



COL CHAIRS PROGRAMME

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

The COL Chairs Programme was started in 2010 to (i) facilitate the development of effective open and distance learning (ODL) and technology-enhanced education and training through advocacy, research and capacity-building across the Commonwealth; (ii) strengthen regional cooperation; and (iii) provide visibility for COL in the field. Since the COL Chairs Programme began, several distinguished academics, several distinguished academics from across the Commonwealth have been designated as an ‘Honorary COL Chair,’ sometimes in collaboration with UNESCO. While the Honorary COL Chair programme served its initial objectives, the programme is being refocused in light of experiences gained and the emerging scenario for promoting learning for sustainable development, as part of COL’s Strategic Plan (2015-2021).

With the new COL Chairs Programme, COL’s academic and intellectual presence will be enhanced in the fields of ODL, open educational resources (OER), technology-enabled learning (TEL) and learning for sustainable development. It will serve as a means of engagement in research, innovation and thought leadership between COL and distinguished individuals working in academic institutions, civil society organisations, or other institutions. The COL Chairs undertake research and innovation in the areas of competence of COL.

COL Chairs are leaders in their respective fields of expertise (e.g., ODL, OER, TEL, learning for sustainable development, etc.) and apply their expertise to support Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4): *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*¹. As such, COL Chairs demonstrate thought leadership through their research and innovation, and advance COL’s mandate as outlined in its Strategic Plan (2015-2021). COL Chairs are scholars or thought leaders in their respective fields and have a proven track record for scholarly or project work that has demonstrated significant outcomes and impact.

The strategic objectives of the COL Chairs Programme are to:

- promote thought leadership in the areas of competence of COL;
- apply research and innovation to support the achievement of SDG4; and
- support learning for sustainable development within the framework of COL’s Strategic Plan.

The Programme is managed by the COL Chairs Programme Committee at COL with the COL President and CEO serving as Committee Chair.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>



TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference outline the expectations of the COL Chair appointment. The COL Chair is expected to:

1. Understand, support and advocate COL's role in the Commonwealth, and align the Chair activities to COL's Strategic Plan (2015-2021);
2. Organise, facilitate and engage in research, innovation and thought leadership relative to the current and emerging trends in ODL, OER, TEL and learning for sustainable development;
3. Work at all levels of education, including lifelong learning, and in formal and non-formal settings, in cooperation with universities, civil society organisations, or other institutions;
4. Leverage and expand their network within and outside the Commonwealth to support the Chair activities;
5. Document and disseminate through reporting and other means, the work/findings from the Chair activities with COL and all stakeholders in the region and the larger Commonwealth in a manner that may facilitate uptake by all stakeholders, within these regions and beyond;
6. Promote and strengthen regional cooperation by creating an environment to facilitate and sustain the sharing of intellectual and physical resources (e.g., course materials, delivery systems and networking) for promoting ODL, OER, TEL and learning for sustainable development at all levels; and
7. Serve as Ambassadors of COL and uphold the highest level of professionalism in carrying out the Chair activities.

The term of a COL Chair appointment is three years. COL Chairs are non-compensated positions and do not receive a stipend/honorarium from COL. Funding, in the form of a grant, may be available to carry out proposed activities of a COL Chair.

EXPECTED ACTIVITIES

The COL Chair is expected to:

1. Work with the COL liaison to outline the objectives and impact of their activity/activities relative to COL's Results Based Management approach (see **COL's Strategic Plan (2015-2021)**);
2. Provide an annual written report to the COL liaison on the activity/activities undertaken in relation to any of the following: i) research/publications; ii) projects undertaken related to COL's areas of competence; iii) participation and contribution to conferences/seminars; iv) regional/international cooperation; and v) mobilisation of funds;
3. Work closely with the COL liaison to provide regular updates on progress with the contracted activity/activities so as to maintain a schedule that ensures the fulfillment of the appointment; and
4. Provide full and timely accounting of disbursements of such funds as requested by COL.

HOST OF COL CHAIR

The COL Chair can be hosted by any academic institution, civil society organisation, or other institution in the Commonwealth with a proven track record for research, innovation and thought leadership in any of the areas of competence of COL. All applications for COL Chairs are to be submitted with the endorsement of the head of the organisation or institution.



FUNDING

COL Chairs may be eligible for a modest grant which will be negotiated to support specific activities. COL Chairs will also be encouraged to acquire funding from other sources such as:

- specific project funding from national and international agencies; and
- private foundations and donor agencies.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. Applications for the COL Chairs Programme are open to any citizen of a Commonwealth country. The deadline for submission is regularly updated on the COL website. Submitted applications will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Applications and instructions for submission can be found on the **COL Chairs Programme webpage**.
2. Before applying, applicants are strongly encouraged to review **COL's Strategic Plan (2015-2021)**.

Criteria for Applicants:

To be eligible for the COL Chairs Programme, applicants should:

- be a citizen of a Commonwealth country;
- hold a PhD, EdD or equivalent qualification;
- have a strong international reputation and network in any of COL's areas of competence;
- have a proven track record in conducting research and other innovative activities in ODL, OER, TEL or learning for sustainable development;

- be affiliated with an academic institution, civil society organisation, or other institution; and
- be endorsed by the head of the host organisation or institution.

Gender equality is integral to all of COL's work and requires that both females' and males' views, interests and needs shape its work in learning for sustainable development. Women are encouraged to apply to the COL Chairs Programme.

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

All applications received shall be reviewed and assessed by the COL Chairs Programme Committee.

APPOINTMENT OF A COL CHAIR

Upon recommendation by the COL Chairs Programme Committee, COL Chairs shall be appointed, and subsequently notified by the President and CEO of COL.

Successful applicants will be appointed as a COL Chair for a period of three years, effective from the date of signing of the agreement.

The COL Chair appointment may be terminated by either party before its expiry date by giving written notice to the other party. The period of notice shall be one month.

RENEWAL OF A COL CHAIR APPOINTMENT

The COL Chair appointment may be extended by another three-year term upon mutual agreement between COL and the COL Chair.