

Connections



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Guidelines for remote delivery of courses

The Commonwealth of Learning has developed two sets of guidelines related to the “remote delivery of distance education courses and programmes” — one for students and one for institutions. The guidelines have two objectives:

- to assist students in making decisions about enrolling in courses that are increasingly being delivered by institutions outside the jurisdictions they were established to serve, and
- to assist institutions themselves in collaborating over the development and delivery of such courses.

The recognition of the need for, and subsequent development of, the guidelines grew from discussions with institutions that provide distance education courses as well as from consultations with the International Council for Distance Education and regional distance education associations.

The premise is that the proliferation of electronic delivery methods has the potential to allow institutions to work together in offering courses in remote locations, which allows them to provide a greater variety of courses and better serve their own students — as well as those registered elsewhere.

“Unfortunately,” says COL’s Director of Programmes, **Dr. Ian Muiridge**, “this situation also has potential for confusion, disorder and perhaps abuse that could bring discredit to reputable institutions and cause frustration for students.”

The guidelines provide a common framework within which individual institutions can work and should help to ensure that students receive a service that is truly beneficial and of high quality.

They are now being distributed throughout the Commonwealth and should be published by distance education journals and regional associations over the next few months. They are also available directly from COL, either by request or through the World Wide Web (Internet).

As there are issues that are difficult to address in such a general document, the guidelines cannot be considered to be complete. They will also be kept under review in



light of comments received and reissued from time-to-time as the need arises.

Two other initiatives are in progress that will also enhance the ability of both students and institutions to make judgements about both the *quality* and *applicability* of courses that might be available to them.

First, COL is undertaking a quality assurance initiative that will have two objectives:

- the development and application of effective *quality assurance* policies and procedures in institutions where these do not already exist, and
- the development of procedures that will enable receiving institutions to make judgements about the *quality* of courses available through other jurisdictions.

Second, COL is developing a proposal for the establishment of a “Commonwealth credit bank” that would help institutions judge the *applicability* of available courses to their own credentials. The system would also provide students with a means of receiving credit — and ultimately credentials — for coherent groups of courses taken from a variety of institutions.

Copies of the guidelines and information about this project or the related initiatives can be obtained through COL’s Public Affairs

New address

The Commonwealth of Learning is moving to a new location on April 28, 1997. Ultimately this move will provide cost-savings that will enable COL to put more of its limited resources into programme activity. Telephone/fax numbers and Internet addresses remain unchanged.

The Commonwealth of Learning’s new address is:

1285 West Broadway, Suite 600
Vancouver, BC V6H 3X8
Canada

Please amend your records.

The Queen

The Commonwealth of Learning is very pleased to be acknowledged by **Her Majesty the Queen**. On March 10, 1997, in her annual Commonwealth Day message, the Head of the Commonwealth said:

But improved and easier travel is only one development. Recent advances in communications technology now enable us to talk to each other and to see each other without even needing to leave home. The Commonwealth uses this sort of technology for its distance education programme, especially through The Commonwealth of Learning based in Vancouver. Through communications like these, the barriers of distance can be removed and we can talk together, almost as if the whole Commonwealth was in one room. Many years ago, my grandfather first spoke to the Commonwealth by radio. Today my message is speeding its way around the world by radio and, for the first time, on the Internet.

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COL in Action

COL, COMNET-IT sign MoU

The Chairmen of COL and COMNET-IT have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together in the growing field of distance education, agreeing that their organisations will "co-operate and collaborate in strengthening the delivery of distance learning programmes through the use of information and communications technologies." **Dr. Ian Macdonald**, Chairman of COL's Board of Governors, and **Dr. S. Ramani**, Chairman of the Commonwealth Network of Information Technology for Development, also co-chaired a meeting that launched the new Network and provided briefings to Commonwealth professional organisations on the technology-related activities and future plans of both organisations.

COMNET-IT is an independent Commonwealth-sponsored foundation located in Malta with **Mr. Henry Alamango** as Executive Director. Its mission is to facilitate Internet-based development, promoting awareness, capacity-building and networked computer connectivity for Commonwealth institutions and individuals around the world. (Web site: <http://www.comnet.mt>)

The meeting was hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London on March 14, 1997. Briefings were conducted by Mr. Alamango and Dr. Abdul Khan, COL's Principal Communications Specialist.

CEMCA

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) has been providing a series of participant-paid training workshops for associated institutions in India and South Asia. Following the success of a workshop on the management of non-print media resources, held last November, CEMCA presented a programme last month on presentation and interviewing techniques for educational broadcasters. Leading media persons shared their experience in various sessions.

Forthcoming programmes include workshops on the use of multi-media in distance learning and on script-writing for the National Open School.

Earlier this year, CEMCA hosted a visit by Commonwealth Broadcasting Association Secretary General, **Ms. Elizabeth Smith**. Collaborative projects were discussed.

Workshops

The following workshops have been held recently under COL auspices. They were organised by Ms. Susan Phillips, Educational Specialist (Materials and Open Schooling). Reports are available.

- A workshop in Luanshya, Zambia on the potential of training laboratory technicians by distance. It was held in collaboration with the World Federation of Technology Organisations, the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa, the

Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO. Participants came from four Commonwealth countries in Africa and opening remarks were delivered by **The Hon. Dr. Kabunda Koyongo**, former Zambian Minister of Science, Technology and Vocational Training. A follow-up workshop has also been scheduled.

- An international workshop to raise awareness on the *Potential of Open Schooling for Women and Girls*, hosted by the Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan, with support from UNICEF. The final report includes a selection of papers.
- An international meeting of experts, convened to discuss issues and arrive at recommendations for COL's work in the transfer of learning materials. A set of protocols, to facilitate such transfers, was developed and will be presented to Commonwealth Education Ministers for their endorsement. The workshop was funded by the UK Overseas

Development Administration and held at the UK Open University. It was chaired by **Professor Lindsay Mackay** of Deakin University, Victoria, Australia. Participation came from 13 Commonwealth countries.

Southeast Asia

COL was invited to participate at the 32nd Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Conference, which was held in Manila from February 25 to March 1, 1997. **Mr. Peter McMechan**, COL's Director, Regions, attended on behalf of the President of COL.

Mr. McMechan, along with COL's Regional Adviser to the President for Southeast Asia, **Dato' Dr. Sharom Ahmat** (President, Kolej Disted, Penang), also attended meetings with the Department of Private Education at the Malaysian Ministry of Education. COL is assisting the department with the task of evaluating and licensing private tertiary colleges that wish to offer distance education programmes and also

*Below: Meeting of COL's Programme Advisory Committee for the Pacific Region took place in Suva on March 10 and 11, despite the threatening forces of a hurricane. **The Honourable Dr. S. Langi Kavaliku**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tonga, who represents the Pacific Region on COL's Board, is seated fourth from the right.*



Above: Training Workshop conducted by COL at the Corinth Cable and Wireless facility in St. Lucia, as part of an Eastern Caribbean "telematics" pilot project. The project provided the means for educational planning and management professionals to enhance their daily work through the use of technology and to use electronic mail and computer conferencing to discuss ideas and issues with their peers in other jurisdictions. Mr. David Walker, COL's Educational Specialist (Educational Technology) facilitated the workshop.

COL in Southern Africa

President's visit

During February and March, COL's President, **Dato' Dr. Gajaraj Dhanarajan**, met with Ministers of Education and other government and education officials throughout Eastern and Southern Africa. Discussions included the progress of current projects, potential and plans for many more, the development of COL's three-year plan, and the encouraging support and appreciation that COL can expect from Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe at the upcoming Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (July; Gaborone, Botswana).

In Tanzania, Dr. Dhanarajan inaugurated the Open University of Tanzania's Regional Centre in Dar es Salaam.

Unfortunately, the President was not able to visit other countries on this occasion, but COL's Regional Advisors continue to provide constructive representation for COL throughout the sub-continent. They are consulted regularly by Governments and have attended several regional forums. **Professor Geoffrey Mmari** (Vice Chancellor, Open University of Tanzania) covers Eastern Africa and **Mr. Jakes Swartland** (Co-ordinator, Revised Policy on Education, Botswana Ministry of Education) represents COL in Southern Africa.

Distance education associations

Support for national and regional distance education associations are key part of the work that COL accomplishes in Southern Africa. These professional associations as well as educational bodies are represented on COL's Programme Advisory Committee for Southern Africa, which met on March 11 in Gaborone, Botswana. **The Honourable Dr. G.K.T. Chiepe**, Minister of Education, Botswana chaired the meeting.

The annual general meeting of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) was hosted by the University of Namibia on March 15 and 16, 1997. Professor Peter Kinyanjui, Principal Education Specialist (Teacher Education), reviewed COL's work and plans with delegates at the meeting. With the change in executive officers that took place at the AGM, DEASA's secretariat is now located in Windhoek, Namibia. With assistance from COL and Technikon South Africa, DEASA will be co-ordinating Internet connectivity between member institutions and the secretariat. DEASA will also participate at the parallel educational technology conference and exhibition that will take place in conjunction with the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Botswana in July. This year's AGM successfully required that all delegates be responsible for their own travel costs.

COL is also hoping to provide assistance in the establishment of a national association in Zimbabwe during 1997/98.

Funding update

Australia, British Columbia restore 1996/97 funding

During COL's 1996/97 financial year, both Australia and the Canadian Province of British Columbia faced severe budget reductions that threatened previously pledged contributions to COL. However, by January (BC) and February (Australia), announcements were made that funding for the year would be restored to previous levels. In both cases, the importance of COL and its work was cited as being too important to suffer the loss of funding. COL appreciates that budgets are tight throughout the Commonwealth and, therefore, particularly welcomes this vote of confidence from two of its important long-standing partners.

Latest contributions

Since the last issue of *Connections*, new or additional contributions to COL's 1996/97 core budget have been received from Botswana, India, St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago, and the Province of British Columbia.

South Africa

The Confederation of Open Learning Institutions of South Africa (COLISA) has been formed in order to collaborate in the areas of finance and resource sharing, academic development, technology applications and the provision of joint core programmes and courses. Founding member institutions are Technikon SA, the University of South Africa and Vista University. A National Commission on Higher Education recently envisioned such collaboration among institutions offering distance education programmes in South Africa.

COLISA has also been active internationally, working with the Tertiary Education Commission of Mauritius and Ministries of Education in both countries to co-ordinate the activities of a Distance Education Interest Group within the Association for the



Development of Education in Africa. COL's President participated in a meeting of the group while in South Africa in March.

The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) has released a report entitled, *Teacher Education Offered at a Distance in South Africa*. This report was compiled as part of a national audit of teacher education in the country and contains detailed survey information, analysis and suggestions for future development. It is available for purchase from SAIDE in two forms: full report (US\$33 or R150) and summary report (US\$10 or R45)

Also available from SAIDE is *Open Learning and Distance Education in South Africa*, which was published in 1995 on the basis of research done in 1994 (US\$15 or R60). It is the report of an international commission that studied distance education and open learning in South Africa, at the request of the African National Congress. Findings and recommendations were reviewed by COL in the June 1995 edition of *COMLEARN* (page 9). Contact: SAIDE Resource Centre, PO Box 31822, Braamfontein 2017, South Africa; Tel: 27.11.403.2813; Fax: 27.11.403.2814; E-mail: saide@icon.co.za

People

Professor Jeff Bettany joined COL in January 1997 for a six-month attachment as a Visiting Fellow. A Professor of Soil Science and Director of Agriculture Information Technology at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, he has also been involved in agriculture development projects with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization/International Atomic Energy Agency and the Canadian International Development Agency. His current research involves the use of Internet technology in courseware delivery and technology-assisted agriculture extension. Using this approach, Professor Bettany is working with COL staff and the agriculture industry to develop a pilot project to train extension workers in the Caribbean region.

Former COL President, **Professor James Maraj** has completed a two-year posting as Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission in Mauritius and begun a new assignment in South Africa. He took up duties this month as Special Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa (UNISA) and as Consultant to the Confederation of Open Learning Institutions of South Africa (COLISA). He also holds a Chair in UNISA's Faculty of Education.

COL Board member and long-time distance education advocate, **Mr. John Samuel**, has moved to Michigan, USA, to take up a position with the Kellogg Foundation. His new work will involve the development of democratic governance programmes for southern Africa. Previously, Mr. Samuel was Deputy Director-General, Higher Education, in the Government of South Africa.

Events

Lifelong Learning Conference

The Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning was held recently in Ottawa, Canada. COL's participation included the delivery of a pre-conference workshop focusing on effective application of appropriate distance learning techniques and technologies in support of non-formal education. Case studies from various parts of the Commonwealth were presented along with the results of recent research conducted by COL. The COL workshop was led by Dr. Abdul Khan, Principal Communications Specialist, and Ms. Patricia McWilliams, Senior Training Specialist.

Digital Radio in Africa

Opening New Frontiers in Learning will be held at the Ghana International Convention and Exhibition Centre in Accra, April 27-29, 1997. The international conference is being organised by The Commonwealth of Learning, in collaboration with the Ghana Ministry of Education and WorldSpace Inc. Participants will discuss how new and emerging technologies — and especially digital radio — can be used to implement effective learning strategies in Africa and how new trends in distance education are likely to shape future roles and responsibilities within the continent. Registrants will also have an opportunity to share educational lessons and experiences with colleagues from other countries in Africa and elsewhere. Conference participants will include Ministers of Education, education planners, NGOs, donors and policy makers. The working languages of the conference are English and French.

Taking advantage of the experts gathered at this international conference, The Commonwealth of Learning is also organising a pan-African consultation on non-formal distance learning (facilitated by Dr. Abdul Khan and Ms. Patricia McWilliams).

A leader in digital radio technology, WorldSpace Inc. is broadcasting direct from satellite to Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia/Southeast Asia. As part of the conference agenda, WorldSpace is exhibiting its technology, including a prototype of a new radio capable of receiving audio, text, data and images. WorldSpace will be making available channels of the AfriStar satellite for the purpose of distance education in Africa.

ICDE

The New Learning Environment: A Global Perspective is the theme of the 18th World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), which is to be held at the Pennsylvania State University, June 2-6, 1997. The second *COL/ICDE Awards of Excellence* will be presented at this occasion, as will papers by COL staff and associates.

Global Knowledge '97

The World Bank and the Government of Canada are co-hosting a major international conference on harnessing knowledge and information for international development. *Global Knowledge '97 — Knowledge for Development in the Information Age* will be held in Toronto, June 22-25, 1997, and is expected to attract over 1,200 leaders of government, industry, multilateral and non-governmental organisations from over 100 countries.

Participants will explore through panels, workshops, virtual conferencing and exhibits how information technology and transfer of knowledge can contribute to global poverty reduction and sustainable progress.

The conference will have three major themes: understanding the role of information in development; sharing ways and means of harnessing knowledge for development; and building new partnerships to empower the poor, foster dialogue and strengthen the information/knowledge resources in developing countries. Participants will examine areas such as policy and regulatory frameworks, science and technology, lifelong learning, distance education and governance.

As an Associate Sponsor, The Commonwealth of Learning is assisting in conference planning and will be hosting a *Global Knowledge '97* symposium on technology-supported distance and open education for development in the information age and the role of open universities. The symposium will be chaired by COL's President and will feature presentations and commentaries from experts drawn from throughout the Commonwealth.

COL's Director, Programmes, Dr. Ian Mugridge, will also participate as a panellist in a colloquium on teacher education.

Several governmental and international agencies, including the Canadian International Development Agency, UNESCO, the UN Development Programme, USAID, and the International Telecommunications Union, are playing major roles in planning, hosting and sponsoring the event. Private sector participation is also growing.

Contact: *Global Knowledge '97* Conference Secretariat, Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Room M7-075, Washington DC 20433, USA; Tel: 202.473.6442; Fax: 202.676.0858; E-mail: globalknowledge@worldbank.org; WWW: <http://www.globalknowledge.org>

Education and Technology in the Commonwealth

Education and Technology in the Commonwealth: Making the Transition is the theme for a parallel convention and exhibition to be held in conjunction with the 13th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) to be held in Botswana this July. The event will take place at the Botswana Convention and Exhibition Centre, July 28-30, 1997. It is sponsored by IDP Education Australia and the British Council, in consultation with The Commonwealth of Learning and the

Association of Commonwealth Universities, at the invitation of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of Botswana.

Convention participants will be able to explore the important issues impacting on the development of education in the Commonwealth through four components:

- a symposium, addressing the challenging themes of education development and appropriate technology;
- an exhibition, demonstrating the many appropriate and interactive technologies in education provision;
- a showcase of best practice around the Commonwealth, including case studies of appropriate technologies and transitional models; and
- displays by Commonwealth ministries and Commonwealth-affiliated governmental and non-governmental organisations, illustrating educational technology in action.

Contact: c/o The Event Organisation Company, 8 Cotswald Mews, Battersea Square, London SW11 3RA, UK.
Tel: 44.171.228.8034;
Fax: 44.171.924.1790;
E-mail: eventorg@event-org.com;
WWW: <http://www.britcoun.org/botswana/convention/cvindex.htm>

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Further details on any news item that appears in *Connections* may be obtained by contacting COL's Public Affairs Office, or visiting our World Wide Web site.

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