

## 1 ORIGINS AND MANDATE

1 We were invited by the Commonwealth Secretary-General to serve as a working group with the following terms of reference:

(a) To consider and make recommendations about appropriate arrangements for the creation of a Commonwealth institution to promote co-operation in distance education, in accordance with the decisions of Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Vancouver in October 1987.

(b) To report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General by 30 June 1988.

2 These terms of reference in turn reflect the decisions made by Heads of Government, meeting in Vancouver in 1987. They commended the Briggs report Towards a Commonwealth of Learning and in its light 'agreed to create a Commonwealth institution to promote co-operation in distance education, which may become the University of the Commonwealth for co-operation in distance education'; they also endorsed in principle a Canadian proposal for a university and college network for distance education, with a headquarters in Vancouver and units in other parts of the Commonwealth. Heads of Government requested the establishment of a Working Group 'to develop the financial and organisational framework, establish appropriate guidelines and set priorities for the institution with a view to ensuring the relevance of programmes and the appropriateness of educational technologies to countries' particular situations and needs'. In the light of this our report recommends priorities and an organisational structure in the context of the purposes and functions set out in Section 2 below. We consider organisation both in Section 3 on structure and in Section 4 on governance, and we look at its implications for staffing in Section 5 and for accommodation and services in Section 6. We examine priorities in relation to programme activities in Section 7 and examine appropriate technologies both in that section and in Section 8 on implementation. The financial framework appears in Section 9.

3 In response to our mandate we have met twice in London and established a planning sub-committee which met in Vancouver and Milton Keynes in order to expedite work between our meetings.

## 2 PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS

4 Our recommendations are directed towards the establishment of a Commonwealth institution to promote co-operation in distance education as called for by Heads of Government. The institution will help Commonwealth countries to develop in a cost-effective way their facilities for distance learning in order to enhance educational opportunity as a means of assisting their social and economic development, particularly human resource development, and will strengthen their key institutions. The arrangements will depend for their success on tapping the experience and expertise of educational bodies throughout the Commonwealth but will in turn contribute to their institutional development. Our concern is with the widest range of post-school-age learners and our recommendations are to select from the widest range of communication technologies, from the simplest to the most sophisticated, taking account of cost, of convenience for learners, and of the