



BEST PRACTICES HANDBOOK ON



Implementing OLIVE-WP and OLIVE-UP Refugee Education Programs

This is an Erasmus+ Refugee Education Initiatives consortium Handbook on best practices on implementing OLive-WP and OLive-UP refugee education programs, prepared by Central European University, the University of East London and the University of Vienna

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Table of Contents

Introduction	6
1. How to use this Handbook	8
2. Open Learning Initiative - University Preparatory Program (OLive-UP)	9
2.1. OLive-UP syllabus overview	11
Academic Instruction	12
English teaching and Academic skills teaching	16
Advocacy skills	17
2.2. OLive-UP administration	19
2.4. Student issues	20
2.5. OLive-UP Budget	21
2.6. OLive-UP Pastoral Care	22
3. Open Learning Initiative - Weekend Program (OLive-WP)	24
3.1 OLive-WP Syllabus Overview	25
Academic Strand	25
English and other Language Teaching	30
4. Key Messages	31

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 aim 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.

1. How to use this Handbook

OLive programs are 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 an operational budget for staff, teachers, and students. Some of this may be provided by in-kind support, or existing university courses or programs may be adapted to serve the

goals of OLLive programs. However it is preferable to have a firmer budgetary foundation and commitment on the part of the universities towards OLLive programs in order to maintain their continuity and sustainability.

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

2. Open Learning Initiative – University Preparatory Program (OLLive-UP)

OLLive-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 language study, and tailored individual support when applying to BA or MA programs across Europe. OLLive-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:

The Academic Instruction 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.

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.

Advocacy and Rights training offers the students intensive preparation in human rights and advocacy work for up to 16 classroom hours per academic year plus addition independent study, 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.

2.1. 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.

Academic Instruction

The academic instruction 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. A degree of flexibility and adaptability should be allowed in syllabi preparation.

Academic instruction 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 instructors 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). In

addition to one-on-one close tutoring sessions, it is also useful to consider an additional introductory level lecture-type course in the broad field of social sciences for the first two terms of the academic year. The aim is to provide additional teaching support in the broad study field before the students start delving more specifically into their chosen disciplinary focus. The course can be planned as two-credit hours and assigned coursework outside classroom hours can be less than in the tutoring classes with the majority of the coursework being carried out in the classroom.

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 instructor. 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. Instructors 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 a 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.

Training and continual support and mentorship to the academic instructors is another important element in the program. OLIve-UP instructors at CEU and UEL are generally recruited among the PhD candidates within these universities and other local universities. Even though most instructors are familiar with the formal university structures and curricula organisation, teaching students with non-formal educational experiences and backgrounds is a novel

experience for many. Therefore the instructors can significantly benefit from pedagogical training opportunities in the universities to this end. At CEU, OLLive has worked in close cooperation with CEU's Center for Teaching and Learning to organise informal discussion groups on pedagogy.

English teaching and Academic skills teaching

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 in both English and Academic skills. 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.

Advocacy skills

Advocacy workshops at OLIVE-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 OLIVE-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.

2.2. 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 OLlive-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. OLlive-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. The challenges that can be encountered are multiple, but the key thing to keep in mind is that the type of education program and the type of student will be quite different from the everyday programs and students that universities generally occur. It is imperative to work closely with university administration in step by step processes of enrolling and registering students (and all the various steps

that these entail) and in regular consultation with people of refugee status themselves or with members of civil society who have experience on issues facing people with refugee status. For example, simple issues like having a local ID card or proof of housing can be difficult obstacles for people with refugee status in many parts of Europe.

2.4. Student issues

In order to attend the full-time OLIve-UP program, students may require a scholarship. You should first check if there are national support structures and if such support structures may be withdrawn or limited if a student enters higher education or moves his or her residence. This requires careful checking and it is very important to work with refugee students in this process and when necessary to rely on advice from government or municipal agencies or civil society actors. .

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 has worked with Cordelia Foundation, an NGO with experience providing therapeutic help for people with refugee status, to ensure support for students and training for staff. Cordelia offered students individual therapy sessions and offered workshop style support to CEU OLIVE staff and students. In addition, OLIVE at the University of Vienna provided links on trauma management (in German) for educators working with people of refugee backgrounds. A copy of that manual can be found on the REIs website.

2.5. OLIVE-UP Budget

There are four core expenses for an OLIVE-UP program: administrative, teaching, operational 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.

2.6 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. OLlive-UP programs need to find a balance between having such assistance available and making its students feel singled out.

Upon successful completion of OLlive-UP and continuation onto degree programs in universities, it is advisable that access to this form of assistance is kept open to OLlive-UP alumni since effects of trauma may carry over and at times intensify when students move onto the next stage of their studies in a new student community. Therefore relevant university units should be consulted to organise the continuation of such support during as well as after the program period.

OLlive-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. Open Learning Initiative - Weekend Program (OLive-WP)

OLive-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.

OLive-WP syllabus is adaptable to different contexts. Broadly speaking, the program 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 OLIve-WP students from Lower Elementary to Academic English, complemented by two levels of conversational English classes.

Skills and Capacity Building develops a variety of necessary skills for students to be successful in the 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

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”.

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.

Lecturers should be aware of the different language levels of students in the seminar. Seminar organisers should be aware of the different educational backgrounds and consider a variety of topics. Students are not always used to being in an academic environment, creative ways to foster discussions should be encouraged, including encouraging students to relate topics to their own social contexts. Students may be particularly interested in issues of forced migration, it is important when approaching such topics to be aware of issues of trauma that may arise, and also to avoid pigeonholing people with complex social experiences as 'forced migrants'.

(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.

The experience at the University of Vienna was that it was very important for students to think about academic writing in the context of writing a research proposal with all its different components - articulating a research question that makes sense in a particular discipline, and learning how to formulate a research methodology to approach or answer that question.

English and other Language Teaching

English teaching at OLIve-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.

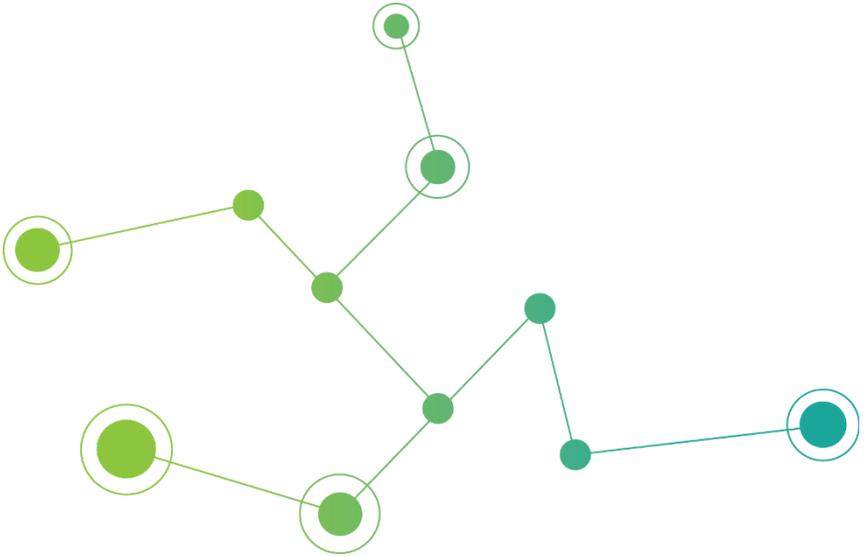
Besides the provision of English teaching, these classes, as the main draw for students, are important in increasing the diversity of a student body. Beginners' and Elementary classes have enabled more women to join the classes, Students in our Beginners' and Elementary group are usually unable to attend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

Students often find English – or other language teaching – particularly important. This is to be encouraged but organisers may wish to ensure that students connect with other components of the program. OLLive’s English teaching is intended to sit alongside and contribute to other goals – be they academic skills development or career skills development or advocacy skills development.

4. Key Messages

The OLLive programs are designed to offer a comprehensive approach to fostering the access of people of refugee backgrounds into higher education in Europe. They are not complete nor comprehensive and should not be seen as such. Rather, these programs and how they are described here are intended to start a conversation about what it might mean for universities to open up and offer opportunities for displaced individuals. What would a pro-active approach to refugee access to higher education, underpinned by systematic preparatory programs like OLLive’s, look like?

The teachers, staff and students in the OLLive programs look forward to an ongoing conversation these matters.



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