



COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING, VANCOUVER, CANADA

UPDATE: Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)

Planning for COL's Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7) is proceeding well in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) as the implementing partner. The venue will be the International Conference Centre (ICC) in Abuja, and the dates are 2 – 6 December 2013. The Forum will address "Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation" through five themes:

- "Girls' and Women's Education" – Closing the gender gap is not only a matter of human rights and equity; it is also one of efficiency and economic productivity.
- "Skills Development" – Skills for developing countries cover a wide spectrum from high level skills for growth, such as classroom teaching, and lower level skills for poverty reduction.
- "Promoting Open Educational Resources" – The momentum for developing more OER has never been greater. However, use and access alone are insufficient to realise the potential for improving access to education at all levels. We need to also focus on quality and the costs of producing quality OER, and how to better use them.
- "Innovation and Technology" – From print to mobile devices, including tablets, technology is a central feature of ODL. However innovation also concerns social processes and the ways in which technologies are applied.
- "Institutional Development" – Resources invested in institutional development, especially in governance structures, quality systems and leadership can create a long term and sustainable impact on ODL growth in a given region and help enhance the credibility of ODL systems.

PCF7 is a dynamic event with a variety of formats to enable participation, knowledge sharing, learning and networking. Apart from paper presentations there will also be a variety of activities that address the interests and expectations of different participants. The idea is to promote dialogue, sharing, networking and collaboration among all participants. There will be plenary and parallel sessions, panel discussions, training workshops, open networking streams, social networking and online media, roundtables, a marketplace, and "show and tell".

There is great interest in the Forum from around the globe. A total of 460 abstract and proposal submissions have been received, each addressing one of the five themes.

Keynote speakers will include:

- Ms. Sakena Yacoobi, Executive Director of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), a women-led non-governmental organisation that provides teacher training to women, supports education for girls and boys and offers health education to women and children in Afghanistan and Pakistan [need to confirm at press time]
- Professor Julius Okojie, Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission, Nigeria
- Professor Peter Okebukola, Pro-Chancellor & Chairman of Council, Osun State University, Nigeria, President of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI-Africa) and former Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission
- Ms. Jenny Glennie, Founding Director of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), a non-profit organisation committed to increasing access to lifelong education for all

UPDATE: Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)

Page 2 of 2

South Africans. She well known internationally for her contributions open and distance education and is a strong advocate adoption of open educational resources in Africa.

- Professor Tim Unwin, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation and UNESCO Chair in Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D)
- Professor Olu Jegede, Secretary of the Kogi State Government, Nigeria, former Secretary-General, Association of African Universities, and former Vice Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria
- Professor Vincent Tenebe, Vice Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria (Conference Co-chair)
- Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (Conference Co-chair)

A sponsorship sub-committee is mobilising external funding and selecting deserving participants for subsidies to enable them to attend. The NOUN Local Organising Committee is supporting resource mobilisation nationally and regionally.

Hotels have been identified and a principal hotel close to the ICC has been block-booked at preferential rates for PCF7 organisers and participants.

An online and offline registration system and customer support service is now in place through a contract with a Canadian company.

www.col.org/pcf7

www.pcf7.net