

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

NOTE: This information is subject to change, without prior notice.
Please consult the appropriate COL [Partner University](#) for the latest updates.
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Overview of CEMBA / MPA Programme

What is “Open and Distance Learning”? How is CEMBA / CEMPA considered an ODL programme?

Open (distance) learning describes policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no barriers or minimal barriers of age, gender or time while recognising prior learning. Distance education is the delivery of learning or training to learners who are separated, mostly by time and space, from those who are teaching and training. Conceptually distinct, yet complementary, these two phenomena come together in the term open and distance learning (ODL).

Traditional ways of delivering MBA and MPA programmes, though attractive, have in general been expensive and restrictive. In view of the physical limitations imposed by the traditional mode of delivery, i.e. face-to-face tuition, classroom setting, specific time and space, the number of students who can benefit from such a costly way of teaching has been limited. COL, as an advocate for distance education and open learning, sees distance education as a viable alternative which provides a flexible mode of delivery and overcomes time constraints and geographical barriers, thereby offering students a novel way of studying and of pursuing knowledge. With distance learning, students are given a chance to seek self-enrichment and advancement in their own time, in their own space, at their own pace and, most importantly, at an affordable price.

The special features of open learning and distance education include:

- Provision of learning at one's own pace, place and time
- Cost effective and cost efficient educational operations
- Provision of equal opportunity of admission
- Self instructional learning materials, in print and non-print media
- Provision of face-to-face and distance tutor support
- Continuous and terminal evaluation.

Who developed the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme?

A Consortium of Partner Universities in the Commonwealth, facilitated by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). COL is an intergovernmental agency established under a Memorandum of Understanding as agreed by Commonwealth Governments on Sept. 1, 1988 and subsequently amended on Oct. 31, 1995.

Why was the Programme created?

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) develops programmes such as the Commonwealth Executive MBA / MPA Programme for the purpose of creating and widening access to education for citizens of the Commonwealth's 54 member nations. COL's goal is to empower individuals with knowledge that enables them to become agents of economic and social development in their home regions.

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COL recognises the challenge of providing affordable access to education in many Commonwealth countries, especially for those people unable to participate in conventional (face-to-face) courses on campus at universities.

The CEMBA/MPA programme aims to provide access to higher education in business and public administration for those students who cannot attend classes via the conventional programmes offered at our partner universities.

As an advocate for distance education and open learning, COL sees distance education as a viable alternative which provides a flexible mode of delivery and overcomes time constraints and geographical barriers, thereby offering students a novel way of studying and of pursuing knowledge. With distance learning, students are given a chance to seek self-enrichment and advancement in their own time, in their own space, at their own pace and, most importantly, at an affordable price.

Which institutions are COL Partner Universities?

The original four [Partner Universities](#) piloted the original CEMBA / CEMPA programme. They are located in South Asia:

Abbreviation	Full Name of Partner University	Country	Membership Date
AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University	Pakistan	2002
BOU	Bangladesh Open University	Bangladesh	2002
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University (see note on page 5)	India	2002
OUSL	Open University of Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	2002

COL continues to receive interest from other universities throughout the Commonwealth. Since October 2004, the following partner universities joined the CEMBA / CEMPA Consortium and are offering the CEMBA / MPA Programme:

Abbreviation	Full Name of Partner University	Country	Membership Date
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Ghana	2007
NOUN	National Open University of Nigeria	Nigeria	2004
UCC	University College of the Caribbean	Jamaica	2007
UG	University of Guyana	Guyana	2007
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea	2007
WOU	Wawasan Open University	Malaysia	2006

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Approval of additional CEMBA / MPA partner universities is at the discretion of the COL CEMBA / MPA Executive Governing Board. Please check COL's CEMBA / MPA webpage for the latest information – www.col.org/cemba.

Note: India's Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which was a founding and contributing member of the CEMBA / CEMPA consortium of partner institutions, is currently reviewing its marketing and delivery strategies for competitively offering the Programme in India. To afford itself the full scope of flexibility in exploring its options, IGNOU is not participating as a consortium member until further notice. (April 2009).

Who administers the programme?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme is overseen by COL, and all academic issues are the purview of the Academic Board, which is made up of Deans and Professors from the Partner universities and COL representatives.

It is the Academic Board's responsibility to review and maintain quality control with regard to the courses and the programme. COL requests our partners collect student feedback and tutor/instructor reviews of the courses and the Programme.

Admissions Tests

COL has developed various Admissions Tests for our Partner Universities. We provide these Admission Tests to our Partner Universities, who in turn administer these Tests under COL Guidelines. Based on the results of these Tests, our Partner Universities determine who to admit to the CEMBA / MPA Programme on the basis of these Test results, and other factors.¹ Partner Universities are responsible for managing the enrolment and students' completion of the Programme thereafter.

Partner University Responsibilities

COL Partner Universities use the course materials (book/modules) provided by COL, as well as their own supplementary materials, such as videos and case studies.

Supplementary materials should provide a local, national and regional context to the learning environment, as well as additional opportunities for applied learning. Partner Universities administer all tests, exams, and assignments relating to the courses. Exams and tests are part of the course materials provided by COL.

Partner Universities also establish and manage their own learning centres and resources (such as libraries and computer labs), as well as tutor/instructor support. Administration and support varies from one partner institute to the next, depending on learner location and other logistical requirements, as well as the Partner University resources available.

Who benefits from taking this Programme?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme is designed for **busy working professionals living in one of the Commonwealth countries** of our Partner Universities. Some partners allow citizens living

¹ Other factors may include personal suitability, essays, references. Admissibility is at the pleasure of our Partner Universities.

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abroad to enrol in the Programme. Check with the COL [Partner University](#) in the country of your citizenship regarding residency requirements.

Students interested in the CEMBA / MPA Programme might have limitations on their ability to attend face-to-face (traditional) programmes because of work and/or family constraints on their time or geographic distance from main campus of the university. For these students, the *flexible*, modular, *distance learning* model allows them to study part-time and to establish their own pace in terms of the number of courses that take each semester.

The special features of open learning and distance education include:

- Learning at one's own pace, place and time
- Cost effective and cost efficient educational operations
- Equal opportunity of admission for women and men
- Self instructional learning materials, in print and non-print media
- Face-to-face and distance tutor support

How modular is the CEMBA / MPA Programme?

It is quite modular, and has three (3) exit points. The availability of each exit point may vary among COL Partner Universities.

Exit Point	Number of Course	Credits
Diploma	8 (core courses required for CEMBA / MPA)	48
Graduate Diploma	10 (8 core + 2 specialised compulsory)	60
CEMBA / MPA	15 (8 core + 2 specialised + 3 electives + 2 required courses)	90

You may choose to stop at any of the above certification points based on the credits completed by you. This is subject to availability at COL Partner Universities. Please check with your institution accordingly.

What is the duration of the Programme?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme duration is listed below.

Programme	Details
Duration	2 years — Full-Time Study
# of Semesters	4 semesters
# of Hours of Study	1,800 hours
Each Course in the Programme	120 study hours

Student hours include such learning activities as working through student material, preparing assignments, tutored activity and preparing for examination, etc.

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What is the 'flexibility' of the CEMBA/ MPA Programme?

Students have the flexibility to complete a Masters degree within 2 to 5 years. This involves taking one or more courses per semester. Graduation may occur more quickly if students pursue the Diploma or Graduate Diploma options.

The Programme is designed so that it may be completed in four (4) semesters but it is recognised that few students will proceed at that pace.

Students may choose up to four (4) courses per semester, in consideration of the working status of students, and the overall CEMBA / CEMPA overall study load.

If students are unable to complete the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme in five (5) years, they will have to re-register. Each Partner University is responsible for notifying students regarding the terms and conditions of re-registration.

Is there a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) or PhD (Business or Public Administration)?

No. Please contact the appropriate COL [Partner University](#) directly to enquire about their PhD programme.

Do I need a computer?

It depends. The expectations for use of computers at home (or through your workplace) and/or through student Study Centres **varies** among Partner Universities. Please check with the appropriate COL Partner University.

How is this Programme delivered?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme is delivered via printed materials, and students have access to tutors in-person or at-a-distance.

Face-to-face interaction is organised through Study Centres. Students should contact the coordinators of their Study Centre for:

- Counselling schedules
- Teleconference schedules
- Telecast and broadcast schedules

Audio, video and computing facilities are also important elements of the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme. Partner Universities may also provide other multi-media learning opportunities through TV and radio programming, videos, the Internet and student/tutor communications.

Supplementary activities and communications between students and tutors **may** require access to Internet and email. Please check with the appropriate COL Partner University.

Is the Programme Online?

Some of our Partner Universities are moving towards online delivery. Please check with the appropriate COL Partner University.

What is the language of instruction?

English. Students must have adequate proficiency in English reading, writing and oral communications to successfully participate in the Programme. Course materials are written in English, although COL Partner Universities may supplement learning activities with activities in the local language of the host country.

What does COL mean by 'gender equality'?

COL requires that ALL course materials are free of gender bias. We also encourage COL Partner Universities to be inclusive of women in all aspects of the CEMBA / MPA Programme's activities.

Admissions, Registration & Fees

What are the eligibility requirements for the CEMBA / MPA Programme?

The admission criteria include the following:

- At least a second class Bachelor's degree from a recognised University
- A minimum of two years of relevant post-qualification experience
- A good working knowledge of the English language at postgraduate level
- Satisfactory score on the CEMBA / MPA Admission Test
- Some Partner Universities require citizens to be resident in the country.

Where can I register?

Please register for the CEMBA/MPA Programme with the relevant Partner University.

How much are the fees?

They are determined by each Partner University.

What is the Admission procedure?

Each Partner University has its own administration practices relating to application processing and admissions testing.

Prospective students will require copies of their work certificates, photographs and a draft/cheque (in the amount of the fees required by the COL Partner University).

Upon receiving confirmation of passing the CEMBA / MPA Admission Test, students are required to complete an official Admission Form, from the Partner University of their choice.

Registration for the Programme is valid for five years from the date of admission. If the student is not able to complete the Programmes within five years, he/she will be eligible for re-registration.

Each Partner University is responsible for determining the conditions of re-registration.

What is the Admission Test?

The Admission Test is designed to provide an additional means for selecting candidates for the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme. Successful completion of the test is one (1) of the eligibility criteria for admission.

The Admission Test consists of multiple choice questions designed to test applicants' capabilities in the following areas:

- General Awareness
- English Language
- Quantitative Aptitude
- Reasoning

The Admissions Test will be conducted on pre-announced dates. Please contact the COL Partner University in your country for information regarding test centres, schedules and preparation essentials.

What if I complete the Admissions Test, but cannot begin studies in that year?

Candidates who successfully complete the admission test **shall be eligible for admission in the year they pass the test or in the following year.** Registration shall be valid for five years from the date of admission.

What are the assessment policies and procedures?

Assessment in each course of the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme consists of Continuous Assessment and Term-end Examination. Course results are based on:

- Overall Continuous Assessment Score (OCAS)
- Overall Examination Score (OES)
- Overall Course Score (OCS)
- Determination of Course Result Status

Overall Continuous Assessment Score (OCAS)

Continuous assessment is based on:

- Tutor-marked assessments (TMAs) in the form of essays or short answer questions. Some courses may also require extended essays or projects.
- Computer-marked assignments (CMAs) consist of multiple choice questions. Not all courses have CMAs.
- Projects/case studies in the form of essay or short answer questions.

Course materials will indicate the number of course assignments as well as which assignments should be completed for assessment purposes and which ones are for teaching purposes only. The weighting of each assessment component (e.g., TMAs, CMAs, projects, examinations) will also be promulgated.

To calculate the overall score (OCAS), the prescribed number of a student's 'best' scores will be selected, including the scores for any assignments 'necessary for assessment purposes'.

Overall Examination Score (OES)

Each course has a written examination, which is held at the end of the course and normally lasts three hours. Students' performance in the examination will contribute to the OES.

Overall Course Score (OCS)

OCS will be calculated from both the OCAS and OES, which is usually the weighted average of the two scores. However, OCS alone does not automatically determine result status. When determining result status, the OCAS, OES and OCS will all be taken into account.

Determination of Course Result Status

A pass score in each course will depend on a satisfactory level of performance in both the OCAS and OES.

What are the academic requirements for assignments and testing?

The type and number of assignments varies among courses.

- Each course requires assignments and course work for 30% of the final course mark.
- Each course requires a final examination for 70% of the final mark.

Students must achieve a minimum average mark of 50% on the assignments to be eligible to write the final examination.

Programme Components

What are the components of the CEMBA / MPA Programme?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme consist of four (4) components: *Core Courses, Specialist Compulsory, Elective and Required Courses.*

Core Courses (CEMBA / MPA)

- Managing Information Systems
- Management in Organisations
- Managing Human Resources
- Operations Management
- Economic Environment of Business
- Public Systems Management
- Quantitative Techniques
- Marketing Management
- Accounting and Finance

Specialist Compulsory Courses

CEMBA Programmes:

- Strategic Management
- Quality Management

CEMPA Programmes:

- Public Policy
- Development Planning and Administration

Electives (CEMBA / CEMPA)

- Electronic Commerce
- Project Management
- Managerial Economics
- Policy Analysis and Implementation
- Contemporary Administrative Systems
- Disaster Management
- Corporate Finance
- International Marketing

Required Courses (2)

- Research Methods
- Research Project

What are typical learning activities?

Each course may include the following learning activities:

- Self instructional printed course materials packages
- Assignments for assessment and feedback
- Audio-video programmes
- Face-to-face interaction with academic counsellors at Study Centres
- Tele-counselling and interaction
- Project work
- Telecast of video Programmes
- Broadcast of audio Programmes
- Interactive satellite aided communication network (teleconferencing)

NOTE: Learning activities vary from course to course.

What is the Research Project?

The CEMBA / MPA Research Project or Project course is a requirement for completion of a Commonwealth Executive Masters degree in two streams: (1) Business Administration and, (2) Public Administration.

Students may enrol in the Research Project course (12 credits / 240 hours) *only* after completing the eight (8) core courses for their respective Programmes AND enrolling in the Research Methodology course.

The Research Project helps students apply their learning from critical components covered in the curriculum, to a 'real-world' issue or problem. The major objective involves students developing the ability to apply multidisciplinary concepts, tools and techniques to solve organizational problems. Moreover, students can contribute their findings and analyses to the wider body knowledge in management or public administration.

How does it work?

Students are expected to forward their Project Proposal to the Programme Coordinator. Work can begin **only** when the Proposal is approved by the Programme Coordinator. A Project Guide is an essential part of this process, and the Student can choose an appropriate individual, in consultation with the Programme Coordinator.

Students must select the Research Project in consultation with his/her Project Guide. Students are also expected to work closely with their Project Guide for the duration of their Research Project.

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Topics for the Research Project may include one or more of the following:

- Comprehensive case study (covering single organisation/multi-functional area problem formulation, analysis and recommendations).
- Inter-organisational study aimed at inter-organisational comparison/validation of theory/survey of management or developmental practices.
- Field study (empirical study).

Credit, Degree and Diploma Information

Does COL grant any Degrees or Diplomas?

No. All Diplomas, Graduate Diplomas or Masters Degrees earned by students completing the CEMBA or CEMBA Programme are granted by a COL Partner University.

The Commonwealth of Learning is NOT a degree-granting institution.

Is this degree recognised internationally for credit transfers?

Yes, in some cases. Students may transfer credits to another COL Partner University offering the CEMBA / MPA Programme.

Transfer of credits to universities external to COL Partner Universities is the student's responsibility. He/she can negotiate directly with each individual university or college.

What is the credit system used in the CEMBA / MPA Programmes?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme is based on the accumulation of credits.

Each CEMBA / MPA credit is defined as 20 hours of study load. This comprises all learning activities such as working through student materials, preparing assignments, tutored activity and preparing for examinations.

All CEMBA / CEMPA courses carry a credit weighting of six (6) (i.e., 6 x 20 = 120 study hours). This credit and study load information can help students determine the level of effort required for successful completion of courses and the Programme, as well as the work required per semester (given work demands and family responsibilities).

How many hours of study are required?

Students can complete the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme at their own pace taking one or more courses per semester.

Programme	Details
Duration	2 years — Full-Time Study
# of Semesters	4 semesters
# of Hours of Study	1,800 hours
Each Course in the Programme	120 study hours

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Student hours include such learning activities as working through student material, preparing assignments, tutored activity and preparing for examination, etc.

How many credits / courses are required to complete the Commonwealth Executive MBA?

Ninety (90) credits are required to complete the Commonwealth Executive MBA. This includes 15 courses (8 core, 2 specialised, 3 electives, 2 required courses).

How many credits / courses are required to complete the Commonwealth Executive MPA?

Ninety (90) credits are required to complete the Commonwealth Executive MPA. This includes 15 courses (8 core, 2 specialised, 3 electives, 2 required courses).

CEMBA / CEMPA Comparison

	CEMBA	CEMPA
Core Courses	8 courses from the Core Courses List	6 courses from Core Courses List + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Systems Management • Management in Organisations
Specialist Compulsory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Management • Quality Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Policy • Development Planning and Administration
Electives	3 courses from Electives List	3 courses from Electives List.
Required Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Methods • Project 	

In terms of study hours, the Programme has the equivalent of two years of full-time study (i.e. four semesters or approximately 1,800 hours of study). Each course of the Programme is assigned a nominal 120 study hours. Student hours include such learning activities as working through student material, preparing assignments, tutored activity and preparing for exams, etc.

How many credits / courses are required for a Graduate Diploma (Business Administration OR Public Administration)?

Sixty (60) credits are required to complete a CEMBA / MPA Graduate Diploma. This includes ten (10) courses (8 core + 2 specialised compulsory).

How many credits / courses are required for a Diploma (Business OR Public Administration)?

Forty-eight (48) credits are required to complete a CEMBA / MPA Diploma. This includes eight (8) courses.

Can I switch to the Masters — if I enrol in the Diploma Programmes?

Yes. The CEMBA / CEMPA Programme is flexible. If you decide to pursue a Masters degree, in addition to the four core courses completed for the Diploma, you will be required to complete three electives in your area of specialization (business administration or public administration), as well as the Research Method course and Project. You should always discuss your decisions with the Partner Universities administering your Programme to let them know your intentions.

Can I switch to the Diploma / Graduate Diploma Programmes — if I enrol in the Masters Degree?

You should always discuss your decisions with a COL Partner University administering your Programme to let them know your intentions. The core courses are the same regardless of whether you are pursuing the Diploma, Graduate Diploma or Masters degree.

If you choose to exit before completing the Master degree requirements, you may earn a Diploma or Graduate Diploma in your discipline (business administration or public administration) as long as you complete the courses required for one or the other of those Diplomas.

Can I obtain both MBA & MPA degrees?

Yes, it is possible. However, you will have to take additional courses to complete the requirements for each degree. Additionally, you will have to undertake an additional research project. You may also be able to take courses through one of the CEMBA / MPA partner universities, particularly if your university does not offer the courses you would like to take. Please consult your desired university for details.

What is meant by “inter-institutional credit transfer”?

COL Partner Universities will approve credit transfer for transferring students from within the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme.

Programme Governance

What is the Executive Governing Board?

The CEMBA / MPA Programme is overseen by the Executive Governing Board. It is comprised of the Vice Chancellors of each COL Partner University and senior representatives from COL.

What is the Academic Board?

The CEMBA / CEMPA Academic Board is comprised of Deans and Professors from COL Partner Universities, along with senior COL representatives.

All academic issues (including curriculum design, content and delivery and quality) are the responsibility of the COL Academic Board.

How is feedback submitted?

COL's Partner Universities collect student feedback and tutor/instructor reviews of the courses and the Programme to maintain and increase quality.

How can Students Provide Feedback (Anonymously)?

For students who wish to contribute specific feedback course quality, instruction or testing, please submit your review and COL will disseminate this feedback to the appropriate Board.

If you would like remain anonymous, please email Dr. Willie Clarke-Okah, Education Specialist, Higher Education, Commonwealth of Learning – wclarke-okah@col.org

Support & Post-Graduation

What support is available to complete the Programme?

Partner Universities provide support to the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme through Study Centres.

These Study Centres house a basic library for reference purposes; counselling facilities on pre-determined schedules; and information and examination centres for the Programme. Tele-counseling (if it forms part of the student support package) is also accessible at the Study Centre.

After admission to the CEMBA / CEMPA Programme, each student is assigned a Study Centre where he/she also submits the tutor-marked assignments for evaluation and feedback.

Are scholarships available?

Please contact the COL Partner University in your home country to enquire about any scholarship opportunities through that institution.

COL does **not** offer scholarship support at this time.

Does the Programme have an international focus?

Yes. The Programme has an international perspective, as it has been developed by curriculum developers and professors from universities around the Commonwealth. Moreover, we encourage COL Partner Universities to share resources and supplementary materials to broaden student perspectives. Tutors also bring a relevant regional and national focus.

Are there opportunities for international travel or study visits?

Currently, each university administers its own student enrolment and accepts students **only** from their country. Please check with each COL Partner University for information about opportunities for student study visits.

Does COL consult with companies to hire / recruit graduates?

No. Please direct any enquiries for recruitment or job placement assistance to one of COL's Partner Universities.

Is this degree recognised for immigration purposes (i.e., to Canada)?

Information contained herein subject to change without prior notice. Please consult the appropriate COL [Partner University](#) for the latest information, university and CEMBA / MPA Programme policies.

No. The CEMBA / MPA Programme will enhance (NOT guarantee) your chances for successful immigration. Please review the Government of Canada's Immigration website and take the Skilled Worker Self-Assessment. For more information, click on this link:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/index.asp>

In terms of applying for jobs, we encourage you to network with your colleagues and begin researching companies and organisations of interest to identify the contacts and opportunities of interest to you. Certainly, the CEMBA / MPA designation will be an important qualification, but you must also have the relationships to secure a well-paying and interesting job.

Is there an Alumni Association?

Currently, alumni networking is done through each Partner University.

Is there a CEMBA / MPA Alumni Network for All Partner University Graduates?

Not at this time — however, depending on the interest of our Partner Universities and Students, this is something that the CEMBA / MPA Consortia may consider at a future date.

Is there a contact CEMBA / MPA — Email Address

- CEMBA / MPA Programmes – Email: cemba@col.org

Please put a descriptive and meaningful heading in the Subject Line of your email. This will make it easier for us to keep track of your correspondence and get back to you.