



LETTER OF INTENT

Preamble

In pursuance of the common aims of harnessing the potential of eLearning and ICTs to bring quality education and training to their citizens, the ministries of education and institutions listed in Schedule A of this Letter of Intent have agreed in principle to cooperate in the creation of a Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). They will work together in course development and supplementation, staff and systems development, research, and distance education management within the framework of existing academic activities and in consonance with the overall objectives of their respective ministries and institutions. The ministries and institutions hereby constitute themselves as participating members of a consortium solely for the aims and objectives outlined in this letter.

Principles and Intentions

The participating members and COL acknowledge that this letter sets out only a framework of principles, which they have accepted, and agree that they will work together in a spirit of cooperation to achieve the purposes outlined herein.

Signatories to this letter agree that participation in the programme by other Commonwealth governments and institutions, as and when they are able to, is welcomed.

COL anticipates facilitating cooperative working relationships among participating ministries and institutions and seeks to ensure that they are partners in arrangements, providing them with opportunities for capacity building in open and distance learning (ODL) as well as in the areas of eLearning and virtual education.

The ministries of education will encourage a wide range of organisations (public and private educational institutions, other ministries, NGOs, technology providers, etc.) to participate in this consortium, under their guidance. The ministries will further ensure that appropriate policies are put in place and adequate resources allocated from existing budgets to provide an enabling environment for VUSSC to operate. Further funding will be sought from national and international sources to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Objectives of VUSSC

The objectives of the VUSSC initiative are:

1. To create a consortium of institutions, enabled by appropriate ICT applications, that will work together in practical ways to plan programs, develop the required content and ensure the delivery of those programs and support services to learners;



2. To offer opportunities for expanded access to education, teacher training and upgrading to benefit the participating countries as well as other member states of the Commonwealth;
3. To enable students in the small states of the Commonwealth to receive education and training leading to qualifications and thereby contribute to their professional growth and career advancement;
4. To enhance existing capacities both human and institutional in the use of open and distance learning and ICT-enhanced education for both the on-campus and distance learner;
5. To deliver quality programmes that can be implemented widely in Commonwealth countries and that will be recognised by participating institutions;
6. To contribute to human resource development in the participating countries; and
7. To promote regional collaboration and partnerships.

Operational Plan

The signatories agree to the following, with the intention that detailed rules and regulations will be developed by the VUSSC Consortium after the signing of this letter by the participants in Schedule A:

The overall design, arrangement and management of VUSSC programmes will be through the establishment of an Advisory Panel, to set policies and lay down rules and regulations (in consultation with participating institutions) on systems of delivery, assessment, award and recognition of credits and credentials on successful completion of the programmes.

Relationship between Participating Institutions

1. To organise, execute, evaluate and generally oversee the various activities mentioned in this letter, the signatories to this letter may nominate one person in each institution to officially act on their behalf.
2. The signatories to this letter will take such steps as are necessary to facilitate the effective and efficient administrative and operational implementation of the programme.
3. The signatories to this letter agree that their relationship is a collective one and will allow for expansion in the list of participating institutions even after the signing of this letter.



Terms of Agreement

This letter will come into effect from the date of signing and may be amended or terminated after due consultations between the contracting institutions and after three months' notice has been given to those concerned.

The participating institutions reiterate their intention to implement these matters set out in this letter in a spirit of cooperation and to seek and maintain consultation and consensus processes which will allow any matters arising hereunder to be amicably resolved.

Schedule A

Having taken note of the core principles of the VUSSC and the recommendations made by the ministers of education during the 15th CCEM, we, the undersigned agree that:

- a) Our countries and institutions will work together, by sharing resources, experience and expertise in order to meet the educational and training needs of our learners by providing quality education and training in a cost-effective manner.
- b) We support COL's commitment to undertake the necessary coordination and quality control, to provide or secure access to the necessary external expertise, and to facilitate networking.
- c) We will have regular consultations in the process of developing and implementing the programme(s).
- d) We commit to participate in the programme(s) by making available, within the capacities of each of our countries and institutions, the resources necessary to provide a quality-learning environment for our students.

Sir John Daniel,
President and CEO
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