The retreat started as planned, at 13:30.

1. Welcome – Professor Asha Kanwar
Professor Kanwar welcomed all those present to the planning retreat. She said the objective of the retreat is to discuss where to take COL in the next three, or possibly six years. She iterated COL’s purpose and provided a history of how COL has evolved, briefly explaining each three-year plan since 2000. She concluded that COL has become more focussed with a greater emphasis on outcomes as seen in the last logic model.

Professor Kanwar next explained the planning schedule listing all the activities that go into preparing COL’s plan for 2015-18. Since the last Board Retreat in June 2013, collective feedback from Board/partners/stakeholders and Regional Focal Points meetings, researching global trends and initiative activities carried forward will have contributed to the first draft of the plan for the Board’s review in December 2014, with the final publication to be presented at the 19CCEM in June 2015. Professor Kanwar mentioned that COL’s Board of Governors will next meet in the Bahamas at that time, prior to the Commonwealth Education Minister’s Meeting.
Professor Kanwar further explained COL’s strategic context with respect to post-MDG strategies, such as the UN High Level Panel and UNESCO’s Post-2015 Education Agenda. The post-2015 development framework for Education in the Commonwealth is Access, Quality and Equity.

Professor Kanwar invited Mr. Vis Naidoo to the floor to present an overview of what was discussed at the last board retreat and the focal points meetings.

2. Setting the Context – Mr. Vis Naidoo

Mr. Naidoo talked to his PowerPoint presentation, starting with a summary of the key answers that came out of the three questions presented at the Board Retreat in 2013.

**Question 1: What is your perspective on the key development focus beyond 2015?**
- Ensure COL remains true to its mandate
- COL to build on its niche in ODL/technology as it relates to learning and development
- “Learning for sustainable development”.

**Question 2: What can COL do to contribute effectively to the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADG)?**
- Expand its strategic partnerships
- COL should support capacity building within countries
- COL should focus on creating an enabling environment to achieve the new goals and support countries/institutions/organisations/individuals to be part of the solution.

**Question 3: How can COL address the various challenges it faces?**
- Raise COL’s profile and visibility
- Balance between being responsive and being driven by an Agenda
- Scalable projects
- Working through partners … “reaching the unreached”.

Mr. Naidoo then summarised the comments that came out of the Regional Focal Points Meetings that were recently held in Trinidad & Tobago (Caribbean) and Mauritius (Africa and the Mediterranean).

**Caribbean Stakeholders Workshop**
- COL to continue its participatory and programme-based approaches, e.g. develop models on community media, contribute to agriculture
- Support curriculum reform so that it is more in line with labour markets and industry needs
- Address crime and violence
- Increase the focus on teacher training – ICT capacity development and integration
- Qualifications Frameworks

**Caribbean Focal Points Meeting**
- Vision should include sustainability … ‘to be the foremost global agency that promotes learning for sustainable development’
- Crime and violence
- Soft skills
• Sustainable tourism development
• Open schools
• Higher Education
• Teacher Education

Africa & the Mediterranean Focal Points Meeting
• Sustainable development.
• COL to include ‘private sector and civil society’ in its mission
• Core strategies … ‘capacity and capability’ and that COL to act as a ‘catalyst for capacity, models’
• Affordable and high quality primary/basic education
• Skills
• Lifelong learning.

Important shifts were also suggested to COL’s strategic goals and structure of its logic model:

Strategic Goals
• Increased access to affordable primary, secondary, tertiary education and lifelong learning especially for girls, women and the marginalised
• Sustainable and replicable learning systems in place for farming, health and skills development in formal, non-formal sectors.
• Improved capacity of government and civil society to provide quality for achieving post-2015 goals
• Cross-cutting themes – creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Structure of Logic Model
• Theme 1: Institutionalising ODL across all levels of education
• Theme 2: Establishing open learning systems to train teachers, lecturers and instructors
• Theme 3: Increasing skill levels in member countries through ODL.

Finally, Mr. Naidoo reported on the feedback received from the internet-based survey that was recently conducted.

1. What should COL focus on with respect to the new global development goals and the 12 themes?
• 88% : Quality education and lifelong learning
• 76.5% : Empowering girls & women and achieve gender equality
• 55.9% : Ensure good governance and effective institutions
• 47% : Create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth.

2. Priority Groups:
• Girls and women
• Youth
• Linking VUSSC with addressing the key priority groups.

3. Relevance and relative importance of COL’s current strategic goals:
• Goals were “noble and worthwhile”
3. Questions to reflect on
Following Mr. Naidoo’s report on the input gathered in the last year, Professor Kanwar posed the question “What is realistically possible for COL?” which should address the following five aspects of COL’s work:

1. Meeting unmet goals
2. Addressing new challenges
3. Harnessing technology
4. Regional focus
5. Minimum intervention, max impact approach

Professor Kanwar then presented the following four questions for group discussion at this meeting:

1. What are the new development trends that COL must address?
2. How can COL further the agenda of your country/region/organisation?
3. What should we sunset? What do we need to strengthen?
4. How do we achieve scale, impact, visibility?

Mr. Naidoo asked the floor to consider these questions as part of the development for COL’s next logic model. Mr. Naidoo said that the groups had 30 minutes to discuss the questions, and then present their five recommendations. He requested each group to nominate a spokesperson to present the ideas captured at each table.

The four groups consisted of:

*Group 1*: Mr. Martin Bean, Dr. Alison Mead Richardson, The Hon. Burchell Whiteman, Professor Asha Kanwar, HE Mariam Katagum, Mr. John Lesperance, The Hon. Danny Faure

*Group 2*: Mr. Olivier Fankhauser, Ms. Janet Ecker, Mr Ian Pringle, HE the Rt. Hon. Sir Lockwood Smith, Mr. Vis Naidoo, Prof. Clement Sankat, Ms. Frances Ferreira

*Group 3*: Mr. Dave Wilson, Mr. Ram Venuprasad, Dr. Mark Bullen, Dr. Chris Berry, Dr. V. Balaji, Dr. Emma K. Vaai, Dr. Godson Gatsha

*Group 4*: Ms. Rosanne Wong, Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, Dr. Jessica Aguti, Prof. Narend Baijnath, Ms. Doris McEachern, Ms. Angela Kwan, Dr. K. Bala

Following discussions amongst the groups, a representative from each group was asked to present their group’s responses to the questions raised.

4. Group Response
Group 1: represented by Mr. Martin Bean
Mr. Bean captured his group’s comments in a mind-map, reported as follows:

1. What are the new development trends that COL must address?
   - Climate change
     - Alternative skills for people in fragile states
     - Learning for sustainable development
     - Each initiative should integrate environmental/sustainable activity.
   - Adult literacy
   - Lifelong learning

2. How can COL further the agenda of your country/region/organisation?
   - Through leadership - by integrating and aligning with the development frameworks of Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO’s) with a focus on countries struggling to achieve the MDGs.

3. What should we sunset? What do we need to strengthen?
   - A balance of core initiatives and “alliance initiatives” that are engineered for exit, i.e. Teacher Education, Higher Education, Health.
   - eLearning has to be a centre of excellence - guidance of technology choices and implementation that is the best fit for the constituency.
   - There should be no shift from focus on secondary to primary.

4. How do we achieve scale, impact, visibility?
   - Global alliances
   - Stimulate innovation
   - COL should celebrate when others run with its ideas/expertise

Group 2: represented by HE the Rt. Hon. Sir Lockwood Smith
Sir Lockwood Smith reported as follows:

1. What are the new development trends that COL must address?
   - Sustainable Development - a trend that we accept as real.
     - Environment
     - Skills for the changing world of work
     - Skills to deal with natural disasters
   - Changing technology – be mindful of changing technologies, which COL is already good at.
     - Modifying models to maximise development
     - Supporting innovation
   - Gender – consider regional differences – it’s not just about females, but also male underachievement in the Caribbean and Pacific.
   - Working with parents to support early education/adult literacy - studies have shown to start working with children earlier.

2. How can COL further the agenda of your country/region/organisation?
• Quality teachers and skills development

3. What should we sunset? What do we need to strengthen?
• COL should not increase the number of initiatives. The models in current initiatives are interesting and positive; COL should use the fundamental processes in these models towards new trends and application of the models to make them do more for COL. For example:
  o L3F could cover innovation and a range of new businesses including the development of value chains.
  o Community Health models could accommodate parent support for early learning.
  o Higher Education could be modified to meet the need of lifelong learning.
• Wide support for strengthening quality of teachers and trainers.

4. How do we achieve scale, impact, visibility?
• Develop/use existing models (or lines of business) that work and market those successful models to relevant organisations. For example, lifelong learning for sustainable development.

Group 3: represented by Dr. Emma K. Vaai
Dr. Vaai presented on behalf of her Group. In response to the questions raised:

1. What are the new development trends that COL must address?
• Sustainable development
• The issue of access has been addressed but is learning taking place?

2. How can COL further the agenda of your country/region/organisation?
• Look at different countries closely associated with each other and see the common agenda to develop alliances.
• Teacher Training/Curriculum reform

3. What should we sunset? What do we need to strengthen?
• Strengthen alliances.

4. How do we achieve scale, impact, visibility?
• COL is visible in the small states through the VUSSC. It is important that COL’s work is relevant because it promotes development.
• COL should continue to promote the VUSSC.
• COL’s model of sponsoring participants to workshops is very good – it brings working people together and produces something of value, which is a benefit to the participants, to capacity building and to developing a sense of ownership.
• Alliances and partnerships are needed.

Group 4: represented by Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman
Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman presented on behalf of his Group. In response to the questions raised:

1. What are the new development trends that COL must address?
In distance education, there are four major challenges:
  o Infrastructure – nationally-determined, but COL could advise
  o Content – COL should make content in different fields available to countries.
  o Mentoring – anyone who wants to learn could get help; COL could develop mentoring groups in various fields.
  o Assessment
Keeping abreast to rapid changes in technologies and helping countries to integrate and organise MOOCs into disciplines/sub-disciplines.
New applications/technologies where COL can be a source of information dissemination about what technologies are available and what is suitable for various contexts.
Pre-occupation with poverty eradication, we lose sight as to how to create greater prosperity – determine what 21st century skills people require to increase productivity and entrepreneurship.
Policy research. Many countries do not have clear road-maps due to changing of governments. Through experts, COL could guide governments to develop long-term strategic plans.

2. How can COL further the agenda of your country/region/organisation?
   Focus on areas, such as:
     o Quality (i.e. finished school but haven’t learned)
     o Relevance – skills and poverty reduction
     o Teacher training using modern technologies and integrating MOOCs
     o Policy development – to transition to knowledge economies

3. What should we sunset? What do we need to strengthen?
   Look at a 10 year framework – have a broader vision.
   Engage technology to improve ODL systems, delivery and development - COL to advise (write a paper) what current and new technologies exist and compare their strengths and weaknesses.

4. How do we achieve scale, impact, visibility?
   Partner with other international organisations of mutual interest.
   Evaluate interventions to ensure impact.
   Refer to theory of change.
   Development road maps.

Mr. Naidoo thanked the spokespersons for presenting their Group’s discussions and invited the participants to add anything further.

Mr. Venuprasad remarked that the Commonwealth Secretariat would like to enhance its relationship with COL and seeks its help on specific activities, such as:
  o Entrepreneurship
  o Working together on signature products
  o Support with PCF8
  o Include COL with Malta’s Small States Centre for Excellence
  o For the 19CCEM, work with COL to enhance visibility of the Commonwealth
5. Wrap-up

Professor Kanwar thanked everyone for their input and acceptance of:

1. Changing COL’s slogan to: “Learning for Sustainable Development”, providing a clearer direction which will be integrated through all its initiatives.
2. Proceeding with a six-year plan.
3. Achieving scale through more association with international organisations.

The retreat ended at 15:34.