

# *PCF5 Welcome*

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*Fifth Pan-commonwealth Forum on Open Learning  
London, UK*

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*By Roger Mills  
Programme Chair*

Welcome to London and PCF5. The formal welcoming session is tomorrow morning so this is simply an opportunity to say hello, and to make a few points about this forum with its theme of Access to Learning for Development.

Just so we can get a feel for who is here at present, I'd like to ask a few questions :

How many are at a PCF5 forum for the first time? How many of you are in London for the first time?

We are expecting delegates from some 70 countries- we won't go through that in detail now but such a diverse gathering is one of the real benefits of these PCFs.

At such a large Forum- we are expecting nearly 700 including those coming for days, it is easy to get lost or lonely (especially if you are the only person from your country or institution).

One way to help overcome this is to wear your badge all the time so people can see your name and where you are from.

We started planning this forum immediately after PCF4 in Jamaica just under two years ago. Everyone who attended that Forum and others were invited to join the agenda setting process.

The result was a plan for a forum which a) addressed the core elements of the COL 3 year plan, which in turn is linked to the millennium development goals and b) moved away from papers which described process (i.e this is how we prepare courses or structure our learner support services) to papers which provide evidence of how ODL has been used and whether it has been successful or not in a particular context.

One of the other principles adopted by the Planning Committee, which comprised colleagues from all areas of the Commonwealth, was that we should encourage attendance and papers from the non-University sector.

Well we have not been entirely successful but more than half of the papers submitted are from non-HE areas. You will find that many of the papers and discussions do provide a fund of examples of how ODL has been used successfully to ensure Access to Learning for Development.

Another innovation is our attempt to stimulate more discussion and less formal presentation of papers. We have tried to ensure that there will be significant numbers of you in each session, rather than have individuals reading their papers to very small groups. We will see how this works out.

As you will note the Forum has been divided into 4 main themes- Health (starting on Wednesday, Governance (Tuesday) and Livelihoods and CYP tomorrow. In addition there are 3 sub themes- learner support, Institutions and appropriate technologies.

You don't need to stay in a theme all the time, but clearly you can if you wish.

Finally there will be a report from every session which will be built up into a theme report and then a final report from Sir John Daniel at the close of the Forum. In this way we hope to have a practical and permanent record of what has been achieved by ODL practitioners and their students in the area of Access to Learning for Development.

The London University staff are here to help you. Don't hesitate to approach them with your queries.

Finally keep an eye out for changes in the programme- announcements will be made at the end of the morning and afternoon plenary sessions, and through a daily 'newsletter'.

Roger Mills