



FOCUS ON THE CARIBBEAN

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA | THE BAHAMAS | BARBADOS | BELIZE
DOMINICA | GRENADA | GUYANA | JAMAICA | SAINT LUCIA | ST KITTS AND NEVIS
ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES | TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is midway through a six-year strategy, which requires creating national resilience by working with governments on policy and regulation; building the capacities of institutions to implement open education; and supporting learners directly with open access and skills.

This summary presents highlights from three streams of work in the Caribbean region from 2021-24.

HOW WE WORK

One member of our Board of Governors, the Honourable Curtis M. King, Minister of Education and National Reconciliation, St Vincent and The Grenadines hails from this region and brings leadership and expertise in a wide range of areas. To augment the board connections, COL leverages an extensive network of “Focal Points” to make its relationship with each Caribbean member country more systematic and interactive — these are senior officials nominated by Ministries. They keep Ministers briefed about COL’s work, provide guidance on country priorities, and serve as a valuable strategic resource. COL hosts regular meetings to update the Focal Points and consult on regional and national priorities. The last COL Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean took place in Jamaica in January 2023. The meetings are held to gather information on the country priorities and to provide information to the member states on what COL has done within the context of its Strategic Plan. Delegates from 10 member countries attended (Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago). Many of the regional and national priorities identified are reflected in COL’s areas of focus which include: inclusivity, boys’ education, TVET education, professional training for teachers and food security.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **COL supports Caribbean Governments’ Strategy**, for instance, building on the success of the COL-Coursera Workforce Recovery programme introduced during the pandemic, the governments in Barbados and Guyana took ownership of this project and launched national programmes to scale up the approach.
2. **We have built open learning capacity with Ministry and Institution Faculty teams**, which led to the development of institutional ODL policies in Guyana, St Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago and institutional strategies for technical and vocational education in six countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica and St Kitts and Nevis).
3. **Delivery of training to farmers**. For example, in Jamaica, over 16,600 farmers received blended training with a tailored ‘farming as a business’ curriculum to equip them with essential agri-business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and technology adoption to enhance their farm management practices.

Caribbean POLICY meets PRACTICE

PCF10 Conference, 2022

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. The Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), the first-ever hybrid Forum was held in Calgary, Canada from 14–16 September 2022. The Hon Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa delivered the inaugural address in person.

The Honourable Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education, Guyana attended and was conferred a COL Honorary Fellow title.

The conference welcomed 17 key stakeholder delegates from eight Caribbean countries. 14 of these delegates were sponsored through additional funds provided by various institutions from around the Commonwealth.

At the ministerial roundtable session, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and COL's President, a lively discussion ensued about strategies utilised by governments to address educational disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. They examined the multifaceted and inherent benefits of ODL in a world where Covid-19 is still a major global health emergency. Nine education ministers spanning the Commonwealth contributed to the conversation.

This roundtable session centred on inclusivity in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to build resilience and technological innovation. Other themes included improved access to education through ODL, service schools, and community engagement for educational growth.

CANQATE Annual Meeting, 2023

The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education – a member of a global network, along with the University of Trinidad and Tobago – organised its 19th annual meeting which was attended by about 200 quality assurance professionals in academia, training agencies, as well as officials from relevant ministries.

The Honourable Lisa Morris-Julian, Minister of Education for Trinidad and Tobago, delivered the inaugural address and the Vice President of COL gave a plenary address on the significance of current artificial intelligence developments.

The event was anchored by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the National Training Agency — an umbrella agency for Technical

and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the country.

In a special address, the Honourable Nigel de Freitas, Acting President of Trinidad and Tobago, emphasised the importance of rapid workforce development to improve and sustain the economic development of societies in the region and highlighted the role that innovative approaches could play.

Senior academics and leaders from COL's partner universities in the VUSSC network made presentations on quality assurance in the post-pandemic recovery phase.

CARIBBEAN IMPACT (2021–24)

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL works with Caribbean governments to drive the quality open learning agenda through Policy and Strategy development.

COL contributes towards strengthening of blended learning approach in skills education in a variety of ways in this region. During 2022-23, the Caribbean Association for National Training Authorities (CANTA) reviewed the Guidelines and Criteria for awarding the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, initially developed in 2015, to integrate components focused on blended learning. State officers at National Training Authorities use the Guidelines and Criteria to oversee the quality and standards of training in the region.

CANTA also held an occupational standards workshop for government staff and officials to develop occupational standards in the green, digital, blue and orange economies.

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. Ministers of Education from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago were members of this panel.

The University Council of Jamaica, tasked with regulating ODL standards and policies for Higher Education within Jamaica, hosted a training seminar with COL's support to achieve two objectives: to disseminate the revised ODL standards and to further train 484 faculty and staff to apply the standards in online course design and delivery. They have also now operationalised the standards into attractively packaged and accessible e-resources to guide workshop facilitators and participants new to the revised ODL standards.

The Jamaica Teaching Council distributed 26,147 Boys' Journals in 76 schools in seven regions—this life-planning guide helps to set life goals and follow them through. This government body was then able to support the mentoring of boys from different schools as part of the 'Boys'

Education Empowerment' project. An e-book 'Teaching boys effectively' was developed for mentors.

The Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme is the foundation of agricultural transformation which COL is setting with partners in Antigua and Barbuda and Jamaica. The Rural Agricultural Development Authority, Jamaica is bridging the learning gaps that exist in the life of resource-limited farmers through training in business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and technology adoption to enhance their farm management practices. To ensure long-term agricultural sustainability, the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs developed a strategy for the attainment of food security in poultry productions and trained extension field officers in climate-smart agriculture.

The Gender Equality initiative supported Belize's Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs in completing COL's gender mainstreaming scorecard. This achievement led to the development of a comprehensive gender strategy with an action plan for integrating a gender perspective into the Ministry's processes and programmes. The process involved the active participation of 56 staff members, affiliate institutions and diverse stakeholders, ensuring varied perspectives were included to help achieve inclusive and equitable outcomes for the Ministry.

COL provided technology support to various ministries and national institutions:

- hosted Moodle platform for the Caribbean Tourism Organization to develop and offer two online training courses to the Caribbean Tourism Sector and to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to offer a course in Assistive Technologies to special education teachers.
- migrated learning management systems to the Cloud (Ministry of Education, Guyana)

The Skills for Work Scholarship programme offered between April 2021 to April 2024 in partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google saw more than 90,000 learners from 25 Commonwealth nations complete more than 130,000 courses. During these three years, nearly 13,000 learners from the Caribbean benefitted from the programme. Elsewhere in the Commonwealth, COL frames this work as reaching direct to learners, outside of government and regulatory support. However, in the Caribbean, our partners in offering these scholarships included The Bahamas: Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training; Belize: Mabel Walker Professional Development Institute at the Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training; Grenada: Ministry of Education;

Guyana: Ministry of Education; Saint Lucia: Ministry of Education, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Science, Technology and Vocational Training; St Vincent and The Grenadines: Ministry of Education; and Trinidad and Tobago: Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme. Over 90 learners benefitted from the scholarship programme in the Bahamas, while nearly 320 learners benefitted in Barbados, 100 in Belize, 1,800 in Grenada, 3,200 in Guyana, 30 in Jamaica, 1,100 in Saint Lucia, 875 in St Vincent and the Grenadines and 5,300 in Trinidad and Tobago. Building on the success of this programme that was introduced during the pandemic, Barbados and Guyana took ownership of this project and launched national programmes to scale up the approach.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL collaborates with partner institutions to build capacity to support quality and inclusive open education and training.

In 2022, in partnership with UNESCO-UNEVOC and CANTA, support was provided for the development of ODL strategies and action plans for eight TVET institutions in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, St Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname (a non-Commonwealth country, included with funding support from UNESCO-UNEVOC). Six of these plans were validated at a regional workshop in Barbados later the same year. Additionally, 10 TVET secondary schools in Jamaica were also supported, and four of these strategies have been validated. COL would provide technical assistance for the implementation of approved institutional strategies.

The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, developed an institutional Open Educational Resources (OER) policy and offered a massive open online course (MOOC) on dispute resolution and conflict management where 1,164 learners from 15 countries enrolled.

In 2023, CANTA conducted a review of the regional occupational standards to integrate elements for blended delivery, with reference to the guidelines and criteria in the regional qualifications framework. Consequently, in 2024, over 20 practitioners from Barbados, Grenada,

Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, designed four coursewares for competency-based training using blended delivery approaches using reviewed Robotics Operating System in the Orange (Dance Instruction), Blue (Fishing Vessel Operations), Green (Photovoltaic) and Digital (Animation) Economy. Plans are underway to pilot these coursewares and to develop others using the skills acquired.

A Monitoring and Evaluation strategy and baseline report were completed, and 65 Belize Ministry staff in open school management and 19 Ministry staff were trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques ahead of an ongoing pilot using 15 AptusPi devices in 15 schools.

In Guyana, the National Centre for Education Resource Development developed 15 teacher training courses while Cyril Potter College of Education is offering 225 courses currently available on their Moodle platform which has facilitated 10,256 learners accessing and completing its courses in online or blended modes. The college also developed an institutional Distance Education Policy.

St Vincent and The Grenadines Community College converted 21 courses for online delivery, nine of which are being offered to 950 students. 42 Faculty members have strengthened their capacity to design, develop and facilitate courses for online delivery. This has led to an increase in the pool of online course developers and facilitators at the college. Furthermore, an Online Teaching and Learning Policy was developed and the IT team is currently developing a Technology Strategy Plan with guidance from a COL consultant.

Antigua State College is strengthening its capacity in ODL as part of COL's ICT augmentation process to build institutional resilience. To date, 16 blended courses have been offered to learners, and a computer lab/studio has been established where high-quality multimedia lessons and other promotional material are being recorded.

In 2023–24, COL co-offered a MOOC on “Teaching Mathematics with Technology” with the University of West Indies, Five Islands Campus in Antigua and Barbuda, attracting over 1,000 participants. This partnership is expected to build evidence on the impact of contextualised OER on teacher professional development, especially in Mathematics and the Sciences.

In Barbados, a visioning workshop on open education was held at the Erdiston Teachers' Training College in 2024, which attracted 20 staff. The plan is to partner with the Ministry of Education on a nationwide capacity-building programme for teachers using ODL.

To support long-term, sustainable impacts, including livelihood strategies, violence prevention, and building the resilience of young men and boys in the Caribbean, for the past three years, COL collaborated with Youth Challenge Guyana, the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Transport, Belize and the Jamaica Teaching Council, to enhance blended learning, align training with employment needs, and sensitise communities. Partnerships in Belize, Guyana and Jamaica have mentored over 5,400 learners and sensitised more than 28,500 community members, addressing critical issues affecting young men and boys. Additionally, research by the Institute of Gender and Development Studies in Jamaica engaged 300 boys and young men and 150 mothers, highlighting the role of mothers in re-engaging boys in education and training. The findings are being used to drive meaningful change through an awareness campaign in Jamaica.

COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration Programme delivers high-quality learning and professional development opportunities – working with 12 partner institutions, including the University College of the Caribbean, Jamaica, the University of Guyana and the University College of the Cayman Islands – that complement their existing MBA/MPA programmes. Eighteen courses were redeveloped, and around 100 students have enrolled since 2021 to the programme offered by our Caribbean partners.

LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

COL provides learners, targeting especially those from disadvantaged groups, direct access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods, through special-purpose programmes.

In Jamaica, over 16,600 farmers received blended training using a tailored business curriculum to equip them with essential business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and technology adoption to enhance their farm management practices.

Youth Challenge Guyana promoted capacity-building for men and boys on the prevention of gender-based violence with the creation of the Community Dialogue Manual and engaged 25 companies to provide internships and jobs to these men and boys in hospitality services. Moreover, a mentoring network for parents was

established to support young men and boys to return to school and seek employment.

The MOOC, “Climate Literacy for All” was offered in partnership with The University of the West Indies, Jamaica. Almost 800 people from 47 countries enrolled in this course that was offered on COL's platform in late 2023. Facilitated by UWI, the course provided fundamental knowledge on the science of climate change and how to identify climate change solutions and take action at an individual level, especially in the context of small island developing states.

SELECTED OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

Pleshette McPhee, Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, Sherry Maynard from the University of the West Indies (Barbados) and Debra Lowe, University of Guyana were invited to participate in the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022, in Malaysia. The workshop theme was “Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world” with three sub-themes — Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change.

The project launch of COL and St Vincent and the Grenadines Community College’s launched a collaboration project in ODL in February 2023. Prime Minister, the Honourable Dr Ralph Gonsalves, described COL as “an institution of solidarity” and underscored the importance of e-learning for St Vincent and The Grenadines, especially in light of his government’s plan to have at least one graduate per household by 2030. Mr Nigel Scott, Director for the college also spoke.

A partnership between COL and OECS led to improved capacity among 50 educators to evaluate, select and use assistive technologies

as instructional support for students with special needs. To mark the successful completion of the training, a graduation ceremony for these educators was held in June 2023 where participants from seven Caribbean nations and territories gathered with leaders and senior members of their Ministries for the virtual ceremony.

Prof Paloma Mohamed-Martin, University, Guyana and Prof Haldane Davies, University of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Jamaica participated at COL’s Fourth Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Senior Officials hosted at the Open University of Mauritius in October 2023. Key recommendations included: a) Have forward-thinking and flexible strategies to proactively position universities in the face of global disruptions and changing student demographics; b) Embrace the transformative potential of technological breakthroughs like generative artificial intelligence and effective exploitation of data; c) Develop strategies in support of the Green Learning Agenda within university contexts; and d) Build on good leadership practices for increased efficient and effectiveness of institutions.

RECENT CARIBBEAN READINGS

Blockchain in Education (with UNESCO)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4131>

Digital and Professional Teacher Competency Standards for Blended TVET

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5408>

Gender Profile 2023: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/1717>

Making Digital Assessment Count: Designing for Engagement, Integrity and Authenticity

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4017>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Caribbean <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5288>

Research Study: Training for Blended TVET in Pan Commonwealth Countries

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5432>

Teacher Skills Required for Blended TVET: Analysis and Guidelines

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5378>

Technology Application in Teaching and Learning

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4069>

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4068>

ACRONYM GLOSSARY

CANTA - Caribbean Association for National Training Authorities

CCEM – Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers

CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

COL – Commonwealth of Learning

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

ODL – Open and Distance Learning

OER – Open Educational Resources

OECS – Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

PCF – Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

TEL – Technology Enabled Learning

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNESCO-UNEVOC – International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

VUSSC – Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

 info@col.org

 www.col.org

 facebook.com/COL4D/

 www.col.org

 [@col4d](https://twitter.com/col4d)

 instagram.com/commonwealthoflearning/

 <https://www.youtube.com/@CommonwealthofLearning>