Theme:
Learning for sustainable development

Objectives:
1. Strengthen the effectiveness of COL’s strategic plan and programme activities in addressing key priorities for education and training in the Pacific; and
2. Refine the approaches of COL to suit Pacific education and training priorities during 2018-2021.

Overview
Seven COL Focal Points met with COL leadership and staff for the mid-programme review and consultation meeting for 2015 – 2018. The meeting was held in Nadi, Fiji on 16th and 17th February 2018. The following Pacific countries were represented: Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, PNG, Nauru and Kiribati. DFAT Australia was also represented as were the University of the South Pacific and PACFOLD. Three of the 7 Focal Points were newly appointed.
# Report of the PACIFIC Regional Focal Points Meeting

**February 16-17, 2018**

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Welcome & Opening Session

Master of Ceremonies: Hasmukh Lal, Director PACFOLD & Pacific TAFE, USP

Welcome: Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President & CEO

COL President gave a warm welcome to all the participants and thanked them for their continuing support to COL as ambassadors in the region. She recognised PACFOLD for co-hosting the meeting.

Prof. Kanwar expressed appreciation to USP for establishing the COL Pacific regional center PACFOLD and gave a review of the activities COL has carried out in the current programme plan 2015 – 2018.

The President summarised the 4 key objectives of the meeting.

1. For COL to hear about the key priorities in Pacific countries and how these fit with the COL mission and mandate
2. An opportunity for COL to present a summary of what we’ve done in each country.
3. A forum to remind Focal Points of COL’s purpose, objectives and programmes
4. To promote Commonwealth wide cooperation as a family working through consensus, respect & understanding. These meetings serve to remind us of our shared values and our common identity as citizens of the Commonwealth.
The full opening remarks can be found here.

Chief Guest: Professor Richard Coll, Deputy Vice Chancellor, USP

Professor Coll noted that USP and COL have a very strong bond working in partnership to bring about important change to the Pacific through Education with the aim of generating quality educational programs that are affordable and accessible and which will strengthen sustainable development. He gave the highlights of the relationship.

The DVC explained that PACFOLD is growing in strength and activities with the appointment of a project officer by USP. He noted the achievements at the regional level in developing an OER Action Plan and facilitated the development of the Pacific ODFL Framework as endorsed by the Pacific Heads of Education Systems (PHES). He urged the members to make full use of PACFOLD to support ODL in their countries.

A history of flexible learning at USP was given, noting that the USP Centre for Flexible Learning (CFL), is proudly competitive globally in its service delivery in the region, through the latest technological infrastructure to deliver education that is accessible and affordable.

The DVC also noted that Focal Point members have a very big part to perform in harnessing flexible learning in the Pacific for all Pacific citizens and that with PACFOLD, USP and COL guidance, they can make an impact in making education more affordable and accessible through upgrading and further developing existing flexible learning infrastructure; ensuring that governments investments in education are focused on relevant tools to make education available anytime anywhere, regardless of geographical and social challenges.

The full text of the DVC’s speech can be found here.
Session 1: Expectations and COL: Vision, Mission, Programme
Rapporteur: Prof Ioana Chang Mow - Samoa

Participants’ Expectations

Facilitator       Dr Alison Mead Richardson

The Focal Points were requested to share their expectations of what would be discussed during the meeting in order that unplanned issues could be addressed if possible. Their expectations included:

- Needing more clear information on the role of a Focal Point
- Discussion on PACFOLD and what they can do
- Better collaboration between countries and COL
- Innovative solutions for shared challenges
- To learn from COL and understand where they can add value
- Key priorities of COL for the Pacific region
- How can USP can better support COL and Focal Points

It was important to identify and address participants’ expectations, particularly with a number of new Focal Points in the group. Most of the expectations related to the priorities identified in the country reports previously submitted. Individual expectations were discussed and noted for later discussion.
Promoting Learning for Sustainable Development

Facilitator  Professor Asha Kanwar

The Commonwealth comprises 53 nations. Of the population of 2.4 billion 60% are under 30, 65% children entering primary schools and 86.89% mobile phone users.

The major donors to COL include Canada, UK, India, Australia, NZ, Nigeria, South Africa with a total of 46 countries contributing altogether. There is a regional office in India (CEMCA) and regional offices in Botswana, Nigeria, Malta and PACFOLD in the Pacific. The Pacific has solid representation on COL board with Dr Emma Kruse Vaai as the Pacific representative.

COL’s Strategic Plan 2015- 2021 was developed in consultation with Focal Points and is closely linked to SDG 4 goal.

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) offer professional training to hundreds of people. It offers courses and develops OERS to 23 institutions in 14 countries, using the Transnational Qualifications Framework TQF and COL also offers the Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA (CEMBA) programme.

Lifelong learning for farmers operates in 11 countries in Asia, Africa and Caribbean with a new programme starting in Tonga now. This aims to increasing food security and increase in empowerment and profit The Girls Inspire project reaches girls in 5 countries across Asia and Africa focusing on learning for empowerment. 35k girls trained, 1620 girls joined internships, 6673 gained employment and the number of child marriages had been reduced.

COL promotes social inclusion and environmental conservation. Some examples include an open school in a fishing village that focuses on fishing skills using scientific methods for out of school youth. ODL students have 1/3 carbon foot print compared to campus-based student without compromising quality. COL offers innovative models with world-class expertise. It assists in capacity building and resources. As an organisation COL encourages more dialogue in identifying common issues within the region.

Comments/discussion

i) What processes involve in accessing resources programmes? COL provides responses to requests immediately and quick response

ii) How does COL select partners? – COL is ready to work with any partners willing to share same ethics & values
Session 2: COL Strategic Plan & Pacific Strategy

Facilitators: Dr Bala & Dr Alison Mead Richardson

Rapporteur: James Bosamata – Solomon Islands

Dr Bala made a presentation on the COL Strategic Plan and the Pacific Strategy.

COL has a fundamental vision as is making a difference to the learner in the classroom. Focal Points should be a channel of communication, being drivers of the message in their country. People have many ideas, but we need to look at how these can be translated into action. We need to look at the quality of teachers, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning.

Is School based professional development programme effective?
An ICT COL supported programme in Kiribati has been helpful to the teachers, but there is ‘identity crisis’. Students get the information but not the knowledge. Some areas to be looked at include Trans-Pacific qualifications, labour mobility between the Pacific and Australia/New Zealand and labour mobility within the Pacific Small States themselves.
It was suggested that there should be Tracer Studies to find out where students go and what they do when they leave university/higher education. Qualification should be part of flexible learning and there should be recognition of prior learning.
Session 3: Country Reports
Facilitator: Dr Alison Mead Richardson
Rapporteur: Lady Siatukimoana Vaea – Tonga

The triennial meeting is an opportunity for FPs to share with COL their current country priorities and to discuss how COL can provide support.

Each Focal Point provided a priorities report for their country according to the COL template. Mr. Filipe Jitoko provided a report from the perspective of PIFS. The reports were prepared as posters and displayed on the wall of the meeting room. FPs took some time to review all the country posters and shared their perspectives on common regional priorities and country-specific needs.

Following discussion, common priorities were noted for the region:
- Closer collaboration with PACFOLD
- Capacity Building of Trainers in ODL
- Development of National OER Policies
- Professional development of teachers, in service and pre-service
- Skills training in the areas of Agriculture, and Fishing
- Training to develop OER Resources
- Upgrading qualifications of trainers in Teacher Education
- Professional development on Instructional Design
- Increased reach to remote communities to provide trainings on life and working skills
- Capacity building for TVET- especially CBET and employability skills
Session 4: PACFOLD
Presenter: Hasmukh Lal – Director PACFOLD
Rapporteur: Betty Jitoko – Australian High Commission

It was noted that there is a need to institutionalise PACFOLD. There is potential for strengthening COL’s work in the region by strengthening the partnership between PACFOLD and Focal Points (FPs). FPs can become agents and brokers. There is also the possibility of FPs becoming members of the Advisory Committee as well as moderators of PACFOLD learn – the online community of practice.
The Pacific Region OER Action Plan is to be presented, as part of the Regional Education Framework, at the Forum Education Minister’s Meeting in May 2018.

Discussion
Some of the issues raised including the role of PACFOLD, as well as the nature of the work it does. This could be better clarified to FPs. Also indicated was a need for clarity around the processes whereby PACFOLD can support the work of Focal Points, and vice-versa

Resolutions/Action Items
In the next 4 months, FPs agreed to identify some of their priority needs, making sure that they are aligned with COL and PACFOLD visions. It was requested that each send a 2-pager to PACFOLD and COL. The two agencies to decide what is viable and what can be handled regionally by PACFOLD and what COL can address. Some concrete action in response to these needs, to be implemented in the coming 6 months.

PACFOLD might like to review its objectives, given more recent changes and the request for more clarity around its work. More dialogue should take place between PACFOLD and FPs on this and other matters. In terms of FPs being members of the PACFOLD Advisory Committee, COL will clarify details with PACFOLD and then revert to FPs.

The PACFOLD presentation can be found here
Session 5: Role of Focal Points

Facilitator: Dr Alison Mead Richardson

Rapporteur: Kaaro Neeti

Dr Alison Mead Richardson started her presentation by looking at the Pacific influence in the COL programme. She mentioned that Pacific developing countries face specific challenges in contexts not found elsewhere in Commonwealth. If COL is to be useful in Pacific countries, then regular, up-to-date information about needs and priorities is required. This is why these meetings are so important, to make sure we have at least one ‘touch point’ in each programme plan. She further highlighted that individual Education Specialists make country visits to learn more about country contexts and to provide capacity building support to countries.

She pointed out that COL needs to be aware of regional frameworks and plans and other development partner activities. She mentioned that country colleagues are working with a range of development partners and their capacity to respond to all requests and activities is limited. Additionally, it was suggested that COL recognize that MoE staff is often small, people and financial resources are stretched.

The session continued with the FPs lining up in order of the time that they had been a Focal point. The longest standing member was Lady Siatu from Tonga (2009) with Anthony Rayappan from PNG as the newest focal point having been appointed in 2017. This is also true for Reginald Garoleo from Vanuatu who was only able to join the meeting on the second day. They then paired off to complete a quiz to check how much they knew about COL.
After checking the answers to the quiz, the Education Specialist made a short presentation interspersed with questions which FPs discussed in their groups and shared their views. Questions and responses include:

**Key challenges experienced by Focal Points**
- Not always aware of COL activities in country
- COL information not always passing through Focal Points
- Sustainability of Focal Points. Ministries of Education should keep Focal Points informed
- Delays regarding payment to COL are sometimes at the Ministry of Finance
- Officials take up many roles, some Focal Points have different roles with partners (UNESCO)
- COL works in non-formal ed & training, involves other Ministries

**What could COL do to help Focal Points be more effective**
- Inform FPs on how we spend the country contribution
- Copy relevant reports to ALL officials concerned (sometimes Focal Points do not receive information)
- Ensure FPs notified of all activities in country
Summary and end of day wrap up
Dr Bala made a quick summary of the sessions that had been covered on Day 1 and thanked all the facilitators, speakers and participants for their contributions. Hasmukh Lal reminded everyone that they were invited to a special cocktail and dinner hosted by USP at the Sheraton Hotel. We were treated to a show by Fiji Fire Dancers.

Day Two: Friday, February 17, 2018

Session 6: Recap of the Previous Day
Rapporteurs from the previous day gave a short recap of what was discussed on Day One.

Session 7: Country Priorities
Facilitator: Dr Alison Mead Richardson
Rapporteur: Kaaro Neeti – Kiribati

In the session on the previous day, FPs had an opportunity to review all the country reports and discuss their country priorities. Important commonalities were identified which will help COL to understand where best to target their support. In this session, FPs worked in two groups to create a ‘diamond’ ranking of the priorities.
Group 1: Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, PNG

- ToT in OER
- ICT in Education
- Designing & facilitating elearning

Capacity Building

Upgrading Teacher Qualifications through ODFL

Open Schooling

Lifelong Learning & Life Skills

National Policy Development in OER

Monitoring and Evaluation

Agriculture Skills Development

Quality Assurance in OER Materials

TVET CBET & Employability Skills
Group 2: Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PACFOLD, AUSAID

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<td>• E-Library</td>
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<th>Capacity Building</th>
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<td>• Lifelong Learning</td>
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<td>• Ministry Staff</td>
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| Designing & Facilitating eLearning for post-secondary |

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<td>• Teacher Education</td>
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<td>• OER &amp; TEL</td>
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<td>• Policies &amp; Procedures for Learning Centers</td>
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| Create awareness programmes on gender-based violence |

| Develop indigenous knowledge programmes for secondary schools |
Session 8: Sustainable Development & Sustainable Livelihoods

Facilitator: Dr Bala

Rapporteur: Mr. Anthony Rayappan – PNG

Major challenges were highlighted including statics on key factors:
- 860 million people undernourished
- 60% of chronically hungry people are women and girls
- Out of 796 million illiterate people categories are women make up more than two thirds
- The global average unemployment rate 12%
- There is Imbalance in sharing wealth by world population.

From the list of countries worst affected by climate change: Vanuatu & Tonga are at the top of the list

The importance of Blue Economy in the Pacific was highlighted and how the government and NGOs can respond to unemployment. There are possibilities of creating life skill training and promoting Blue economy.

Looking towards Sustainable Development (Economic, Social and Gender Equality), focus on “Five Ps” was highlight
1. People
2. Peace
3. Planet
4. Partnership
5. Prosperity

Attention was drawn to the significance of Goal # 4:
“Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunity”. To adopt Holistic Perspective, there is a need for empathy. We need to look how to strengthen the role of Education in achieving SDG’s
**Session 9: Aptus – Classroom without Walls**

**Facilitators** Dr Alison Mead Richardson & Prof Ioana Chan Mow

**Rapporteur** Matai Tagicaki – PACFOLD

Aptus, one of COL’s technology innovations was demonstrated. It is also known as “Classroom Without Walls”. Without access to the internet, Aptus creates a wireless local area network that allows other devices such as smart phones, tablets and laptops to connect. In this way access is provided to learning resources and tools such as Moodle, WordPress, Wikipedia, Khan Academy, Own Cloud etc. The type of learning resources could vary in different countries.

Matai Tagicaki from PACFOLD demonstrated Aptus and Focal Points were given time to use their portable mobile devices to access content on Aptus. This generated a lot of interest while they explored the tool.

Both Kiribati and Samoa have been piloting the use of Aptus in schools. Prof Chan Mow and Kaaro Neeti shared some of the achievements and challenges of using Aptus. It was noted that teachers in Kiribati need more training in how to upload content to Aptus before the units can be deployed to schools. In Samoa, Aptus is in use in schools.
**Session 10: OER Global development and best practice**

*Facilitator: Prof Asha Kanwar*

**Rapporteur: Prof Ioana Chan Mow – Samoa**

COL is world leader in ODL. There have been 6 regional consultations. We need to look how OER can lead to inclusive and equitable education.

The benefits of OER include reduce costs, enhanced access and improved quality. OER textbooks save costs and improve the student performance.

In the Pacific there is a national policy. OER is used in Kiribati

Priorities including focusing on OER policy, emphasising indigenous knowledge, infrastructure and connectivity and development of the Pacific OER Action Plan

Surveys undertaken by COL including both a government and stakeholder survey. The government had 102 responses and stakeholders totaled 638 responses. The findings concluded that there was access to quality materials but lack of appropriate policy. Overall there was poor awareness with government and stakeholders having a different focus. The government focused on language & culture while the stakeholder focused on saving time for teachers’ continuous improvements.

The way forward for OER includes more awareness and capacity building. The promotion of policy development and better communication strategies for dissemination should be implemented as well as exploring different business models and the development of mechanisms to monitor the progress taking place.

Start small with small projects to show results before expanding

- What kind of approach should be adopted by Ministers?
- How can PACFOLD take OER forward?
- Table Regional OER Action Plan at Ministers meeting but need parallel action by COL/ Focal Points/PACFOLD
Session 11: COL’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Facilitator: Dr Bala

Rapporteur: Cecilia Giouba – Nauru

Bala made a presentation on COL’s result-based monitoring and evaluation. He stressed that RBM is critical to the continued funding of the programme. Theory of Change has an input, output, outcome and impact evidence. Monitoring and Evaluation processes are important when projects are implemented. Monitoring the progress of the project is important; indicators of the project will help give indication of the strength and weakness of the plan.

Evaluating the strength and weakness of the project will give way to innovative ideas to try out to achieve the ultimate goal of the project.

The Micro-Finance project in India for women with infants is an example of a successful project on Theory of Change. It was a bottom up system. The change took place from the bottom (project implementers) and the top (government) took interest when evidence of impact was statistically given. The project went through a trial and error period until success was evident. Education must be holistic to ensure that all factors involving in the process are working together.
Session 12: Summary of Discussions and Way Forward
Facilitators: Dr Bala & Dr Alison Mead Richardson
Rapporteur: Betty Jitoko – Australian High Commission

Dr. Bala made a summary of the discussions and stressed the need for clear communications between COL and Focal Points and for a good information flow between us. Each member was then invited to share 1 important take message they will take away from the meeting and 1 share 1 action they plan to take as a result of what they have learned.

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Take away message</th>
<th>Planned action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>Priorities of other Pacific countries</td>
<td>Support COL projects at SINU</td>
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<td>Australian High Commission</td>
<td>The scope of COL’s work in the Pacific</td>
<td>Report to Canberra – stress the potential of PACFOLD</td>
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<td>Tonga</td>
<td>Potential of PACFOLD to support country activities</td>
<td>Follow up on Aptus – learned from Samoa the potential for Tonga</td>
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<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>Theory of Change is important tool for Vanuatu</td>
<td>Ask Minister to appoint a full-time COL Focal Point</td>
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<td>PNG</td>
<td>The role of the focal point</td>
<td>Report to Ministry of greater collaboration with COL; Recommend development of GBV materials with support of COL.</td>
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<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Refreshed the role of Focal Point and what COL can do to add value; regional collaboration through PACFOLD</td>
<td>Focus on TEL policy</td>
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<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>Knowing the mandates of COL, PACFOLD and Focal Points and the support available for APTUS &amp; OER</td>
<td>To promote ODL approaches within Cabinet</td>
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<td>PACFOLD</td>
<td>Meeting the Focal Points and learning about their role</td>
<td>Hold an Advisory Board meeting Develop training packages for Aptus and OER in the Pacific Share the Pacific OER Action Plan for input</td>
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The meeting closed with some final words of appreciation from the COL President. She reminded the group that the Pacific may be small, but it is of great importance to COL and they are committed to providing as much support to Pacific Islands Countries as possible.

The Focal Points also voiced their appreciation for the continued focus on the region and the personal support that they receive. They presented the COL colleagues with gifts.
# Annex 1: Programme

**Date:** Friday 16\textsuperscript{th} February  
**Time:** 08.30 – 16.45

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<th>Session</th>
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<td>08.30 - 9:00</td>
<td>Arrival and registration</td>
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<td>9:00 - 10:00</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; Opening Session</td>
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<td>Alison Mead Richardson &amp; Hasmukh Lal</td>
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<td>Chief Guest: <em>Professor Richard Coll</em>, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of the South Pacific</td>
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<td>Welcome: <em>Professor Asha Kanwar</em>, President, COL</td>
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<td>Introduction of Participants</td>
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<td>10.00 – 10.30</td>
<td>Focal Points Photo</td>
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<td>10.30 – 11.00</td>
<td><strong>HEALTH BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>11:00 - 12.00</td>
<td>Participants’ expectations</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>K. Bala, Alison Mead Richardson, Asha Kanwar</td>
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<td>Rapporteurs</td>
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<td><strong>SESSION 1</strong></td>
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<td>Overview of COL: Vision, Mission, Programme</td>
<td>Presentation and plenary discussion</td>
<td>Asha Kanwar</td>
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<td>12.00 - 12:30</td>
<td>COL Strategic Plan &amp; Pacific Strategy</td>
<td>Plenary presentation and discussion</td>
<td>K. Bala</td>
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<td>12:30-13:30</td>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
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<td>13:30-15:00</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Country Reports</strong></td>
<td>Review Country Posters Identify commonalities and differences</td>
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<td>Where can COL add value?</td>
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<td>How can we collaborate to gain efficiencies and economies of scale?</td>
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<td>15:00-15:30</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>PACFOLD</strong></td>
<td>Presentation Pair discussion &amp; feedback</td>
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<td>What can PACFOLD do to support regional ODL and national priorities?</td>
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<td>HEALTH BREAK</td>
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<td>15:45-16:30</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Role of Focal Points</strong></td>
<td>Timeline and quiz Pair group discussion and Plenary presentation</td>
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<td>How much do you know about COL?</td>
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<td>16:30-16:45</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Summary and wrap-up of day</strong></td>
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Date: Saturday 17th February      Time: 08.30 – 16.30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Facilitator/Presenter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.30-9.00</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 6</strong> Recap of the previous day</td>
<td>3 key points from each rapporteur</td>
<td>K. Bala Rapporteurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>09.00 -10.30</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 7</strong> Country Priorities</td>
<td>Individual priority diamond</td>
<td>Alison / K Bala</td>
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<td>10.30 – 11.00</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 8</strong> Sustainable Development and Sustainable Livelihoods</td>
<td>Presentation Focus Group discussions</td>
<td>K. Bala</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00 – 12.30</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 9</strong> Aptus – Classroom without Walls</td>
<td>Demonstration and discussion</td>
<td>Alison Mead Richardson</td>
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<td>12:30-13:30</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 10</strong> Focus on OER</td>
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<td>Asha Kanwar</td>
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<td>13:30-14:30</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 11</strong> COL’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning</td>
<td>Presentation Plenary discussion</td>
<td>K. Bala</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30-14.45</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 12</strong> Summary of Discussions &amp; Way Forward</td>
<td>Presentation Plenary discussion</td>
<td>K. Bala/Alison</td>
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Time for shopping and relaxing!
Annex 2: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Professor Asha Kanwar, President, COL

Deputy Vice Chancellor, USP; Distinguished Focal Points and Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to be here in Nadi for the Pacific Focal Points meeting. We are very grateful to Dr Hasmukh Lal, Director and Matai Tagicaki of the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), for their support in co-hosting this regional event. Thanks to each and every one of you for coming to this meeting. I am pleased to note that we have 8 FPs or their representatives from the 11 Member States.

Fiji is a very important member of the Commonwealth and is hosting the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers next week, where we will see the who’s who of education from around the world. The theme of this conference ‘Sustainability and Resilience: can education deliver?’ is of great relevance today in our complex and uncertain world, but especially so for the small states.

As we are at the mid-point of our Strategic Plan ‘learning for sustainable development’, we will be holding regional meetings around the Commonwealth. This is the first meeting in the series planned for this year and we decided to use our presence at the 20th CCEM to convene our Pacific Focal Points. These Focal Points meetings are very important events in the life of COL, which is why you see three of us here. This is usually not possible as we have only a small group of specialists. We have taken this opportunity to organize other meetings as well. One of these is a roundtable on Open Educational Resources that we are organizing jointly with USP at the Integrated People’s Forum being held just before the Ministerial meetings. Fiji and USP have taken a leadership role by developing a national and institutional policies on OER, an experience that can be shared with other Commonwealth countries and institutions just beginning to enter this space.

Recognising that the Commonwealth is a diverse and geographically dispersed community, COL has established regional centers to support capacity building in the field. We are very grateful to Prof Rajesh Chandra for hosting PACFOLD at the USP campus in Suva. PACFOLD was established as a regional hub of expertise in flexible and open approaches to learning and is there to strengthen existing institutions through capacity development designed to meet their specific needs. Please take full advantage of this facility.

In the past, most countries in the region have participated in pan-Pacific activities. All the Commonwealth small states in the Pacific are members of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth or VUSSC. One important milestone for the VUSSC and the National University of Samoa partnership was the graduation of the first group of students who earned their Diplomas in Sustainable Agriculture. Solomon Islands National University is offering VUSSC courses. In the last three years, COL has sponsored 45 persons from Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and
Vanuatu, to do the COL-developed Legislative Drafting course offered by USP. The Pacific was well represented at the 8th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Malaysia. COL has also supported a number of conferences and forums, including the Pacific TVET Open, Distance and Flexible Learning Forum in Tonga, a Pacific TVET OER Workshop in Fiji which saw participants from nine countries. But we didn’t think this was enough.

COL has been making special efforts to deepen its work in your countries and this targeted approach is beginning to deliver results.

In Fiji, COL has worked with the USP to develop an OER policy and organized several regional training programmes in OER and TVET.

COL is working with Kiribati Teachers’ College & Ministry of Education to develop a school-based teacher development programme and organized an eFacilitation online training for KTC staff.

Colleagues from Nauru participated in a regional OER for TVET workshop in Fiji.

COL awarded scholarships to five teachers from the University of Papua New Guinea to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning at The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. COL also provided support to Ginigoada an NGO on instructional design resulting in the development of a book keeping course in PNG.

In Samoa, COL developed a Technology Enabled Learning Policy and Strategy with the National University of Samoa. COL’s work with the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc. to strengthen the training of community development workers in Life Skills and Permaculture has resulted in increased income and food security.

COL is working with Solomon Islands National University (SINU) to develop a distance learning Diploma in Construction Management. COL has been invited by SINU to develop a ‘second chance education programme’, for 4000 learners a top priority for the prime minister himself.

In Tonga, COL has partnered with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Tonga Institute of Education and the Tonga Institute of Higher Education to develop OER based eLearning courses on life skills. The Tonga Business Enterprise Center, an institution of Tonga Chambers of Commerce and Industry, launched a financial literacy programme for farming communities, particularly women, with the support of COL.

In Tuvalu, COL facilitated a workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Island Council which brought together participants from five islands. Additionally, pilot courses for technical and vocational skills such as working with concrete, basic horticulture, introduction to basic painting skills, and basic sewing skills, were developed.
In Vanuatu, COL is supporting the Ministry of Education and Training to adapt an OER course in small engine maintenance and assisting with the process of registration of the course as an accredited programme in the newly reformed competency-based education and training system. COL’s support in Vanuatu has a special focus on providing secondary schooling for out-of-school youth by improving throughput and reducing dropout rates. COL has facilitated a twinning arrangement with the Open Access College, Australia.

These examples give you a flavor of COL’s partners and their activities. I hope this meeting will further strengthen our engagement in the region.

What do we hope to achieve at this meeting? Let me outline four key objectives.

One, we need to hear from you what your priorities are and how these will fit in with COL’s mission and mandate. We will be listening very carefully as you outline the key areas that COL should integrate into its plan so that we are able to address these systematically as we go forward. We have strengthened our work in the Pacific, but we need to do more, and this can’t happen without your help.

Two, this is also an opportunity for us to present a summary of what we have done thus far in each of your countries. You will recall that the current Six Year Plan started on July 1, 2015 and takes us to June 2021—we are now at the mid-point and would like to give you an interim report. The final report will be presented at the next Focal Points meeting.

Three, these face-to-face meetings are an excellent forum to remind you of COL’s purpose, its organization and its programmes. While some of you may be veteran Focal Points, others may be quite new to COL and its work. Since you are our ambassadors in the field, it is important that you know what we do.

Four, as a Commonwealth organization, it is part of our mission to promote Commonwealth-wide cooperation. The Commonwealth is often referred to as a family of nations that works through consensus, respect and understanding. These meetings serve to remind us of our shared values and our common identity as citizens of the Commonwealth. In fact, the theme for the CHOGM to be held in London in April is “Towards our Common Future”.

In addition, these meetings allow us to introduce our staff to you. Just as some of you are new, we too have a policy of rotation under which old staff members leave making way for new colleagues from other Commonwealth countries. Let me then introduce you to our Vice President Dr Bala—some of you may have met him in Auckland at the Regional Consultation on OER; and Dr Alison Mead Richardson, our ES; Skills Development, who has been very active in the region.
Let me thank you all once again for your presence and for being COL’s voice and visibility in the field. Let me once again thank Prof Rajesh Chandra and his team for being such staunch supporters and friends of COL. Let me extend a warm welcome to each one of you.

Annex 3: Pacific Focal Points Contact List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td>Name and Position</td>
<td>Address/Contact Number</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Name and Position</th>
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</table>
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<th>Contact Details</th>
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