Open source licensing

The **licence** is what determines whether software is open source

The licence must be approved by the Open Source Initiative (www.opensource.org)

All approved licences meet their Open Source Definition (www.opensource.org/docs/definition.php)

Approved licences >50 and include the GPL, LGPL, MPL and BSD.

Intellectual Property Rights

- Writing software = creating property
- Property is always owned by somebody
- Agreements and contracts should specify who owns property that is created
- This may require a technical legal examination of any agreement and contracts
- All projects which produce software need to keep complete, detailed records of the licensing and ownership of contributions to that software - an IPR registry

Copyright

- Software is protected by copyright law
- By default only the owner of software may copy, adapt or distribute it.
- The owner of software can agree to let another person copy, adapt or distribute the code - this agreement is called a licence.

Licence effects

- Open source licences grant the rights to copy, adapt or distribute the code to people other than the owner

- Open source licences aim to create a community of contributors who will fix and develop the software.

- Combining two pieces of software code under different licences can be complex.

A common myth

- There is no compulsion to release changes that you make, either under the GPL or any other open source licence

- You may keep internal versions of GPL software that you have modified without necessarily licensing them to anyone else

- This applies equally to individuals and legal entities like companies and institutions