

Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA)

REVISED CONSTITUTION (Proposed February 2023; Updated April 2023)

1. PREAMBLE

We believe that:

- open schooling has the capacity to expand access, to promote equality, to deliver high-quality and effective services, and to reduce the unit costs of education at all levels; and
- when those who are involved in open schooling share their experiences and knowledge, we as a community of practitioners are supported to improve our practice.

2. NAME OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Association shall be called the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association.

The acronym is COMOSA.

The Association will function as a community of practice (CoP).

3. DEFINITIONS

Association: The body established in terms of this document and referred to as the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA).

Chairperson: Meetings are typically called and chaired by COL's Education Specialist for Open Schooling but an alternative chair can be nominated and appointed at any time.

Chapter Chair: The member nominated by members in a given region to facilitate the interests of their COMOSA chapter and typically rotated among the member countries.

Community of Practice: Groups of people who share a concern or passion for open schooling and learn how to engage in this work more effectively because they interact regularly.

Coordinating Committee: The chairs of all COMOSA chapters, the COMOSA webmaster or equivalent and the COL representative.

Member: Any institution or individual who has, on a voluntary basis, registered themselves on COMOSA-Connect.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL): A system of teaching and learning that is characterised by the separation of teacher and learner in time and/or place; uses multiple media to support learning; and involves multiple means for regular two-way communication between learners and peers, learners and teachers, learners and administrators.

Open Schooling (OS): A supplementary or complementary model of schooling which uses a range of flexible approaches, based on open and distance learning methods, to provide structured learning opportunities. OS is used predominantly for out-of-school youths and adolescents so they can complete their schooling and/or gain skills for the workplace. However, OS provision may also extend to school level learning opportunities for adults.

Open School: An institution/entity supporting teaching and learning through open and distance learning. The name can vary depending upon the context. The main identifier is that its method of delivery, its services and the learners it serves differ from the structured mainstream school system in being more open about who can study, when and how.

4. STATUS

- 1) The Association has no legal status.
- 2) The Association is a volunteer association with a flexible structure, as inclusive as possible for those involved in open schooling.

5. VISION AND MISSION

- 1) The VISION STATEMENT of the Association is:
To become a dynamic global community of practitioners/institutions dedicated to the development of open schooling as a means of promoting education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- 2) The MISSION STATEMENT of the Association is:
To be a global community of practitioners/institutions who share their knowledge and experiences for the greater good of open schooling and to improve practice.

6. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to provide a platform for practitioners to learn and improve practice through sharing. The sharing will predominantly but not exclusively be guided by the following objectives:

1) Networking

- a) To provide opportunities for managers and staff from open schools to communicate, meet and interact with one another in order to raise and discuss issues of mutual concern.
- b) To facilitate the exchange of information on current developments in open schooling.
- c) To encourage and support mutual learning from experience.
- d) To strengthen collaboration between open schools around the world.
- e) To facilitate co-operation with other regional and international bodies/institutions.

2) Advocacy

- a) To promote the concept of open schooling and highlight its potential for local, regional, provincial, state and national governments, as well as international bodies.
- b) To work towards popularising this form of education amongst potential participants in countries around the world.
- c) To advocate and lobby for increased participation by open-schooling practitioners in policy making for education at national and international levels.
- d) To highlight the need for national qualifications frameworks and examination systems that can accommodate the particular requirements of open schooling.
- e) To promote mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning and for the accumulation and transfer of credits that will enable those who take part in open schooling to move freely into other forms of education and training or vice versa.
- f) To work towards an international accreditation system for open schooling.

3) Capacity Building

- a) To provide opportunities for continuing professional development and skills upgrading for open schooling practitioners (for example, through workshops, study tours, staff exchanges and/or discussion forums for specialised staff).
- b) To build consensus among open-schooling professionals on ethics, performance standards and elements of best practice.
- c) To build and strengthen the internal capacity of member institutions by providing technical assistance, consultancies, training and other support services.
- d) To provide advice and technical support for new open schools, as well as for existing institutions undergoing a process of restructuring or transformation.

4) Creating and sharing resources

- a) To facilitate the formation of consortia for the acquisition and/or development of shared learning materials and/or programmes.
- b) To establish and promote other initiatives for sharing materials, resources and expertise among the Association's members.
- c) To advise open schools on the availability and use of open educational resources or other learning materials that can be accessed at minimal cost.
- d) To develop and maintain a digital platform for making open information readily available.
- e) To identify and exploit cost-efficient technologies for sharing information

5) Research and Development

- a) To share basic data, the level(s) at which education is provided, details of programmes/courses offered, technologies used and key statistics (e.g., enrolment, number of local study centres, staff complement, assessments/measurements of impact, etc.).
- b) To facilitate the standardisation of definitions and measures (e.g., of student numbers, full-time-equivalent students, drop-out rates, examination pass rates, etc.) so as to assist open schools in determining what data they should collect and to allow for meaningful comparisons between open schools and across jurisdictions.
- c) To design studies for researching aspects of schooling, including (but not limited to) tracer studies to identify the benefits and/or limitations of participation in open schooling.
- d) To build internal capacity within member institutions by facilitating the involvement and participation of their staff in international research projects.

- e) To disseminate the findings of research.

6) Quality Assurance

- a) To develop acceptable standards for the delivery of ODL programmes and to support a code of practice for the Association's members.
- b) To promote the provision of quality support services (e.g., administrative assistance, tutorial guidance, counselling, etc.).
- c) To support the monitoring of these standards by making arrangements for peer reviews, formal audits and international evaluation missions.
- d) To provide quality assurance mechanisms for the international accreditation of open schools.
- e) To take advocacy initiatives to implement these standards in member countries.

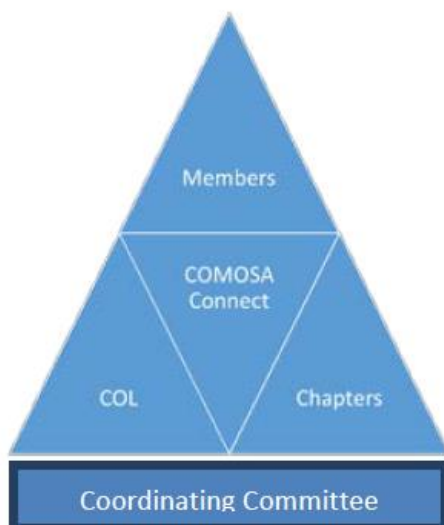
7) Gender Equity

- a) To sensitise members of the Association to gender issues as they relate to open schooling.
- b) To promote gender-responsive approaches and programmes in open schooling.
- c) To encourage and support equal participation by women in the activities of the Association and in its governance structures.
- d) To support development of appropriate Gender Policies.

8) Collaboration

- a) To actively promote and seek collaboration between open schools in a country or region and globally.
- b) To encourage and support collaboration between open schools.

7. STRUCTURE



1. The structure consists of:
 - a. Members
 - b. Chapters based on regions
 - c. COL as service provider
 - d. COMOSA Connect as the communication platform
 - e. the Coordinating Committee (chapter chairs and COL, directing and facilitating the operations of COMOSA)
2. COL will play a coordinating role for the activities of COMOSA.
3. COMOSA Connect will submit to COL an annual status report, which will then be presented at the Coordinating Committee meeting.
4. COL will provide feedback about the Coordinating Committee meeting to all members after the meeting.

8. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION

COMOSA was established for practitioners in open schooling in Commonwealth countries. However, any individual, agency, institution, organisation or other entity, whether governmental or non-governmental, interested in, committed to and/or involved with open schooling can register as a member.

1) Register of Members

A Register of Members of the Association shall be maintained on COMOSA Connect and be available for all members.

2) Termination of Membership

Any member can terminate their membership by deregistering from COMOSA Connect and requesting to be removed from any associated forums.

3) Membership Fees

COMOSA is not a fee-paying organisation.

9. CHAPTERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

- 1) Members will, upon joining, be allocated to one of the following regions, based upon their location:
 - a) Asia
 - b) Pacific
 - c) Canada/Caribbean
 - d) Africa
- 2) COMOSA Connect will provide for members joining from other regions of the world.

- 3) COMOSA acknowledges that there are many differences within regions and that the diversity and richness of all contexts should always be acknowledged and respected.
- 4) Geographical spread and members' needs will determine whether these regions should be adjusted.
- 5) The members of each chapter will establish and maintain a local forum under the leadership of the chapter chair.
- 6) The members of a chapter will select, biennially, a chair for the chapter. An existing chair can be re-elected for another term. COL will facilitate the process. The role of the chair will be to, whenever required, co-ordinate matters that relate to the chapter and represent the chapter on the Coordinating Committee.
- 7) Each chapter will try to have at least one meeting/webinar per calendar year. The agenda and format will be determined by the respective chapter.
- 8) However, chapters are under no obligation to conduct or organise activities unless they themselves decide to do so.
- 9) The chapters aim to continuously stimulate communication on COMOSA Connect.

10. MEETINGS AND DELIBERATIONS

- a) **General Meetings**
The Association does not conduct specific annual general meetings, but it can, at the request of members, collectively decide to arrange a meeting.
- b) **Coordinating Meetings**
The chairs of chapters and a representative of COL constitute the Coordinating Committee. COL will biannually arrange for a virtual meeting of this committee, in July (the start of the new COL financial year) and February (mid-year).
- c) **Chapter Meetings**
Chapters arrange chapters meeting as and when it suits them; however, there should be an attempt to conduct at least one virtual meeting annually.
- d) **Interest Group Meetings**
Any group of members who would like to arrange a meeting representing a special interest group can do so. This can be within or between chapters.
- e) **Annual**
COL, in consultation with the Coordinating Committee and members, will arrange and facilitate an open online forum.

11. OFFICE BEARERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

1) Office Bearers of the Association

The office bearers of the Association shall be the Chapter Chairs, the nominated COL representative and the COMOSA webmaster or equivalent. COL shall be responsible for playing a coordinating and secretariat role.

2) Secretariat

The Coordinating Committee will collectively take responsibility for secretarial matters. COL and COMOSA-Connect will provide required services.

3) Roles and Functions of Nominated Office Bearers

COMOSA does not conduct elections. Office bearers are nominated for the positions they hold by members of the Association and the list of office bearers shall be regularly maintained. In order to develop the community of practice, each office bearer will in turn assume responsibility for leading and chairing the next bi-annual meeting, as indicated in the minutes of the preceding meeting. COL will assist with coordination of this rotation.

a) Chairperson

- I. The current Chairperson shall preside over the relevant Coordinating Committee meetings.
- II. The current Chairperson shall also preside over a general meeting of the Association if such a meeting is called.
- III. The current Chairperson shall, when required, act as the advisor for the Association.
- IV. The current Chairperson shall represent the Association in discussions with external bodies, funders and government agencies.

b) Vice-Chairperson

- I. In the absence of the Chairperson, or when the Chairperson is unavailable for a particular engagement, or if the Chairperson is unable to continue in the post, the COL representative or a Chapter Chair shall perform the duties of the Chairperson.

c) Chapter Chairs shall:

- I. facilitate the process of sharing;
- II. liaise on a regular basis with COMOSA-Connect to provide support with information gathering and sharing;
- III. facilitate the implementation/promotion of good/best practices;
- IV. collect names and email addresses of attendees at events and activities to build the membership of the chapter;
- V. support the collection of information for monitoring and evaluation purposes;
- VI. facilitate and support the collection and storage of copies of presentations, slides and programmes, and the collection of photos and videos of chapter activities; and
- VII. facilitate sharing through discussions and reflections on topical issues that are of interest to the community.

12. FINANCES OF THE ASSOCIATION

- 1) The Association does not have a bank account and does not handle any money.
- 2) If chapters and/or interest groups want to engage in any initiative where the handling of money is required, that chapter/interest group must take full responsibility for how money matters will be dealt with.

13. RECORDS

COL will keep a repository of important documents of the Association.

14. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Any member can suggest a change to the constitution. The change must be supported by five other members.

Suggested changes are submitted to the Coordinating Committee.

Suggested changes are circulated to all members for comment.

Once the Coordinating Committee has considered all the contributions, the members will be asked to vote on the matter.

15. DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

The association will cease to exist if the number of communication messages (sharing) decreases to a point where the communication platform COMOSA-Connect and related social media are closed.

The Coordinating Meeting will, at least two months before the closing of COMOSA-Connect, inform members of the possible closure, to give members the opportunity to rectify the situation.