

## UNIVERSITY OF LONDON EXTERNAL SYSTEM

18 April 08

### **Witness seminar in UK: Legacy of the University of London External Degrees in the Commonwealth**

Date and venue: The witness seminar will take place on Monday 14th July 2-3.30 pm Logan Hall, at the Institute of Education., Russell Square as part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan Commonwealth Forum which is being hosted by the University of London in 2008

### **Theme: Legacy of the University of London External Degrees in the Commonwealth.**

There would be approximately 12 participants who would participate in a discussion chaired by Professor Robert Holland from the Institute of Commonwealth Studies and facilitated by Michael Kandiah, Director of Witness Seminar Programme Institute of Historical Studies.

The witness seminar would focus on expansion of institutions of Higher Education in the Commonwealth, the association (including 'Special Relations') with the University London, and its enduring legacy.

The group would reflect on how national policy in relation to HE was developed – and whether UOL contribution reinforced elitist education or widened participation.

The 'legacy' is not only in the form of the University of London's graduates who permeate every tier of civil society and government across the Commonwealth, but in the way that university extension has become part of the way that universities continue to form and attempt to widen access.

The intention is to arrange the seminar with a chronological focus, with the period before 1970 being followed by more recent developments. Seminar presentations will be followed by open discussion in which all participants may reflect on the critical themes and their resonance today and for the future.

### **Background**

Since its founding in 1986, the Centre for Contemporary British History, has been uniquely associated with the production of 'witness seminars' on events or developments which have taken place within the bounds of living memory.

These exercises in oral history involve asking key participants to meet around the seminar table to discuss and debate the issues surrounding the chosen topic as they remember them. Witness seminars thus operate as group interviews, chaired by a senior academic, which are taped and transcribed primarily for the use of researchers.

The CCBH witness seminars are widely regarded as among the most useful and innovative forms of oral history. They often prove to be of more value than one-on-one

interviews because of the interaction between witnesses stimulated during these discussions.