

Message on the Launch of the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica

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**by
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Honourable Minister, Respected Maxine Henry-Wilson, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to send greetings from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on the occasion of the launch of the National Qualifications Framework. This is an important milestone in enhancing the quality and relevance of tertiary education in Jamaica and COL is honoured to have been part of this journey.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation with the mandate to work in 52 countries out of which 30 are small states. Ministers of Education had directed COL to establish a Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) for strengthening existing tertiary institutions for human resource development over ten years ago. This is now a thriving network with Jamaica as an active member. Not only did the small states work together to develop needs-based courses but also developed a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) to enable the movement of credits and qualified people across national borders. The objective of the TQF is to support the development, international recognition and comparability of courses offered within the VUSSC context.

National institutions from small states that wish to offer educational programmes that are co-branded with VUSSC are required to have these programmes approved by the institution, the national qualifications authority and, where applicable, the regional qualifications body. Programmes of institutions in countries which do not have qualifications authorities can also be considered for registration on the TQF provided that the qualifications are quality assured in their country of origin. By referencing and registering programmes on the TQF, national qualifications can have a Commonwealth-wide acceptance.

Jamaica played a key role in the development and implementation of the TQF and was ably represented on the TQF Management Committee by Dr. Yvonne Marshall. Jamaica was also instrumental in referencing the CARICOM qualifications framework against the TQF. With so much experience and expertise in designing qualifications frameworks, the Jamaican National Qualifications Framework is bound to be a model for those still grappling with this issue.

We are very grateful to Jamaica for its financial and intellectual contributions. As the former Chair of COL's international Board of Governors, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman OJ always inspired and encouraged us to make a difference to the life of the last person in the queue. I would like to congratulate Maxine Henry-Wilson, a well-known stalwart of tertiary education in the region, for leading this initiative and to say how much we value our partnership.