APPRAISAL

of

DISTANCE EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In association with the Vice Chancellor and members of the University of the West Indies, the Commonwealth of Learning is studying the University's continuing and other outreach programmes and appraising possibilities for further developments in academic policy for off-campus study towards University qualifications. The contribution of UWIDITE, now and in future, is integral to the appraisal. The terms of reference are on page 24 below.

The appraisal has been conceived as a consultative exercise, and the timetable for the study is set out on page 25. What follows are first impressions. They are written in the light of a three-week visit to Jamaica, St. Lucia, Barbados, and Trinidad, in May 1991, during which I had discussions with the 49 men and women listed on pages 22-23. I had two aims during those discussions: to become informed, in a preliminary way, of possibilities and problems, as seen by leading people in the University and in the communities it serves, for a greater use of distance education for University qualifications; and to identify what seem to me to be the main questions for further discussion and study in the formulation of academic policy for off-campus study towards University qualifications.

This brief report - First Impressions - is necessarily a tentative interpretation of my initial discussions. It is written as an invitation to the people I have talked to - and, equally important, to others who also have a close interest in the University's policy for distance education - to offer any comments they may wish to make in response to these first impressions. The procedure for doing so is described on page 21.

The three members of the appraisal team will visit the University region in October 1991, when we will seek to inform ourselves as fully as we can about prospects for the further development of academic policy for distance education. All comments made in response to First Impressions will thus be valued by my colleagues and myself for the contribution they can make to our understanding of the essential nature of our task.

For my part, I will be assisted most at this early stage of the appraisal by comments that draw my attention to errors of fact or interpretation and point out issues that I have not identified, or, if identified, have not given enough attention to.

William Renwick
FOR THE APPRAISAL TEAM
UNIVERSITY MISSIONS

Several threads ran through all my discussions which, when woven together, form a rope of understandings about the University's mission as an agent of development in the Commonwealth Caribbean. My summary of these is as follows:

- From the concept of the Irvine committee onwards, the University has been looked upon as the intellectual centre of the region, an indispensable source of knowledge, professional and technical expertise, and creative responsiveness. People inside and outside the University point to numerous examples of ways by which that expectation has been fulfilled during its first 43 years.

- From its inception, too, the University has had a unifying purpose. Its mission is to advance the interests, broadly conceived, of the peoples living in its 14 constituent territories; and to do this by reaching out and exerting its influence in all of those territories as well as drawing their students on to its teaching campus(es).

- There is clearly evident today a renewed sense of political commitment to the University as a vital regional institution. It is an outcome of the debates of the 80s during which the governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean reviewed their collective interests, and, in the Grand Anse Declaration, Grenada, 1989, Heads of Governments committed themselves to policies for the advancement of Caribbean integration and to the University as a regional institution.

- As one of the architects of these inter-governmental initiatives, the Vice Chancellor has a clear view of the contribution the University should make to the development policies of its member countries during the 1990s. If the territories are to make the transition from economies based primarily on natural resources to societies whose further development is based principally on human resources and knowledge, the University has a quite central role to play. In its Development Plan for the Decade, the University has set itself the objective of increasing the number of university graduates by 50%.
There are equally strong convictions about making access to University offerings as widely available as possible. These are part of a Caribbean ethos and are felt as deeply inside the University as by people outside it. It seems to me significant that one of the first two academic appointments made by the University College in 1947 was the Director of Extra Mural Studies. From the appointment of resident tutors, and the establishment of University centres in non campus countries, through its flexible policies for matriculation, the opportunities it has made available under the Challenge Programme and UWIDITE, and through the working relationships it is beginning to enter into with tertiary institutions in the Commonwealth Caribbean, the University has taken important policy decisions whose aim has been to reduce the disadvantages of distance and remove the denial of educational opportunity.

There is a firm belief in the Caribbean (as there is throughout the world) that distance education in its various guises can open up opportunities for education and training in ways that have only recently become widely available. The hope is that well-conceived, well-managed programmes of distance education can reach out to people who would otherwise be denied the chance to study for higher educational qualifications, and are capable of completing them; and, by so doing, reduce the demand for, and the cost of, additional places in face-to-face teaching institutions.

The educational aspirations of people in the non campus countries, and the expectations of their governments, exert a continuing pressure on the University to respond constructively and over an increasing range of its offerings. In Jamaica, too, (and perhaps in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago as well) there are similar pressures from people who cannot commute to the University campus. These pressures are institutional in a region where the University, as a regional institution, interfaces with other regional organisations such as CARICOM and the OECS, as well as with government representatives on the University Council. These pressures are creative in as much as they remind the University that it must respond to the differing needs of each of its 14 member countries for higher education.
DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE POLICY QUESTION

My discussions have served to emphasise the timeliness of this appraisal. From teachers actively engaged in outreach and UWIDITE activities I sense a strong wish for the University to undertake a critical stocktaking of what it wants to achieve through distance education. They are personally committed to distance modes of learning and teaching. They are convinced that, properly developed, these can provide a viable alternative to face-to-face teaching on campus. They also believe them to have the potential to make courses of University study available to many men and women who are not able to become full or part-time students on a campus. But if that is to happen, there is a conceptual task to be done first, one that must entail very full discussion throughout the University.

It is equally clear to me that the Vice Chancellor and the Pro Vice Chancellors I have talked with want the University to have a much firmer commitment to distance education. To them the question is not whether there is a future for distance education at UWI but how and in what form it should be expressed, and under what policies it should be managed. They are looking to this appraisal for practical advice on how distance education should be conceptualised, planned, administered, and funded as a regular University function.
A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

I can think of no other University with precisely the same challenges now faced by UWI in its outreach/distance activities. There are no models to be followed. The position is very much more complex than it is in the only other university with which comparisons might be made, the University of the South Pacific. UWI is much larger and more diverse in its faculties, post graduate programmes, and research institutes. Its three campuses are complex in themselves and in their inter-relationships. The infrastructure of national tertiary institutions is also much further developed, and there are many more of them than in the South Pacific. This adds an entirely new dimension to the relationships the University is already developing, and which can be developed much further through carefully planned initiatives in outreach/distance education. Typically, when universities set out to teach through distance education their objective is to provide opportunities for people who would otherwise be denied. But to that basic objective, the UWI is being challenged to add another which will also have to be achieved if the opportunities to be made available to potential students are to be realised. The UWI's policies will need to be a combination of outreach and distance education. They will need to have strong elements of institutional support, in-service training for lecturers in national tertiary institutions, and the development of colleague relationships among all who become engaged in the development and delivery of distance education courses.

The fact that, so far, the University's commitment to distance education has been experimental and marginal to the teaching of students on campuses may prove to be a blessing in disguise. A great deal of experience has been gained in other universities that can now be referred to with advantage. Developments in telecommunications offer possibilities that could not be entertained a decade ago. Even so the University faces a unique challenge. There are no standard solutions, and it has a very real opportunity to be innovative.
TOWARDS A POLICY FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

Most of the policy questions surrounding the further development of UWI's outreach/distance education activities that this appraisal is concerned with have already been the subject of active discussion in the University and in the countries of the region for some time. Most of the items I raise below have been brought to my notice by people I have talked to during this initial visit. Some of the key elements of a comprehensive strategy are already in place or are being worked through. Examples are the principles incorporated in the University's policies for matriculation which allow for part-time, evening and extra mural study and the admission of mature students; the recognition for University awards of courses or parts of courses completed in other tertiary institutions; the recognition of national tertiary institutions as providers of courses or parts of courses for students whom the University will register and examine for its degrees and certificates; and the beginning, through initiatives of the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions, of consultative processes for validating qualifications and parts of qualifications that will have a recognised status for accrediting by Caribbean tertiary institutions towards their awards.

At the present time, however, the University's contribution, as a provider of distance education, though by no means insignificant, is small and marginal to teaching which requires regular attendance taught on one or other of its campuses during the academic year. The presiding norm is the face-to-face undergraduate course taught to students who will study it full-time until they graduate. But if the University is to become an effective provider of distance education it will have to give practical expression to another norm for teaching and learning, one that can answer to the circumstances of teachers and learners separated from each other in space and often in time.

By no means, however, should the two modes be thought of as being mutually exclusive. A University that teaches in both modes has the potential to benefit from the best of what its teachers devise in each mode. Face-to-face episodes can be built into distance education courses. Distance learning approaches can be built into courses undertaken by part-time and evening students. And even full-time students - and the University has already made some use of the possibility - can be taught from another campus by electronic means.

For distance education approaches to become a regular feature of academic life, and for the University to become an effective dual mode teaching institution, the following issues seem to be the agenda to be addressed with a view to making policies which, taken together, will comprise a strategy for outreach/distance education.
PEDAGOGY

The essence of organised distance learning is that, with varying amounts of direct or indirect assistance from a lecturer or tutor, and with varying amounts of contact with students undertaking the same course, a student works progressively through a course of study materials, submits assigned work which is marked and returned, and is assessed during the course and/or examined at its end. A great many variations can be played on this basic theme but the keys to success lie in:

- well planned courses and skilfully devised printed and other supporting materials for students to work through;
- provision for students to have any problems associated with a course of study resolved quickly;
- the quick and regular return of marked assignments with guidance on whether the student is performing up to expectation;
- student and other evaluations of course materials and of the management of courses which are then be fed back to course designers and course lecturers with a view to improving what is on offer to students.

These questions lie at the heart of policy-making for outreach/distance education at UWI. They are pedagogical questions. Most of the people I have talked to who are themselves closely involved with outreach and/or UWIDITE programmes see this as the prime issue which, when resolved, will open the way for discussion about ways and means, including the use to be made of telecommunications facilities.

TARGET GROUPS

Of the various groups towards which UWI's policies of outreach/distance could be directed, the following have claims to serious consideration:

Mature men and women. A case does not have to be made for this group. They are the classic focus of distance education. They may or may not be qualified for normal matriculation. They live in campus countries as well as non campus countries. Those who are in career positions want to deepen their knowledge, improve their formal qualifications, learn new skills. Those who are not in formal employment - including many women - are looking for a second chance to study for qualifications they could then use for career purposes.
Challenge Students. There is an overlap between this group and the mature men and women discussed above. Some of them are in NCCs that do not have tertiary institutions teaching first year University Social Science programmes. Some live in countries with such institutions but, though suitably qualified, have not gained admission to their full time, first year University programme. Such students are a main focus for the work of Resident Tutors and University Centres. With mature students, they are the main source of untrained talent in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Their numbers are bound to increase because neither the University nor the national institutions can be expected to increase significantly their annual intakes of full-time students. The financial barriers to full-time studentship, whether on a campus, or in a national institution, is another factor that will swell their numbers.

Teachers. All countries give the highest priority to the upgrading of the professional knowledge and skills of primary and secondary teachers. Distance education approaches are being built into courses run by the faculties of education for teachers and principals. There is much scope for more such courses, their adaptation to the requirements of the countries served by them, and a general upgrading of the distance education components in them.

Preliminary Science and Maths, and English. There are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and science subjects, and of English, in Jamaica and the NCCs. Successful distance education approaches have been used in other countries, and could be used in the Commonwealth Caribbean to great advantage. An initiative now would also be timely in relation to the Caribbean Examination Councils intention to introduce a qualification to replace GCE A levels in 1994. It could mean that the development of distance education teaching materials could be developed as part of the syllabus development that will be associated with this move.

The University is of course only one of the institutions with an interest in such a development. A co-operative project, in conjunction with the Caribbean Examinations Council, national departments of education, and national tertiary institutions suggests itself. To the extent that the University can assist in improving the entry qualifications of students admitted to the faculties of natural sciences, it will be able to reduce the numbers taking Preliminary science at Mona and conserve its teaching for degree students. Furthermore, the number of students undertaking comparable courses in schools and national tertiary institutions is growing each year. The development of distance education materials at the Preliminary level would thus have a big impact throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean.
The same argument applies to the development of distance education materials in English for students at the same level.

**Continuing Education Courses.** UWIDITE has become the carrier of many short, self-contained courses for occupational groups, voluntary and community organisations, and special interest groups. Included in these courses are supporting printed materials. With a stronger commitment to distance education approaches, the print-based materials for such courses should be given greater attention, and the range and number of courses could be increased. These courses have the potential to be financially self-supporting and an earner of income for the University.

**Adult Learning and Distance Learnings.** Distance education is one of the fastest growing fields of education, and it is bound to increase even further during this decade. It will become an important aspect of the work of national tertiary institutions in the Commonwealth Caribbean as well as UWI. The University should consider developing, for teaching through distance education modes, courses in the pedagogy of adult learning and of distance teaching and learning.

**Innovative Courses.** One of the policy questions the University will need to consider is whether it will develop and teach, for degree or post-graduate awards, courses in distance modes that are not also (or not yet) taught in face-to-face classes on a campus. Anthropology is an example of a discipline not taught in the faculties of arts and general studies or of social sciences which could be introduced to degree courses through distance modes.

There is scope, too, for developing post-graduate certificate or diploma courses that would tap the research of the University's research institutes and consortia and make it accessible to teachers, other professionals, and the public generally for their own continuing education. One example would be a certificate or diploma in Caribbean Studies, which could become the means by which much valuable knowledge about social, economic and cultural development in the region could be made generally available for study and reflection. Regular revisions of the content of the subjects of such a course of studies would become an indispensable source of knowledge and guidance for lecturers and teachers in schools and national tertiary institutions who are wanting to strengthen the teaching of Caribbean Studies in the countries of the region. Another example is the University's contribution to women and development. There is a diverse and a growing body of research and commentary that could be made more widely available for study through
distance modes. Once they were developed and included in UWI's curriculum, distance courses with a distinctive Caribbean content or emphasis would be of interest to students elsewhere in the world who want to be better informed about the region.

DEGREES BY DISTANCE EDUCATION?

Major questions are whether the University's policy for distance learning will encompass the possibility that some degrees could be completed entirely by distance education modes; and if they could, how the second and, particularly, the final year of a degree course should be organised for students who are unable to spend a full academic year on a campus. These questions are linked with the allied question of the extent to which, in principle, the University will be prepared to devolve on to recognised national tertiary institutions the responsibility for teaching (and, in time, examining) degree courses beyond the first year level.

One can envisage a number of paths by which students who do not begin degree courses as full time campus students would be able to progress towards the completion of a degree. The University's move to a semester organisation and a credit system, and its developing relationships with national tertiary institutions, open up possibilities for considerable diversity. The use of summer schools as part of the requirement to students enrolled in final year subjects of a degree by distance modes is worth careful consideration.

HOW OPEN?

Important questions will need to be worked through about the 'openness' of courses of distance education for University awards. Should such courses be limited to men and women who meet the University's present matriculation requirements? Should a lower age be set for the admission of mature students? Should the University actively set out to increase the demand by developing and teaching, as part of its repertoire of distance programmes, courses that would assist potential adult students with quite modest formal educational qualifications to prepare themselves for admission to degree programmes? Should, in that context, the University develop and teach its own programme of Preliminary courses through distance education?

Another factor making for, or limiting, openness will be the enrolment and tuition fees to be charged distance students. The cost of developing and teaching distance courses will be high in relation to the numbers likely to be enrolled in them. Few, if any, courses are likely to be able to break even on any realistic structure of fees. There will thus need to be
a trade off between convictions about 'openness', on the one hand, and the financial costs incurred by policies intended to increase openness.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL LINKS AND COLLEAGUE RELATIONSHIPS

Through the work of the joint boards in teacher education, the University has already developed institutional links with teachers colleges and colleague relationships with teachers and college lecturers. Similar relationships are now being explored with other national tertiary institutions and their lecturing staffs where they teach, or are preparing to teach, courses for University awards.

These relationships fall under the University's outreach activities, but important additional dimensions can be added to them in the context of policies for distance education. Teachers in a University faculty and a national institution (or a teachers college) who are teaching the same subject for the same examination have a continuing mutual interest in what is taught and how it might be interpreted for students. Such relationships are now being built up, for example, between lecturers in Antigua State College and Sir Arthur Lewis Community College on the one hand, and lecturers in the faculty of social sciences at Cave Hill and St. Augustine. If, for example, the Faculty of Social Science were to be given the responsibility of converting some or all of its first year social science courses for use under distance modes of learning, additional possibilities for colleague relationships would open up.

Some lecturers in the national colleagues would no doubt take part in the conceptualisation of such courses and in writing parts of them. Some would value the finished products for the guidance they would themselves receive for the preparation of their own teaching purposes. Newly appointed lecturers to national institutions would be able to use them as a vital part of their induction. Other national institutions preparing for recognition by the University for the teaching of first year social science courses would also have valuable resources to guide them. The review and regular revision of each course of study could become an important focus for discussion among all the lecturers teaching that course. And if, as may be the case, there are problems in maintaining continuity in the teaching of particular courses in a national institution, the distance mode materials would provide a backup service for students who might otherwise be without a lecturer, or have one entirely new to the teaching responsibilities associated with their course.

It can be expected, too, that some lecturers in the national institutions will want to improve their academic qualifications and will enrol for higher degrees. This will further
enhance colleague relationships, and will also open possibilities for research done as part of such degrees and for other purposes to have its focus in the territories where they live and work.

Opportunities to talk to each other regularly about items of common interest will be essential to the development of these colleague relationships. Having telecommunication links between the University campuses and national tertiary institutions for consultation and facsimile transfer should be a high priority.

DISTANCE EDUCATION TUTORS.

Students of distance education courses who have regular access to suitably qualified tutors typically perform better than those who do not. The tutor may be someone the student can talk to in person, or by telephone, or by participating in a teleconference, as in the University now, through a UWIDITE tutorial.

A comprehensive policy for distance education will need to include ways of identifying, appointing, guiding, remunerating, and retaining competent tutors. For there is a close parallel for distance education policies with the colleague relationships the University needs to build up as part of its outreach policies. distance education policies, as for its outreach policies. In some cases the distance education tutors employed by the University through its Continuing Education Centres will be the same persons who, during the day time, will be teaching the same course in a national institution or teachers college. For distance education tutors, as for lecturers in recognized tertiary institutions, the building of colleague relationships will also be important. It will be equally important to have telecommunication links that will enable regular contact between lecturers on campuses and lecturers and tutors in the territories and in remote parts of campus countries such as Jamaica.

An emphasis on the building up of colleague relationships between campus lecturers and lecturers in national institutions and distance education tutors raises difficult questions of priorities in the use that University teachers make of their time. In the networks of relationships that are developing, University lecturers may well find themselves adopting a 'two-tier' relationship towards students enrolled in their subjects as distance students. To conserve their time, University lecturers may have to interface with lecturers in national tertiary institutions and with distance education tutors who, in their turn, will interface with the students. If this is to become of necessity the working arrangement, it underlines the importance of developing close colleague relationships.
PRODUCING DISTANCE EDUCATION MATERIALS

Considered as a learning system, distance education can be analysed under three broad headings:

- the development and revision of the printed and supporting materials that are the main carriers of what is to be taught;
- a timetabled delivery system that links students to these instructional materials and to support services intended to assist them as they work through them;
- and the nature, quality and the effectiveness of students' interactions with the materials through the delivery system.

The way the content will be organised and presented will be influenced by the characteristics of the delivery system and the ways students can be expected to relate to it. Irrespective, however, of how it will be delivered, a course of distance education must be planned so that it has a pedagogical coherence that students can be inducted into and can respond to. All the people I have spoken to who are currently engaged in distance education activities at UWI see the conception, design and production of such materials as the main challenge now facing the University in this field of work.

The preparation of good course materials for use in distance education modes is highly labour-intensive. It makes considerable claims on the time and creativity and also on the sense of commitment of the University lecturers whose knowledge is the intellectual core of what is finally produced. It also calls for a team approach as subject specialists, editors, and specialists in the production of self-instructional materials combine their expertise to produce texts with supporting aids and visual components that have the capacity to play Socrates to a student encountering them alone.

How to give practical expression to this basic requirement of distance education must be a central theme of the appraisal. The nature of the contributions that UWI Radio and CARIMAC may be able to make will also be explored.
DELIVERY SYSTEM

The standard components of the delivery system are likely to be:

- registration through the University Centres, the information for student record purposes being fed into the University's computerised information system;
- regular delivery of course materials to all students in each course;
- arrangements for regular tutorials, whether face-to-face or through electronic means;
- arrangements for receiving assignments from students, and for marking, recording, and returning them;
- arrangements for supervising and assessing any practical requirements;
- conducting examinations, marking scripts and recording and reporting examination results to students.

Distance education systems quickly become complex pieces of administration, requiring close, continuing attention to ensure that they are efficient and responsive to unexpected situations. In the Caribbean, where 14 territories will be involved, spread out over vast distances, this vital operational side of the entire distance education enterprise will need to be carefully thought through. Whatever system is put in place must have operating protocols, built in forms of accountability, and enough managerial clout to ensure that it works efficiently.

THE TEACHING INPUTS

I have already underlined the crucial importance of the contribution of University teachers in the conception and writing of distance education course materials. It will be essential for the University to determine the conditions under which its teachers are to undertake responsibilities for its distance education teaching programmes. For degree level courses of study these would be to:

- write new courses and revise existing ones;
- vet local tutors and support them in their work;
• monitor standards used by tutors who mark assigned work for which the University lecturer is formally responsible;
• examine or assess students at the end of the course;
• and they may, depending on how the University organises its distance education operation, be responsible for ensuring that the delivery system is working effectively for the students enrolled in their course.

Depending on the number of students enrolled in courses these responsibilities will range from small to very large. But whether small or large, they will take the University into a new mode of operation, with new responsibilities.

All the University teachers I talked to who have been responsible for conducting UWIDITE courses insisted that, if the University is to put distance education on a proper basis, clear conditions must be set down for the teachers who undertake responsibilities for it. All spoke of the unsatisfactory nature of the present grace and favour arrangements, where UWIDITE courses (and supervising the first year degree work of Antigua State College and SALCC) are carried out as additions to the normal responsibilities of deans, heads of departments, and lecturers.

This will call for careful thought to be given to two related matters. First, rules will be needed that enable due allowance to be made for a lecturer's distance and outreach responsibilities when departmental timetables are drawn up. Second, the criteria for assessment and promotion within the University will need to be reviewed so that lecturers who do exemplary work developing distance courses and teaching them can have it assessed in the context of their claims to be considered for salary promotion.

IMPROVING UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Behind these concerns is another. It is the recognition that the University gives to good teaching, whether face-to-face or through distance modes. It can be predicted that UWI will repeat the experience of other universities which, starting as face-to-face universities, became dual mode universities when they also began to teach at a distance. It is common for teachers who have developed self-instructional materials to acknowledge that the experience has made them rethink their techniques as face-to-face teachers, and that they have become better teachers as a result. The move to become a dual mode university, in short, will heighten the interest teachers have in the teaching act itself.
In the context, therefore, of the move into distance teaching, the University should consider its institutional arrangements for the improvement of University teaching per se. There is a strong case to be made for establishing teaching and learning centres on all three campuses with a view to assisting lecturers to assess their teaching effectiveness - whether as face-to-face teachers or in distance modes - and, where necessary, take appropriate steps to improve it. There is also a strong case for including 'effective teaching' as a criterion (along with research and publication and service to the community) in relation to which members of the University academic staff will be judged when they are under consideration for assessment and promotion.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The University would very likely not be considering developments in its outreach/distance education programmes were it not for the telecommunications revolution of the last decade. UWIDITE enabled many people in the University and in a growing number of the territories of the University region to become alert to what telecommunication can make possible. The University's policy for distance education will have to be based firmly on a complex telecommunications network.

Here the singular feature of the developments now under way need to be underlined again. The lines of communication that the University will have between faculties on its three campuses, between campuses and University centres in the NCCs, between University teachers and lecturers in national tertiary institutions, and between University teachers and distance education tutors will be very complicated. Add to this the link that faculties such as medicine and engineering are making with institutions and professional organisations in the Caribbean, and outside the region, and the networking possibilities take on an exponential character.

There is also in all this a certain bewitchment of language. As a visitor to the University it is clear to me that the acronym UWIDITE has taken on a life of its own. One must listen carefully to decide whether, in conversation, it is being used to refer to a particular telecommunications configuration, to the distance education activities associated with it, or as a short-hand for distance education generally. Those most closely associated with the UWIDITE experiment are aware of this, and are concerned that too much has come to be read into it and to be expected of it.

Even in an upgraded form, UWIDITE will be far from synonymous with the University's interest in the development of its telecommunications infrastructure. The
Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Medical Sciences at St. Augustine - to use two examples - have the beginnings of telecommunications facilities which, stemming from their interests in continuing education, will be capable of generating their own outreach activities.

As part of its terms of reference, this appraisal is asked to "have regard to the present contribution of the University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE) and to possibilities for its further development for distance learning." That in itself creates no problem. But since UWIDITE is not the only telecommunications facility available to members of the University community, it seems to me that, when thinking of possibilities for further development, the appraisal should generalise the discussion and refer not solely to UWIDITE but to telecommunications facilities for distance education. (The phrase 'continuing education' raises the parallel question of the policy relationships to be developed between the contributions to continuing education of the University's professional faculties and those of the School of Continuing Studies.)

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The developments now under way will generate increasing demands for access to books, journals, and information that teachers and students will need but which are not physically available to them in their own library. I am thinking particularly of lecturers and students in the national institutions and resident tutors and the students serviced by the University Centres. On the one hand this is a matter of telecommunications networking which will enable them to have access to computerised bibliographers and receive facsimile copies of journal articles and other forms of information. On the other hand, there are installation, servicing, and operating costs to be considered.

EVALUATION

One of the features of a number of the teaching programmes funded by outside agencies for transmission on UWIDITE is a requirement for some form of evaluation and reporting to funding agencies. Though it does not happen in other institutions as often as it should, there are unassailable arguments for building regular processes of evaluation into the management of distance education programmes as a regular element. These should include student evaluations, arrangements for the peer review of course materials as they are being worked up, the routine evaluation of the effectiveness of teachers and tutors responsible for distance courses, the regular monitoring of the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery systems, and periodic outside evaluations of particular programmes and the overall effectiveness of the University's distance education activities.
MANAGING DISTANCE EDUCATION

In my initial discussions the focus was on missions and objectives, and questions about management received only cursory attention. But when the appraisal team returns to the University in October, my colleagues and I will be interested both in the defining of objectives and in ways by which they might be translated into action. That will be the context within which we will consider the management of the University's responsibilities for distance education.

COSTS AND PRIORITIES

My main initial aim has been to form impressions of the possibilities for development that people inside the University and outside of it have had in mind when they responded to the terms of reference set down for the appraisal. Several have made the point that the possibilities are limitless. But resources of expertise, time, materials and money set limits to what is practicable. Questions of costs and priorities, and the allied question of the extent to which various users of the University's distance education offerings should be expected to contribute towards their costs, will be taken up during the next phase of the consultation.

It is my understanding that the University does not include distance education responsibilities among the factors that generate administrative, teaching, and marking demands on faculties. If my understanding is correct, that policy should be reviewed. With the advent of national tertiary institutions as teaching partners with the University for some courses, the identification and apportionment of the costs of its external courses will require close analysis. But irrespective of how costs are assessed and apportioned, and the extent to which they may be recovered, the University and the countries that contribute to the courses and benefit from them need to know their economic costs.
CONCLUSION

The main conclusion to be drawn from these initial impressions is one of general orientation. Formalising and strengthening the University's commitment to distance education raises broader questions than, say, a decision to establish a new teaching faculty. Distance education will add new responsibilities which can influence the work of deans, heads of subjects, and lecturers in all faculties, departments, and research institutes.

It will change the character of the University. By adding a new teaching mode it will create conditions for continuing comparison within the University itself between the effectiveness of courses taught by distance modes and by face-to-face modes. The obvious comparisons will be between the conditions under which University teachers are required to carry out their academic duties under each mode. And because many teachers will find themselves teaching in both modes, such comparisons will be made daily, as matters of direct personal experience. In the light of the experience of other universities that have added distance modes of teaching, the University will have to determine clear policies for its distance education responsibilities to ensure that these comparisons are not detrimental to the orderly development of its distance education missions.

To the extent, however, that a firm commitment to distance education becomes a settled feature of campus life, it will open up new pedagogical horizons for the University as an institution and for its teachers. At the institutional level the University is strengthening relationships with other tertiary institutions, and with professional and voluntary organisations, and distance education will multiply the opportunities for university teachers to extend their intellectual leadership in the Commonwealth Caribbean. At the personal level, distance education has the potential to involve its teachers in continuing reflection on the complexities of learning and teaching in tertiary institutions, whether by distance modes or face-to-face. The long term effects on the quality of teaching and learning in the University and its associated institutions could be very great indeed.

As a predominantly face-to-face teaching university, UWI is already a complex institution. A strong commitment to distance education will greatly increase that complexity. A great deal of thought will clearly have to be given to finding ways of ensuring that the University's responses to the numerous possibilities now opening up for distance education are made in a context of coherent University policies and clearly stated priorities. And at the operational level, there will need to be enough devolution of responsibility on to campuses and faculties to ensure that, through active participation, the University's policy commitment is reflected in the commitment of its teachers.
INVITATION

It is my hope that readers will respond to First Impressions so that I can benefit from their thoughts about the appraisal and, more to the point, whether my discussion of the issues to be addressed is reasonably well on target. The questions in my mind, and upon which I would value guidance, are:

- Is First Impressions sufficiently comprehensive or does it leave out issues that should be added?
- Are there matters of fact or interpretation that need to be put right?
- And, most importantly, are the issues that are identified set out fairly and accurately?

If the Appraisal team is to maintain its timetable, responses will need to be available for the team's scrutiny when it visits the region in early October 1991. To this end, responses should be forwarded to Professor L.R.B. Robinson at the UWI Mona Campus to reach him no later than 30 September, 1991. The responses thus received will be collated and be ready for the start of the work of the Appraisal team.
PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Jamaica

Dr. Lucille Mair, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Burchell Whiteman, Minister of State, Ministry of Education
Mr. Alister McIntyre, Vice Chancellor, UWI
Professor the Hon. Leslie Robinson, Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal, Mona
Professor the Hon. G.C. Lalor, Pro Vice Chancellor, Science and Technology, Deputy Principal, Mona
Professor the Hon. Rex Nettleford, Pro Vice Chancellor, Outreach and Institutional Relations
Mr. Lascelles B. Smith, University Bursar
Dr. Marlene Hamilton, Dean, Faculty of Education, Mona
Dr. Edwin Jones, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Mona
Professor K. Magnus, Dean, Natural Sciences, Mona
Mrs. Meta Bogle, Head, Department of Educational Studies, Mona
Mr. Uriel Salmon, Lecturer in Accountancy, Faculty of Social Sciences, Mona
Mrs. Janet Brown, Caribbean Child Development Centre, Mona
Mrs. Lilith Williams, Project Officer, Fertility Management Unit, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Mona
Mrs. Vilma McClenan, Programme Co-ordinator, UWIDITE
Mr. Courtney Walker, Technical Officer, UWIDITE

St. Lucia

Dr. Nicholas Frederick, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
Dr. Vaughan Lewis, Director General, OECS Secretariat
Mr. Leighton Thomas, Principal, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, The Morne
Mr. Madison Stanislaus, Co-ordinator, Continuing Education Department, SALCC
Mr. Robert D. Harvey, Assistant Co-ordinator, Continuing Education Department, SALCC
Dr. George Knox, North Island College, Victoria, British Columbia, Commonwealth of Learning Fellow
Mrs. Marilyn Floissac Resident Tutor, St. Lucia, University Centre

Barbados

Pro Vice Chancellor, Sir Keith Hunte, Principal, Cave Hill
Professor W.K. Marshall, Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Deputy Principal, Cave Hill
Mrs. Howell, Officer of University Services, Cave Hill
Ms, Elizabeth Watson, Librarian, Learning Resources Centre, Cave Hill
Mrs. Norma Holden, Principal, Barbados Community College
Mr. Wilfred Beckles, Registrar, Caribbean Examinations Council

Trinidad and Tobago

Mr. Hem Lee, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Education
Mr. Hart Edwards, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
Mr. Clive Borely, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education
Mrs. Gardner, Assistant to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
Dr. Alvin Ashton, Executive Director, National Institute of Higher Education Research, Science, Technology
Pro Vice Chancellor G.M. Richards, Principal, St. Augustine
Professor K.A. Butler, Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences, St. Augustine
Mr. Carol Keeler, Dean, Faculty of Education, St. Augustine
Mr. Carol Parris, Dean, Faculty of Social Science, St. Augustine
Professor R. Saunders, Dean, Faculty of Natural Sciences, St. Augustine
Professor D.R. McGaw, Dean, Faculty of Engineering, St. Augustine
Professor Ashton Parris, Faculty of Engineering, St. Augustine
Mr. Clement Imbert, Faculty of Engineering, St. Augustine
Dr. S.W. Carrington, Faculty of Arts and General Studies, St. Augustine
Dr. Bridget Brereton, Faculty of Arts and General Studies, St. Augustine
Dr. Barbara Lalla, Faculty of Arts and General Studies, St. Augustine
- Faculty of Arts and General Studies, St. Augustine
- Faculty of Arts and General Studies, St. Augustine
Mr. Esmond Ramesar, Associate Director, School of Continuing Studies, St. Augustine
Mr. Tony Gibson, Technical Consultant, Faculty of Medical Sciences, St. Augustine
Mrs. Redhead, Senior Assistant Registrar, Student Affairs, St. Augustine
TERMS OF REFERENCE

The appraisal is to:

- study the University's continuing education and other outreach programmes;

- appraise possibilities for further developments in academic policy for off-campus study towards University qualifications;

- have regard to the present contribution of The University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE) and to possibilities for its further development for distance learning;

- have regard also to the capital and recurring costs of any developments in its policies for distance education that might be proposed;

- and prepare a report after appropriate consultation with the Vice Chancellor and members of the University, and other persons, agencies and organisations in the Caribbean with interest in the University's contribution to distance education.
# THE APPRAISAL TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1991</td>
<td>Initial visit to University region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>First Impressions to be sent to Vice Chancellor for distribution and comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>July/August</td>
<td>Comments on First Impressions from people in the University and member countries to be sent to Appraisal team</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Appraisal team visit to University campuses and various member countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Appraisal team's draft report to be sent to Vice Chancellor for distribution and comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1992</td>
<td>Comments on draft report to be sent to appraisal team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March or April</td>
<td>Return visit by appraisal team for discussion with University administrators and teachers on draft report and responses to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Appraisal team's final report to be sent to President of Commonwealth of Learning, who will transmit it to the Vice Chancellor</td>
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