse learning backgrounds. Student costs will rise in countries where the state does not provide financial support to refugees. In many European states, students may be able to use existing state support to enter into OLIVE UP programs. Where this does not exist, OLIVE UP programs should provide financial assistance in the form of a stipend and accommodation. CEU OLIVE UP also takes into account family situations and offers an extra 'dependants' allowance' as well as an emergency fund should unexpected situations arise.

3.4 OLIVE UP Pastoral Care

For many OLIVE UP students, the program is an opportunity to enter into university after much difficulty. A lot of hope is naturally invested in an opportunity that cannot promise a desired outcome. Unless universities connect OLIVE UP to specific degree programs and state that satisfactory completion of an UP program will lead to a funded place in a degree program, anxieties about post-OLIVE life cannot be fully assuaged. **It is important that OLIVE UP programs are very clear about what the program can achieve and what it cannot.** Unclear messages can lead to unwarranted expectations, and deep disappointment.

As noted earlier, students often bring experiences and memories of traumatic situations. It is important to ensure that they have regular access to expert assistance. **It is crucial that this assistance is made available in a non-stigmatising way.** OLIVE UP programs need to find a balance between having such assistance available and making its students feel singled out.

OLIVE UP programs may wish to consider a **family allowance and an emergency fund.** The family allowance would be a sum added to a stipend received to take into account dependants. The emergency fund would be made available on a case by case basis, and provide a small form of security against the unexpected for students.

3. OLlive-WP

Open Learning Initiative - Weekend Program

OLlive-Weekend Program is a non-degree university program for refugee students run by Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, the University of East London (UEL), and the University of Vienna. The aim of the program is to prepare students to take advantage of employment opportunities commensurate with their skills and experience, and to support their further study plans in their countries of residence through intensive language learning and professionally and academically oriented courses.

OLlive-WP syllabus is adaptable to different contexts. Broadly speaking, the programs runs at the three universities all have three course strands:

- **The Academic strand** strengthens the writing and research skills of students through individual tutoring in the subject of their choice, academic skills training, and one multidisciplinary academic seminar per term. It also helps academically oriented students prepare for university applications. An additional course offered when possible is an Introduction to the Social Sciences, an overview of the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences.
- **English Language Skills** offers five different levels of English education for OLlive-WP students from Lower Elementary to Academic English, complimented by two levels of conversational English classes.
- **Skills and Capacity Building** develops a variety of necessary skills for students to be successful in labor market and actively participating in public life of their countries of residence. This includes a variety of courses, such as career and CV training, understanding of local labor market, basics of entrepreneurship, and audiovisual storytelling.

3.1 OLIVE-WP Syllabus Overview

1. Academic Strand

The Academic Strand has three components, academic tutoring, academic seminars and academic skills classes. The three components are related. The core program is academic tutoring and the other two courses are intended to help further develop critical and analytical skills necessary for university study.

(i) Tutoring

In every cohort of OLIVE-WP, some 15 students are placed in academic tutoring classes. These are students aiming to make competitive applications to university and are accepted on the basis of their past academic experience and/or qualifications and general propensity for further study. Tutoring students must also have at least an upper intermediate level of English (in UEL and CEU) or German (in UV) to be able to keep up with academic readings.

- Tutoring is organised in small group sessions. Many are comprised of only one student, others two to three. Tutoring at OLIVE-WP is run over 10 sessions of 1 hour and 15 minutes each. Students are provided readings commensurate with their academic experience and language abilities. In the first session, tutors assess students' academic abilities and construct a syllabus with the assistance and supervision of an Academic Coordinator, a member of the university's academic faculty. Tutors are usually doctoral students.

The general aim of tutoring is to help students gain an introduction to the discipline of their choice, preparing them for an eventual application to university. Specific aims change from student to student.

Individual syllabi in each tutorial changes from time to time depending on students needs, but all culminate in the development of a research project which students present in short 10 minute sessions at a conference at the end of the term. Tutors are encouraged to give students short written assignments, such as one or two page response papers. Students more adept at English will be encouraged to write longer essays.

(ii) Academic Seminar

Every term, the program organises a team-taught seminar series, delivered by academic staff and students, with guest lectures also from other organisations when appropriate. The titles of the seminars thus far held are: “The Politics of Human Rights”, “Media, Culture, and Society”, “Globalisation, Capitalism and Development” and “Rights and Social Struggles”. (Vienna)

Students are encouraged to participate and contribute to discussion. The seminar is an important way to give students concrete classroom experience where their opinions, and their ability to cultivate these opinions in nuanced academic language, is given priority.

(iii) Academic skills:

The goal of the class is to support students in developing critical thinking, presentation, reading and writing skills and to introduce them to key academic exercises and assignments they would be expected to produce in an university context. Classes usually have a lecture-based and a practice-based components. A typical class would start with two short academic presentations by students followed by short Q&A with the class. This allows practising speaking and listening skills as well as time management. Teachers would then introduce a particular academic exercise (critical reading, response papers, argumentative essays, quoting and referencing, etc).

The last part of the class would be dedicated to practising this exercise, either individually, in small groups or as a class. Homework are suggested every week though they are not compulsory. Individual feedback is provided to students both during the class and for any homework they submit. In addition to traditional academic skills, the classes now also address more technical skills including: how to produce a powerpoint presentation, how to format an essay, how to make a reference list. Ideally, the academic skills classes should be coordinated with the tutoring so that any assignment required from students for their tutoring has been covered in the class ahead of the deadline.

2. English Teaching

English teaching at OLLive-WP is by far the most popular provision. Almost all students - except most native speakers - attend English classes. Classes are run at five levels - Beginners', Elementary, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, and Advanced. All English teaching is undertaken by experienced teachers, the majority of whom are professional teachers. English teaching for Elementary students is further supported by a conversation class.

- Teachers with experience teaching marginalised groups, particularly those unused to European-style classroom settings, are important. Produced textbooks can be used as a resource but teachers have been wary of the cultural blind spots of the more mainstream textbooks, and their applicability for OLIVE students.

Besides the provision of English teaching, these classes, as the main draw for students, are important in increasing the diversity of a student body. Beginners' and Elementary classes have enabled more women to join the classes, Students in our Beginners' and Elementary group are usually unable to attend other classes (such as the academic seminar) meaning that they can to an extent be isolated from the wider group.

3. Skills and Capacity Building

There are two types of courses that fall into this category: those that provide students with specific marketable skills and those that work with students to articulate their experience and politics through film and drama courses.

Courses focusing on skills training have included courses on entrepreneurship and setting up a business and 'CV clinics'.

Courses in film and drama are run with the assistance of experienced professionals and provide students with tools to articulate the complexity of their political and personal experience (to the extent that they wish) in a social and political environment that is not welcoming of refugee voices.

3. OLIVE-WP Administrative Issues

Administering OLIVE WP can be work-intensive. Programs in all three universities recruit up to 45 students for 12 or 18 week periods and often work with volunteer teachers. While the program runs on the weekends, significant preparatory work must be done over the weekday (for example class scheduling, following up on absences, and, where required, processing student stipends and health insurance). **In order for OLIVE WP to function effectively, a dedicated administrator is a necessity.**

(i) Student issues

An important ethos of the OLIVE programs is that our students, weekend or full-time, should be part of the university community to the fullest extent possible. Universities implementing OLIVE style programs are **encouraged to enrol its students as students of the university**. At CEU for example, OLIVE WP was able to take advantage of the university's existing 'non-degree student' category to give university cards and library rights to its students. OLIVE WP students at CEU are thus allowed to enter university premises and use its facilities (libraries, computers) at any time.

Childcare issues will arise. Women students in particular may need young children to be supervised while they are in classes. Childcare arrangements should take into account national rules and regulations. If OLIVE WP students have a formal student status at the university, then they may be able to take advantage of existing childcare facilities.

Healthcare issues may arise. In most cases, in order for students to be registered formally as university students health insurance will be required. Refugees and asylum seekers do, all over Europe, have the right to national health insurance. However, as in Hungary, they may not always have the right papers. At CEU, the OLIVE program pays for university-provided private health insurance for students who have not been able to access national health insurance.

(ii) Student Recruitment

OLIVE-WP programs recruit up to 45 students every term. Recruitment is based on the following principles (1) students' ability to undertake one of our two core courses (tutoring and language learning), (2) for continuing students, their progress in English or tutoring and (3) being either a refugee or asylum-seeker, or a migrant who is subject to similar forms of marginalization'. OLIVE-WP recognises that the lines between refugees and asylum seekers and other migrants can be blurred.

Entry into the programs depends on an assessment of need and an assessment of the extent to which potential students will be able to take advantage of OLIVE WP course offerings in their future plans.

4. OLIVE-WP Budget Considerations

OLIVE-WP budget issues centre on student costs and staff costs. Student costs may differ from place to place where OLIVE runs, depending on state benefits and the likelihood of students finding employment.

i. Student costs.

Travel and Stipend

Students may require travel costs to university to be paid if these are not adequately covered by state benefits. If there are no adequate living stipends, organisers may wish to budget for a stipend to cover meals and incidental costs related to attending OLLive programs.

Health Insurance

While in most European countries, refugees and asylum seekers are both eligible for health care, actual access to this may differ from place to place. Organisers are encouraged to invest some time in helping students access healthcare rights that are due them, but if this proves difficult, some budget for private health insurance should be considered. If students are enrolled as university students proper, the university may require evidence of such healthcare insurance.

University entrance exams and application fees

Most universities will require some sort of language exam or other specialised exam (such as GRE/GMAT) for OLLive-WP students applying to BA programs. Some universities may also have application fees. OLLive programs should consider a budget line to pay for these.

Refreshments

OLLive-WP is an all-day program. Students may find nearby restaurants and cafes prohibitively expensive, and some budget for snacks and beverages throughout the day is highly recommended.

Social services

Refugees and asylum seekers in many parts of the world can encounter unexpected difficulties. While it is on the whole recommended that OLLive organisers turn to social workers and migrants rights organisers for assistance in addressing these, a small emergency fund to help students in temporary difficulties is recommended. This can be made up of donations from students and staff at the university.

Internships

OLLive organisers may wish to organise a small number of internships in local organisations/businesses or at the university itself. This is a useful way of helping refugees and asylum seekers familiarise themselves with working environments and give them a chance to demonstrate their skills with a view to gaining employment. Ideally, internships should be paid by recruiting organisations. If this is not possible, then OLLive organisers are encouraged to set aside a small fund..

ii. Staff costs

OLive teachers are both paid and volunteers. The actual costs of the project are hard to entirely meet and OLive programs in all three universities run on unpaid volunteer work by university faculty, staff and students. In order for OLive programs to function, a significant dedicated volunteer staff has been proven necessary. Teachers and tutors are paid at a rate as close to market value as possible. As stated previously, it is crucial that at least a part time administrator is employed.

4. OLive-WP Pastoral Care Issues.

Students may have a number of **issues concerning their general inclusion** in host society, rights and benefits for themselves and their families, employment, health care, insurance, etc. Educational ambitions, regular class attendance, and self-confidence are often directly related to these issues. To address these challenges, OLive programs are encouraged to cooperate with support groups and NGOs who have experience in dealing with issues of migrant social inclusion. In OLive-WP at CEU, for example, a consultant from a migrant support group is available regularly to assist students with different social welfare issues.

Students enter the program with a variety of experiences including the circumstances that influenced their decisions to leave their home countries, various transition paths they have gone through, and their current conditions which could be very diverse country to country. Several students suffer from short term or more enduring **post- traumatic symptoms**.

As a rule of thumb, OLive team members do not actively ask about these experiences just out of human curiosity or sense of solidarity. Yet, even well controlled traumatic experiences may surface in simple conversations, human encounters, and educational situations to which the OLive staff members should be able to respond. Some students may feel natural or necessary to share traumatic experiences with tutors, peers, and others. To make the OLive staff prepared to handle these situations, OLive programs may wish to work with counselling and psychological services provided by specialists as well as existing university medical and counseling services. It is also crucial that OLive staff receive formal training required to deal with students experiencing post-traumatic symptoms.

