



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

**COUNTRY REPORT**  
2021-2023 | **PACIFIC**

---



**Samoa**

## Helping Commonwealth Member States and institutions use distance learning and technologies for expanding access to education and training.

---

**The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)** is focused on adding value to member states' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of the Pacific in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development.

During its current plan (2021-2027), COL will:

- i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
- ii) invest in innovations and research;
- iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
- iv) promote gender equality; and
- v) implement a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan.

COL's work is organised into two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender Equality and Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) as cross-cutting initiatives.

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth, particularly in the small states in the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) and has four initiatives: Open Schooling; Teacher Education; Higher Education and the Virtual University for Small States of The Commonwealth (VUSSC).

The Skills sector supports formal, non-formal and informal education and training to equip learners for livelihoods and has three initiatives: Skills for Work; Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and GIRLS Inspire.

The work in these sectors complement the three pathways of change COL is focusing on in achieving impact for each Pacific member state. These are:

1. Building National Resilience
2. Strengthening Institutions
3. Improving Lives and Livelihoods.

## INTRODUCTION

Samoa is a small state of the Commonwealth, with a population of over 222,000 ([World Bank](#), 2022).

COL's current work in Samoa is in the areas of skills for work, technology-enabled learning and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) network. Learners from Samoa are also participating in COL's free, open online courses and benefitting from other available resources.

## PARTNERS

COL's partners in Samoa include:

- Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
- Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc.
- National University of Samoa (NUS)
- Samoa Qualifications Authority
- USP Alafua Campus

## KEY CONTACTS

### FOCAL POINT

**Muagututi'a Dr Ioana Chan Mow**  
Professor, Computing Education  
National University of Samoa

## COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - JULY 2023

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa delivered the Inaugural Address and participated at PCF10.**
- **216 teachers from Samoa trained to provide effective learner support in ODFL contexts.**
- **Active TVET Project with the National University of Samoa**
- **Development of online learning resources for teachers: [ODL Course Catalogue](#), [National OER Collection Site](#) and [Online TVET Toolkit](#)**

In addition to COL's core activities, the Partnership for Open Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) in the Pacific is a 5-year project (2020–2025) funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) to support enhancing capacity and efficiency of education sectors in the Pacific through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology. COL, together with the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), is implementing the project in the nine Commonwealth countries in the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu). <https://pacificpartnership.col.org>

## BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL is working with governments to use gender responsive ODL policies and strategies for increasing equitable access to quality learning.

COL initiated several high-level panels on Climate Change and Education to support Member countries in advancing climate action (through policy, capacity, resources and research). This resulted in the [Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education](#), published in August 2022.

A survey on data resilience in education systems was conducted with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, Samoa in May 2022 to understand the data infrastructure and management system in response to natural disaster.

Between July and October 2022, three nominated Ministry officials from Samoa participated in two workshops on policy and planning for ODFL.

Starting in April 2023, COL offered a bi-weekly training for the ministry officials on how to customise the open courses for re-offering within a specific country context with mentor support. One official from Samoa participated in training.

## STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL is supporting partner institutions to strengthen its ODL systems and capacities for providing quality education and training.

Samoa contributes curated OER videos to the Pacific Regional Video on Demand (VOD) Channel which was established by COL in response to partners in the Pacific Island States. It's designed to ensure that all resources are downloadable even in low-bandwidth environments and can be hosted on local servers. <https://pacificregionalchannel.org/>

USP launched the Semester Zero programme in January 2022 to ensure a smooth transition of future students to university life. This programme was implemented using a COL-hosted Moodle platform.

A survey on ICT access and use in the Pacific was conducted in April 2022 with people in the Pacific, in which two from Samoa participated. The purpose of the study was to better understand the local needs to ensure an effective and appropriate delivery of a learning program in the Pacific.

Seven courses developed and offered with 216 teachers from Samoa trained to provide effective learner support in ODFL contexts:

- Open Educational Resources for Online Learning, July 2021 (3 teachers); November 2021 (6 teachers)
- Digital Skills for OER Sharing, September 2021 (31 teachers); November 2022 (2 teachers)
- Communication Skills for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, January 2022 (9 teachers); June 2022 (31 teachers)
- Assessment Skills for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, April 2022 (6 teachers)

- Empowered Digital Teacher for Online Learning, June 2022 (7 teachers)
- Learner Support for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, November 2022 (77 teachers)
- Quality Assurance for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, February 2023 (35 teachers)

COL provides tuition scholarships to learners in the Pacific for USP's Legislative Drafting Programme which was developed with COL support. A total of three learners from Samoa have been awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting. Graduates from this programme contribute to good governance in the region.

Launched in September 2022, the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Course Catalogue offers training courses for teachers in the Pacific on various aspects of ODL. This catalogue was designed in a way that Ministries and educational institutions can have admin access and share any relevant courses for their own country. <https://www.odlcatalogue4pacific.org/>

The Samoa OER Collection Site provides resources for teachers that can be used or adapted for their teaching. <https://wsm.oer4pacific.org/>

COL organised a webinar in July 2023 with 25 staff and faculty members at the National University of Samoa on GPT-powered Moodle Support System. COL has partnered with the National University of Samoa to enhance the capacity of Technical and vocational education training (TVET) practitioners using the online Pacific TVET Professional Development Toolkit. <https://pacifictoolkit.col.org>

## IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

COL continues to provide learners, especially from disadvantaged groups, access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods.

COL is working with the National University of Samoa (NUS) to enhance the capacity of Technical and vocational education training (TVET) practitioners using the online Pacific TVET Professional Development Toolkit, which was developed by COL. Lecturers at NUS are using resources in the Toolkit as they develop a learner's course manual on how to grow and maintain plants in containers from seeds for a horticulture botany course, to be available online for distance learning students.

COL's partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google continues to offer nominated learners this vast range of courses - a pathway for lifelong learning and growth and enhancing skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Since July 2021, 385 learners from Samoa have enrolled in 1,473 courses with 369 certificates being issued.

The MOOC on 'Assessment Skills for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning' re-offered by the University of South Pacific (USP) in March 2023 had 352 enrolments, including 4 from Samoa. [Apr2023]

## SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In March 2022, a **webinar on the TVET Toolkit** was held with seven practitioners and institutional leaders from Samoa registered, with additional TVET institutions showing interest to become

partners. Melissa Porter, National University of Samoa Director for Academic Quality Unit, participated as a speaker to share her institution's experience in using the online Pacific TVET Professional Development Toolkit.

Professor Aiono Alec Ekeroma, National University of Samoa participated at COL's fourth edition of the **Vice-Chancellor's Roundtable** which focused on "Quality Higher Education for Sustainable Development in July 2022. This two-day event held in Malaysia provided an opportunity to share and learn from peers and develop collaborative action plans.

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Five delegates from Samoa registered for the **Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10)**, the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14-16 September 2022. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who welcomed the delegates from across the Commonwealth, extended a special greeting to Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa, who delivered the PCF10 Inaugural Address and chaired the Ministerial Roundtable. The Honourable Seuula Ioane Tuaau, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture was also present in Calgary. Ms Peseta Noumea Simi, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade was a panelist on Transforming Education for Climate Change. Other participants included: Ioana Tuugalei Chan Mow, National University of Samoa; Peseta Noumea Simi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Melissa Porter, National University of Samoa.

A **special parallel session during PCF10** convened over 40 key policymakers, educators and practitioners from the Pacific **to review the progress of open, distance, and flexible learning (ODFL) in the Pacific, share lessons learned and discuss a way forward.** This was also an opportunity to share information on the 'Partnership for ODFL in the Pacific' Project. This event was co-chaired by Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa and Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President and CEO.

- The Prime Minister of Samoa said, "ODFL is an important channel for increasing educational opportunities and outcomes, and relevant especially for the Pacific region, given the small and dispersed remote population and limited access to secondary and post-secondary opportunities. Despite the importance of ODFL in the region, there's been a limited investment; more investment is needed for education in multiple ways."
- Ms Peseta Noumea Simi, CEO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Samoa (on behalf of the Minister of Education, Samoa), recommended strategies going forward to ensure uninterrupted access to high-quality education for all, which included: 1) adopting a multi-modal delivery of education across the region; (2) planning for access to devices and the Internet for students and teachers; (3) providing technical support and training; (4) monitoring staff and student engagement and developing a community of practice.

A **ministerial roundtable session**, also held during PCF10 and co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and COL's President and CEO, generated a lively discussion on how governments have addressed educational disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. The roundtable session revolved around ODFL and building resilience and technological innovation while being inclusive. Other themes included improved access to education through ODL, service schools and how every community is vital to educational growth. How can technology address the challenges of distance learning and the new normal? As overcrowding in classrooms is a global crisis, ODL can help ease these problems to ensure no student is left behind. Introducing new programmes and new ways to

ensure student engagement was also discussed. The subject of ODL remained front-and-centre, as ministers from across the Commonwealth examined the many inherent benefits of ODL in a world where Covid-19 is still a major global health emergency. These included how excellence in distance education minimises one-on-one classroom contact, where many in developing countries are still unvaccinated against the coronavirus. COL was tasked with several actions — capacity building of teachers, developing skills for livelihoods, enhancing the quality ODL, promoting the well-being of students and empowering parents to strengthen the educational ecosystem.

## PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

**Report of the Special Parallel Session: Strategies and Solutions for ODFL in the Pacific Region**

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4534>

**ICT use and access in the Pacific: Emerging Perspectives** <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5252>

**Improving the Efficacy of Mentorship with an Open Education Ecosystem**

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4065>

**Integrating OER in Teaching: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific**

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4014>

**Reversioning OER: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific** <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4015>

**Guide to QA of ODFL Provision in the Pacific** <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5443>



4710 Kingsway, Suite 2500  
Burnaby, BC V5H 4M2  
Canada

Tel: +1.604.775.8200  
Fax: +1.604.775.8210  
E-mail: [info@col.org](mailto:info@col.org)  
Web: [www.col.org](http://www.col.org)