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Commonwealth Consortium
for Education

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Recording Activities of the Consortium in 2019

May 2020

Commonwealth Consortium for Education
c/o Association of Commonwealth Universities
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www.commonwealtheducation.org

Contents

Foreword.....	3
1. Engagement with Commonwealth Inter-Governmental Organisations	4
2. Advocacy: reflecting on the past and future of Commonwealth co-operation in education	5
3. Outreach and communication	6
4. Representation.....	7
5. Finance	7
6. Membership and administration	8
7. Acknowledgments.....	9
Appendix A: Financial Statement.....	10
Appendix B: Consortium Membership.....	11

Foreword

Making a better future is the natural focus of the energies of communities composed predominantly of young people, as is today's Commonwealth family. When Heads of Government convene for their biennial CHOGMs or ministers of education gather for their conferences, their communiqués are largely directed to future policy and action. These statements provide roadmaps for Commonwealth strategies to deliver the attainment of goals and targets that member countries have set themselves including most notably the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals promulgated through the United Nations.

After 2018 when both CHOGM in London and the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Fiji took place, 2019 was something of a 'fallow' year; a year without fresh political directives, but rather one of follow-up on the previous year's decisions and preparation for the next round of CHOGMs initially scheduled for June 2020 (Rwanda) and 2022, and 21CCEM in Nairobi in March 2021.

It was also a year of 'significant anniversaries' for the Commonwealth, which the Commonwealth Consortium for Education and other accredited bodies played their part in observing. In particular the Commonwealth family marked the 70th Anniversary of the creation of the modern Commonwealth in April 1949. The London Declaration issued at that time ensured India's continuing membership of the Commonwealth after its assumption of republican status, so charting a course that the majority of today's Commonwealth member states subsequently followed.

There were also anniversaries of special significance for members of the Commonwealth education community, marking 60 years from the first Commonwealth Education Conference, held in Oxford in July 1959, and the 30th birthday of the Commonwealth of Learning which opened its doors for business in Vancouver in January 1989. CCfE actively engaged in observing these anniversaries and those of two member organisations who also reached significant milestones: the 60th birthday of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth and the 50th of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council. Our engagement was only partly to acknowledge and celebrate past achievement. It was more for the purpose of reflecting on past trends and experiences, using them to identify future opportunities and better ways to operate in future.

The Oxford Conference in 1959 established the foundations on which much of the subsequent educational co-operation among member countries has rested. It was itself the first in the long series of 20 triennial conferences – eight 'Commonwealth Education Conferences' followed by a dozen 'Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers' – that have provided stimulus and oversight for joint programmes of exchange and collaborative work. These gatherings have expanded in the past twenty years to include parallel events for teachers, students, higher education leaders and civil society and have grown to become – after the Heads of Government Meetings - the largest Commonwealth inter-governmental event. Their shifting locations – so far six in Africa, four in Asia, three in the Caribbean, three in Europe, and two each in Canada and the Pacific – have showcased the unity, diversity and vibrancy of the Commonwealth across its different regions.

Second, the Oxford Conference gave birth to a small professional secretariat to serve as a support and clearing house for collaboration. Oxford Conference participants agreed on the creation of a Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit which early in its existence established itself at Marlborough House and some five years later morphed into the professional education team of the Commonwealth Secretariat created in 1965. It has had a continuing role, under the Secretary-General, as implementers of Ministerial decisions, enablers of exchange of experience and information, providers of expert advice. The team has also been co-ordinator of important new initiatives such as the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (now discontinued), and the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol.

The third major surviving legacy of the Oxford Conference is the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) under which over 35,000 young men and women from every Commonwealth country and dependent territory have been enabled to undertake further and higher studies in another part of the Commonwealth. The Plan has been greatly expanded since its foundation 60 years ago, diversified by the addition of specialised programmes to address particular needs and by the introduction of distance-education options. It has been strengthened more recently by the new Queen Elizabeth Scholarships tenable in middle- and low-income countries. CSFP has brought immeasurable benefit to individual award-holders, to their countries and communities in terms of knowledge and skills needed for development, and to the Commonwealth community through the personal and professional links created.

Unlike the Commonwealth Secretariat whose resource base has in recent years become depleted, more particularly by a fall in voluntary contributions to the Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Commonwealth of Learning has continued to prosper. In 2019 its 30th birthday coincided with the Golden Jubilee of the UK's influential Open University and the two organisations joined together in hosting the 9th Pan Commonwealth Forum for Open and Distant Learning in Edinburgh in September.

The end of 2019 found members of the Commonwealth family turning their attention to the next round of important Commonwealth meetings, aware that in 2020 the global community would be a third of the way through the 15-year effort to attain the goals and targets of the SDG programme agreed in 2015; and even more conscious of the urgency of addressing the threat posed by climate change and the growing inequalities in wealth and human welfare within and between the societies forming the Commonwealth. To meet these challenges in education, the same kind of optimistic vision, commitment and energy that former generations of Commonwealth leaders showed in creating today's arrangements for conducting Commonwealth collaboration in education, will be needed again.

Note: This report is submitted in May 2020 as the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold. The magnitude of its impact on education does not affect our report on activities in 2019, but will play a major role in shaping future activities and priorities across the Commonwealth education community.

1. Engagement with Commonwealth Inter-Governmental Organisations

This was a 'gap year' for those inter-Governmental meetings that provide direction for Commonwealth educational co-operation. Neither CHOGM nor CCEM was scheduled.

Education Ministers Action Group. Since 2015 there have been annual meetings of the Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) to monitor progress with implementing Education Ministers' decisions. The occasion of the UK-hosted Education World Forum held in January in London each year has been found a convenient opportunity for consultations at the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the 2019 meeting of EMAG reviewed initial action taken to follow up the Nadi Declaration (recording the outcomes of 20CCEM in Fiji in February 2018). Consortium representatives were able to meet with Ministers informally on that occasion, and the President through his attendance at the EWF was also able to make numerous contacts with the Education Ministers and other representatives of the twenty Commonwealth countries represented.

Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education. Later in the year, CCfE participated in the two-day meeting at Marlborough House of EMAG's technical working group, the Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education (CADME). The Group convened at Marlborough House on May 28 and 29, under the chairmanship of the Principal Secretary of the Fiji Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts. The main agenda item was discussion of what different partners could contribute to the realisation of the Nadi Declaration and Sustainable Development Goals. The Meeting

also heard oral reports from Kenya on its initial thinking and planning regarding the next Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Nairobi in 2021, and an account from the Permanent Secretary in Malta's Ministry of Education and Employment of that country's impressive programme of education reform.

Ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF9). The Consortium was represented by Peter Williams at this triennial event sponsored by the Commonwealth of Learning and on this occasion co-sponsored by the UK Open University celebrating its 50th birthday. This was the second time that an event in this series had been held in the UK (the previous time was in London in 2008). On this occasion the PCF was held in Edinburgh at the Murrayfield Stadium, September 9-12, with several hundred delegates present. The President of Seychelles HE Danny Faure, himself a former Minister of Education and one-time curriculum officer in the Ministry, gave a Keynote Address. In addition to attending the many interesting plenary sessions, CCfE's President was an active participant in a half day workshop on capacity building and skills development in the Pacific.

Later in the year in November the President of COL, Professor Asha Kanwar, gave the Anniversary Lecture at the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, with Mark Robinson (President of CHEC and CCfE's London Chair) presiding.

Consultation Meeting with Commonwealth Secretariat. The General Meeting held on November 25 (see below) was preceded by a consultation with the Education Team in the Commonwealth Secretariat. Convened in consultation with the Secretariat team, the main item on the agenda concerned progress and priorities in the work programme of the Secretariat in the light of its seriously constrained resource situation, and how Commonwealth organisations could best support activities. The meeting discussed the *Learning for Life* document issued by the Secretariat as a framework for its work programme, and the progress that had been made with implementation of mandates from 20CCEM in Fiji. Members agreed to assemble information that would assist the Secretariat with preparations for the next EMAG meeting in January 2020. Participants also looked ahead to the Rwanda CHOGM (June 2020, Kigali) noting that despite disappointment over the apparent limited scope for discussion of education priorities, the agenda of the Youth Forum might provide room for useful interventions. Preliminary thoughts were exchanged about the shape of 21CCEM to be held in Nairobi in the first half of 2021.

2. Advocacy: reflecting on the past and future of Commonwealth co-operation in education

Given that the Commonwealth Secretariat was mainly focussed on celebrating the broader 70th anniversary of the Commonwealth, it fell largely to the Consortium and the Association of Commonwealth Universities to mark the Commonwealth's achievements in education, 60 years since the Oxford Conference in 1959. The two organisations worked in close consultation, ACU's particular focus being the 60th anniversary of the launch of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (and 10th anniversary of the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships).

At the time of the 50th anniversary of the Oxford Conference in 2009, the *Round Table* (Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs) had devoted a special issue to educational co-operation in the Commonwealth. The present Editor was pleased to respond to the suggestion that the 60th anniversary should be marked in a similar way and our Secretary and President, Beth Kreling and Peter Williams, were invited to be Guest Editors of the volume, published in August under the title *Commonwealth education: adapting to survive* (Round Table, Volume 108 Issue 4). Themes covered by the eight articles submitted by authors from round the Commonwealth included a think-piece on the actual and potential role of the Commonwealth in educational co-operation; the Commonwealth's contribution to shaping the international development goals for education; challenges in ensuring girls' full participation in

education; India's role in south-south co-operation; Commonwealth student mobility and the Scholarship Plan; education co-operation in the Caribbean in the light of regimes theory; future uses of technology in education; education in Commonwealth small states in the context of climate change concerns.

In the editorial by Beth Kreling and Peter Williams, Consortium members will recognise many of the considerations and arguments that have constituted the CCfE's platform for advocacy in recent years. They identify important roles for the Commonwealth in educational co-operation and desirable measures to effect greater impact. Having noted the salience of education in most member countries' domestic agendas, partly due to the youthful age profile of their populations, the place of education in helping to define Commonwealth identity, and the extent of Commonwealth collaborative infrastructure in education, the authors go on to confront the reality that for a variety of reasons education has recently figured low in Commonwealth collective priorities. The proliferation of international mechanisms for educational collaboration has contributed, but the focus of the Commonwealth's more developed member states on promotion of democracy and human rights has been to the exclusion of human development agendas in education and health. A preference for lining up behind the international development agenda rather than playing to the Commonwealth's unique strengths has been an additional factor in blurring the Commonwealth's profile in global educational co-operation; but a combination of declining resources at the disposal of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the stripping back of its education team have seriously eroded Commonwealth capacity in education, which continuing member-country support for COL has only partially offset.

In a final section the two authors indicate a number of measures that might be adopted to realise the potential that the Commonwealth represents. They suggest a redefinition of the agendas to which the Commonwealth applies its energies, focussing more on building fairer and more equal relationships in educational co-operation and enhancing Commonwealth impact by sharpening and improving the instruments at its disposal. These include improvements to Ministerial Conferences (the CCEMs), renewing Secretariat capacity in education, more effective partnership working among Commonwealth agencies, and drawing to a much greater extent on outside expertise through the use of expert groups and the appointment of high-profile 'champions' to marshal support for collaborative programmes and projects.

The volume was launched, appropriately in Oxford, during the biennial Conference on Education and International Development convened by the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) in September. There was a brief launch ceremony at which hospitality was generously funded by The Round Table and Association of Commonwealth Universities, and this was followed by a workshop session attended by a few dozen Conference participants. A number of contributors to the volume including Professors Michael Crossley (University of Bristol), Kenneth King (Edinburgh), Keith Lewin (Sussex) and Pauline Rose (Cambridge) made presentations and these were followed by lively exchanges on the nature and extent of Commonwealth comparative advantage as promoter of international co-operation for educational development.

3. Outreach and communication

The Consortium's role in serving as a clearing house to keep members informed of new developments in Commonwealth educational co-operation, and alerting them to events of interest. is mainly effected through:

Our website at <http://commonwealtheducation.org> managed by the Secretary

Our quarterly Commonwealth Education Calendar of upcoming events of particular Commonwealth relevance in the areas of education, culture and youth. Consortium members and partner organisations use the Calendar as one means of publicising their own meetings and activities. The Calendar is prepared

by the Hon President and in 2019 there were issues in January, April, July and October; with special updates in September and November 2019. All issues are updated on the Consortium website for ongoing access.

Supplementary email alerts from time to time draw members' attention to information received from the Commonwealth Secretariat and others about matters requiring action, or of likely interest and concern.

Publications. The only new publication of note in 2019 was the special issue of *The Round Table* to which reference has been made in Section 2 above.

4. Representation

As an organisation officially accredited to the Commonwealth the Consortium engages fully in Commonwealth collective gatherings and ceremonies, such as those organised in London on Commonwealth Day, and the observance in 2019 of the 70th anniversary of the Commonwealth; as well as in Commonwealth business and consultative meetings. In October it attended the Secretary General's dialogue at Marlborough House.

Steps were taken in 2019 to regularise the Informal Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO), which represents a common platform for co-operation among Commonwealth-accredited civil-society organisations. Consortium representatives played an active part in the drafting of a constitution for the Forum setting out aims objectives and procedures and, with the approval of the membership, CCfE became one of the founder members of IFCO. It was regularly represented at the quarterly consultation meetings and contributed to the initial drafting of IFCO submissions being prepared for CHOGM 2020 in Rwanda.

Whenever possible, the Consortium is represented by its officers at gatherings organised by CCfE members. In 2019 these included special occasions to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council in November and a Reception in December 2019 organised by the Association of Commonwealth Universities at the Cyprus High Commission to mark the 60th anniversary of the creation of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan in 1959. Special lectures were organised in December by the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management, and by the Council for Education in the Commonwealth.

More direct involvement by officers in executive operations of Commonwealth civil-society bodies included:

Mark Robinson: Chair, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC); Trustee, Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC); Treasurer, The Round Table.

Beth Kreling: Editorial Board Member, The Round Table

Peter Williams: Secretary, Council for Education in the Commonwealth Support Group for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, on which Mark Robinson and Beth Kreling also serve, involving close engagement with the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Commonwealth Scholarship Commission.

5. Finance

A financial statement covering 2019 and earlier years for comparison, is attached to this report at Appendix A. This shows that the Consortium's balance increased by £801 from £12,190 to £12,991.

The Consortium's operational expenditure was kept at a low level (£299), the decrease as compared with 2018 reflecting lower outlays on website development. The modest level of 2019 spending reflects the

absence of any major meeting abroad requiring representation as well as the Consortium's continuing reliance on voluntary labour from its officers, so having to meet only the actual cash expenses incurred.

Subscription payments (as distinct from sums due) were only about half the level in 2018, as reflected in the highish figure (£843) under 'debtors'. It was confidently expected that the outstanding sums would be largely recouped in 2020 as some subscription payments were in process at the end of 2019 and there was agreement in a number of other cases that members would pay their 2019 subscription with their 2020 dues.

The Consortium continues to hold its account with the Unity Trust Bank, the account being operated on a day to day basis by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, as Treasurers.

6. Membership and administration

Following up on the General Meeting of the Consortium held in 2015 the successor event required by the Constitution would normally have been held at the time of CCEM in Fiji in 2018; but it had been postponed in recognition of the fact that few members had been able to be directly represented at 20CCEM. The Meeting was held instead on November 25 2019 at Marlborough House and confirmed (in accordance with the Constitution's requirement) members' unanimous agreement on the value of the CCfE's continued existence for at least the next three years. In addition to its regular business of receiving and discussing reports on membership and finance, and confirming officer appointments, the meeting received an oral report from the Commonwealth Foundation on those of its programmes that had the closest bearing on education.

The Consortium continued to enjoy accredited status with the Commonwealth.

Membership

Eighteen organisations (17 full members and one associate) were in membership of the Consortium – see Appendix B. In addition, the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth of Learning and Commonwealth Foundation enjoy 'special member' status.

The Consortium was pleased to welcome into membership the Commonwealth Education Trust. The Trust's predecessor body, the Commonwealth Institute, had been a founding member of the Consortium from 2001 until the Institute was closed and its assets passed to the Trust.

The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council was removed from the list of associate members reflecting its complete absorption into the Royal Commonwealth Society, itself already in membership of CCfE.

The majority of the members (13 out of 18) had their current headquarters in the United Kingdom, but several have branches or corporate/individual members spread across Commonwealth regions. The Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) and Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM) both rotate their organisational base triennially according to the location of current officers. ACLALS moved its base at the end of the year from the South Pacific to Canada, while the Secretariat of CCEAM moved from Australia to North America. The Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) operates out of Canada. The Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics and Technical Universities in Africa (CAPA) which in 2019 broadened its constituency from Commonwealth Africa to the whole of Africa and consequently rebranded itself as the Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa (ATUPA) is based in Kenya. The convenor of the Commonwealth Teachers Group is based in South Africa

Officers

Chair. Professor Colin Power, based in Australia, remained as Consortium Chair. The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) continued to provide the London Chair (Alternate Chair) in the person of Mark Robinson, who is also a Trustee of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth. He presided over the November General Meeting on behalf of Professor Power.

Treasurer. The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) filled the role of Treasurer through its Secretary-General, Dr Joanna Newman, with ACU's Chief Finance Officer, Revd Keith Stephenson, - succeeded in May 2019 by Catherine Harrison - managing the Consortium's finances on a day-to-day basis.

Secretary. Beth Kreling, a member of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth.

7. Acknowledgments

The Consortium records its appreciation to all those of its members, officers and other partners who contributed in important ways to its work in 2019 and earlier. We single out for special mention:

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) which handled our financial administration (through Joanna Newman, Keith Stephenson - see also below - and Caroline Harrison/Michael Gushman) and provided the Consortium with its mailing address. ACU's Head of Strategic Partnerships, Faye Taylor worked closely with us on activities to mark the 60th anniversary of Commonwealth educational co-operation.

The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council which supplied our Alternate Chair, Mark Robinson.

The Commonwealth of Learning which generously waived the attendance fee for the Consortium's representative at the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Edinburgh in September.

The Commonwealth Secretariat through whom our accredited status with the Commonwealth afforded us opportunities to participate in policy-making and professional dialogues and enabled us to use accommodation in Marlborough House for our own meetings, as well as opportunities to engage and consult on planned education initiatives and priorities. Our main contacts were with the Education team in the Social Development Policy Unit headed by Layne Robinson, and regular communication was also maintained with Jamie Wiles and her successor Catherine Muir in the Secretariat's Partnerships Team.

The Council for Education in the Commonwealth from whose membership the Consortium's secretariat (Beth Kreling) was drawn.

The UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) for accommodating a workshop session on Commonwealth educational co-operation in its Conference Programme in Oxford in September and to Sarah Jeffrey, its Programme Manager for her assistance with the logistics involved.

Among the many individuals who have contributed to its work The Consortium pays particular tribute to *Keith Stephenson* who retired from his post as Chief Finance Officer at the Association of Commonwealth Universities in April 2019. Ever since March 2008 in that capacity, and previously as Director of Finance and Resources, Keith supported his Secretary-General (initially John Tarrant, then John Wood and latterly Joanna Newman) in their capacity as Consortium Hon. Treasurer by carrying out all the 'donkey work' involved in managing our finances and preparing annual statements of account for the Annual Report. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with Keith who has been unfailingly generous with his time and meticulous as to detail and the following of correct procedures. The Consortium and its members are indebted to him for his contribution to our work and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Appendix A: Financial Statement

Commonwealth Consortium for Education: Income and Expenditure In 2019 and Earlier Years

	2019	2018	2017	2016
	£	£	£	£
INCOME				
Subscriptions from members and associate members - current year	1,100.00	1,100.00	1,025.00	950.00
- earlier years		75.00		
	1,100.00	1,175.00	1,025.00	950.00
EXPENDITURE				
<i>Administrative Costs</i>	298.84	491.12	668.88	507.51
Honorary Secretary's expenses		-		
Bank charges	74.00	84.68	72.00	36.00
Other Officers' expenses & Cost of Meetings	167.43	216.46	569.90	381.51
Website	57.41	189.98	26.98	90.00
<i>CCfE Representation at Commonwealth Conferences</i>		154.97		
CCEM (Fiji 2018)		92.57		
CHOGM (London 2018)		62.40		
<i>Project activities</i>		5,111.00		
Consultancy Report on future of Commonwealth educational co-operation		5,111.00		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE IN THE YEAR	298.84	5,757.09	668.88	507.51
NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	801.16	(4,582.09)	356.12	442.49
Balance brought forward at 1 January	12,189.90	16,771.99	16,415.87	15,973.38
BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD at 31 December	12,991.06	12,189.90	16,771.99	16,415.87
Represented by:				
Cash at bank – Unity Bank	12,237.25	12,035.60	16,853.02	16,619.27
Debtors:	843.23	300.00	300.00	
Creditors: creditors / unrepresented cheques	(39.42)	(145.70)	(381.03)	(185.40)
Creditors: Subscription in advance	(50.00)			
	12,991.06	12,189.90	16,771.99	16,433.87

Appendix B: Consortium Membership

Consortium Members and Officers in 2019

Members

(17 Members and one Associate Members = 18)

ACEAB	- Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies	www.aceab.org
ACLALS	- Association of Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies	www.aclals.org
ACU	- Association of Commonwealth Universities	www.acu.uk
BUILD	- Building Understanding through International Links for Development	www.build.org.uk
CAM	- Commonwealth Association of Museums	www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam/
CAPA/ATUPA	- Commonwealth Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa	www.capa-sec.org
CASTME	- Commonwealth Association of Science, Mathematics and Technology Teachers	www.castme.org
CCEAM	- Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management	www.cceam.org
CEC	- Council for Education in the Commonwealth	www.cecomm.org.uk
CET	- Commonwealth Education Trust	www.commonwealth.org.uk
CGEF	- Commonwealth Girls Education Fund	www.cgefund.org
CHEC	- Commonwealth Human Ecology Council	www.checininternational.org
CLEA	- Commonwealth Legal Education Association	www.clea-web.com
CSA	- Commonwealth Students Association	www.commonwealthstudents.org
CTG	- Commonwealth Teachers Group	email: s.garg@nut.org.uk
ESU	- The English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth	www.esu.org
RCS	- Royal Commonwealth Society	www.rcsint.org
ROSL+	- Royal Over-Seas League	www.rosl.org.uk

Special Members (3)

CF	- Commonwealth Foundation
COL	- Commonwealth of Learning
COMSEC	- Commonwealth Secretariat

+ Denotes Associate Member of the Consortium

Officers

<i>Chairperson:</i>	Professor Colin Power AM
<i>Alternate Chair:</i>	Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (Mark Robinson)
<i>Hon Treasurer:</i>	Association of Commonwealth Universities (Dr Joanna Newman, assisted by Rev. Keith Stephenson and Caroline Harrison)
<i>Hon Secretary:</i>	Council for Education in the Commonwealth (Beth Kreling)
<i>Hon President:</i>	Peter Williams OBE