



GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION TO THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (ACTT)

Organisation of Guidelines

These guidelines are organised into six (6) sections to enable ease of understanding. The sections are:

1. Purpose and scope
 - a. This identifies the rationale for the guidelines and provides references to the key legislation that governs ACTT and its processes.
2. Definitions
 - a. This explains any new or not commonly used terms introduced in these guidelines and in the criteria.
3. Goals, expectations and pillars of ACTT's registration process
 - a. This explains the goals, expectations and pillars of the registration process. This section provides clarification of the criteria and the expected outcomes for an institution applying the criteria to its operations.
4. General information
 - a. This provides information on:
 - i. What constitutes an application for registration?
 - ii. How to submit and re-submit an application for registration?
 - iii. The resources and support services available to assist institutions.
 - iv. How to communicate with ACTT prior to, and during, the processing of the application for registration.
5. Requirements for submission
 - a. This section identifies the requirements for an application to be accepted by ACTT.
 - b. Provides a suggested format and style for submitting applications to ACTT.
6. Understanding the criteria
 - a. This provides guidance on the documentation requirements and identifies the benefits to be derived by institutions/providers applying the criteria for registration.

1.0 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist post-secondary and tertiary institutions to prepare acceptable applications for registration with ACTT. ACTT acknowledges its responsibility to assist institutions and create an enabling environment for all post-secondary and tertiary institutions to become registered.

These guidelines are prepared following ACTT's criteria and process for registration and will assist post-secondary and tertiary institutions and providers to comply with requirements under Chapter 39:06. The aim of registration is to certify that minimum requirements are met for the operation as a post-secondary institution/provider in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.0 Definitions

1. Award is any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of competence or achievement.
2. Continuous improvement sometimes called continual improvement. The ongoing improvement of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough interventions.
3. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a philosophy and attitude for analysing capabilities and processes and improving them repeatedly to achieve customer satisfaction.
4. Course is a defined body of knowledge, skills and aptitudes acquired over a specified period and to which one or more credits may be awarded.
5. Criteria are distinct and discrete statements that identify or define in verifiable terms the attributes of institutions to be registered by ACTT.
6. Criterion Statement is an overall description of the requirements of the criterion.

7. Curriculum is the planned interaction of students with instructional content, materials, resources, and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives.
8. Examples of Evidence will include examples of tangible evidence that an institution may provide to prove that the standards have been achieved.
9. Executive Head is a person who has executive authority over an institution for provision of educational services or the person who officially directs and controls the institution/provision at the executive level.
10. Narrative is an evaluative account that shows how the evidence provided satisfies the requirements of the respective standard.
11. Programme means an curriculum composed of a series of courses leading to an award such as a certificate, diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral degree.
12. Programme approval (External) ACTT undertakes programme approval at the request of institutions seeking external validation of the quality of their programmes.
13. Programme approvals (Internal) refers to the quality assurance process through which an institution/provider is satisfied that academic programmes are properly designed, structured and resourced, are consistent with the institution's mission and have learning outcomes that are set at an appropriate level.
14. Programme Monitoring is a process of continuously evaluating a programme to ensure it remains effective, and that improvements are made.
15. Programme Review is a comprehensive evaluation of a programme, towards the end of its period of approval. It is similar to initial approval in many respects but, because it is concerned with a programme that is already in operation, it can take into account actual student performance, as well as feedback from students, from staff teaching the programme, and from employers who have recruited graduates from the programme. Self-assessment is central to the programme review process.
16. Programme specification is a comprehensive yet concise description of the intended learning outcomes from a tertiary level programme and of the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated.
17. Quality Management System (QMS) is a formalised system to direct, control and improve the institution's quality of teaching, services and other offerings.
18. Quality Plan is any document setting out specific quality practices, resources and the sequence of activities to ensure the effectiveness of a particular service, course or programme.

NOTE: A programme specification is an example of a quality plan for the teaching and learning process.
19. Quality Policy refers to the institution's/provider's overall educational philosophy, purpose, goals and objectives regarding quality as formally expressed by top management.

NOTE: The quality policy typically contains a pledge/commitment to satisfy stakeholders' needs while, continually improving the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes and/or services. It also communicates how the organisation defines quality and excellence and indicates how quality and excellence will be achieved and measured.
20. Registration is the process whereby an institution/provider has its QMS evaluated to determine whether its QMS meets the minimum requirements of established criteria and standards (*for registration*). It leads to

authority to conduct business (operate) as a post-secondary or tertiary institution/provider in Trinidad and Tobago when the minimum requirement defined in the criteria for registration are met.

21. Review (management) is a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the programmes and operations of the institution. It involves analysis and evaluation of the quality policy, internal quality audits and evaluations, documented systems, results and improvement programmes (including those based on customer feedback) and any other focal areas that are critical to the institution's mission, vision and stated purposes. Review (management) should establish corrective and preventive actions for identified or potential problems.
22. Standards are statements that identify the conditions that are necessary for an objective evaluation of the extent to which an institution meets each criterion.
23. Supporting documents include copies of policies, procedures, processes and records which show evidence of the information given in the narrative.
24. Teaching-Learning process refers to all activities that an institution/provider undertakes to ensure that learning takes place. These include, but are not limited to, different stages of instructional design, development, delivery, evaluation as well as support services, resource allocation and programme review.

3.0 Goals, expectations and pillars of ACTT's registration process

ACTT expects every institution and provider operating in T&T to demonstrate that it has a defined QMS that is consistent with ACTT's seven criteria for registration. Registration establishes a formal, legitimate and recognised relationship between the ACTT and an institution or provider operating in

Trinidad and Tobago and is the first step towards accreditation of institutions and programmes and the recognition of qualifications and awards.

The criteria for registration refers to 7 criteria consisting of 7 criterion statements and 22 standards. Each criterion reflects a principle of sound educational management. Each criterion statement translates these principles and norms into statements of expected practice and each standard makes explicit the conditions necessary to meet the requirements of the criterion statement. Fulfilment of the criteria proves that an institution or provider has an interconnected, interrelated, integrated and interactive system of management, as such, ACTT's standards are not evaluated in isolation but are reviewed in a holistic manner.

The examples of evidence listed in the standard are not exhaustive but illustrations of typical sources of evidence that can be provided. Submission of all the examples listed does **not** guarantee a successful evaluation. All evaluations are conducted in the context of the distinct vision, mission and stated purpose of the institution. See figure 1.1

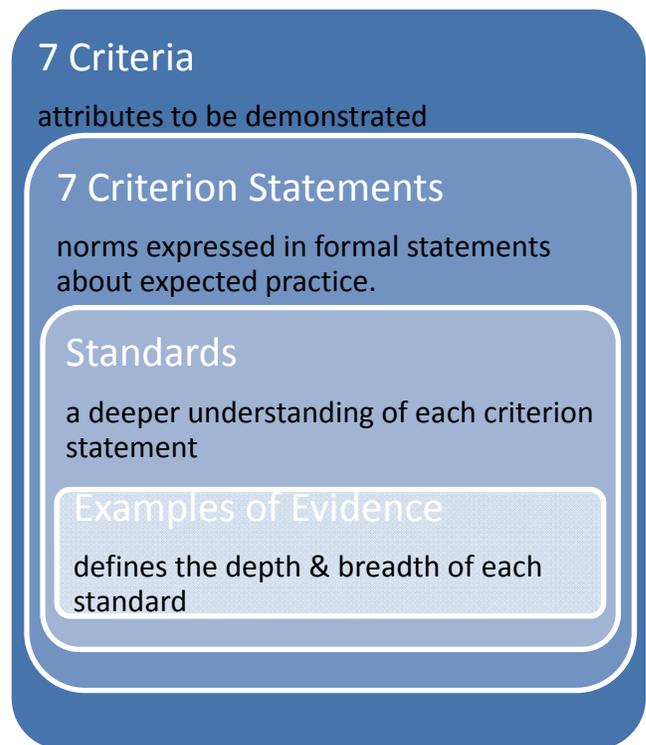


Figure 1.1 Structure of ACTT's criteria for registration



ACTT also expects that by applying the criteria for registration an institution/provider will become:

1. Future focussed

The institution/provider is committed to realising its vision and demonstrating agility in adapting to the inevitability of change by continually improving its readiness for the future.

2. Learning-centred

Realising that learning-centred processes which emphasise student characteristics, learning styles and needs are most critical to adding value to an educational provision; the institution/provider will commit to continually planning, monitoring and improving the effectiveness of its teaching and learning process to better serve the student population.

3. Integrated

Realising that all its systems, process and services are interdependent, the institution/provider will commit to a system approach to managing, thus taking a more holistic view of the institution.

4. Distinctive

Realising its unique and identifiable character, the institution represents itself based on its own distinct vision, mission and stated purpose.

5. Accountable

Realising that transparency and integrity are critical to the ongoing health of the institution/provider, the institution/provider commits to internal and external review of its operations.

6. Outcome oriented

The institution/provider will become results-oriented through better planning, monitoring and enhancement of its programmes and services to achieve the desired outcomes or results.

4.0 General Information

4.1 How is the registration process initiated?

1. The institution/provider submits a Letter of Intent to become registered as a post-secondary institution/provider. The letter must indicate:
 - a. name of the institution/provider
 - b. address(es) of the institution/provider
 - c. scope of the institution's/provider's offerings, (i.e. the levels and types of qualifications offered)
 - d. number of sites and or campuses that the institution/provider wishes to have registered.

NOTE: The Letter of Intent must be signed by the Executive Head of the institution/provider. Each site is evaluated separately for registration.

2. The institution/provider completes the Institutional Data Form (IDF), signed by the Executive Head of the institution/provider that was sent to the institution/provider by ACTT.

4.2 What comprises an application for registration?

An application for registration with ACTT comprises the following:

1. The completed registration application form
2. A narrative for each standard describing the quality practices of the institution/provider in relation to the specific standard for registration.
3. Evidence or supporting documentation that verifies the practices identified in the narrative.
4. A list of supporting documents submitted in the appendix or the main body of the submission correctly cross-referenced with evidence submitted for other standards, appendices, websites, etc.
5. A soft copy of the narratives provided for the Criteria for Registration in Microsoft Word on Compact Disk (CD).



6. Payment of the Application Processing Fee

NOTE: An application for registration is only deemed to be complete when all six requirements above have been met. Applications that fail to meet the requirements of this section will not be accepted.

4.3 How do I submit an application?

Applications for registration should be addressed to:

Executive Director,
The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago,
Level 3 Building B, ALGICO Plaza,
#91-93 St Vincent Street, Port of Spain.

4.4 What resources and support does ACTT provide to post-secondary and tertiary institutions to help them prepare for registration?

1. Registration Form
 - a. The registration form requires the institution/provider to provide preliminary biographical data on the institution.
2. Criteria for Registration and FAQs
 - a. The criteria for registration is the key resource for institutions and providers. The criteria, criteria statements, standards, and examples of evidence for registration are documented in this publication. The FAQs provide answers to general questions about the registration system, process, and criteria.

NOTE: Institutions/providers are advised to review these documents thoroughly before preparing a submission.

3. ACTT's website www.actt.org.tt

- a. Institutions/providers may utilise this electronic medium to contact the Council and access information on its processes and services.

4. ACTT Staff - Quality Assurance, Registration, Accreditation & Quality Enhancement

- a. Support is available through ACTT's staff to assist institutions/providers with their application.
- b. Having received a non-compliance report on a gap analysis for registration, quality enhancement support will be provided to direct or guide the institution/provider in meeting ACTT's requirements.

4.5 Communicating with ACTT while an application for registration is being processed

Once an application has been submitted an institution/provider should direct all queries to the Quality Enhancement Officer and should refrain from contacting the Quality Assurance Unit during the time the application is being processed.

When the Gap Analysis Report is completed, the institution/provider will be notified about the outcome of the evaluation.

4.6 How long does an application take to be processed?

The cycle time for processing an application is dependent on the quality, appropriateness and adequacy of the submission and the evidence to support the claim for registration. However, the projected timeline for processing an application that satisfies these guidelines is a minimum of four (4) months.

5.0 Requirements for submission of an application for registration

5.1 Presentation and Style requirements

- Provide a background and other information relevant to the institution's/provider's purpose vision, mission, context and priorities

- Avoid over elaboration and exaggeration of quality practices.
- Use letters or numbers (a, b, c or 1, 2, 3) to identify each statement, bullets or roman numerals can be used for sub statements.
- Do not contradict or present inconsistent evidence to support criteria. This includes different versions of the same document in different sections of the application.
- One form of evidence may be used for the fulfilment of multiple standards. In such cases, only submit one copy of the evidence and properly cross-reference to relevant standards.
- Ensure evidence is relevant to standard.
- Use a polite, professional and positive tone.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms except if previously defined.
- Submission should be in triplicate and securely fastened using three-ring binders.
- Ensure all copies are identical.
- Use separator sheets with tabs to identify sections.
- Use double-sided option when printing and/or copying.
- Line spacing should be 1.5

5.2 Evidence requirements

1. Include only information and evidence that deal directly with the registration issues related to the specific criterion and standards. Evidence must be relevant and important to the institution/provider and will support an effective evaluation of the fulfilment of the standards.
2. It may or may not be necessary to submit copies of entire documents such as:
 - a. bye-laws
 - b. student handbook
 - c. quality manual
 - d. evaluation (internal/external) reports

NOTE: In some cases the relevant information can be summarised or it may be necessary to submit only copies of the relevant pages that provide the evidence to satisfy a particular standard. Documents should be

made available for verification and evaluation at the time of the site visit.

NOTE: Institutions/providers can also provide electronic evidence or can e-reference their narrative to the institution's website or a secure portal that has been created for the purpose of demonstrating that the requirements for registration are in place.

5.3 Format requirements

1. Organise submission according to the criteria and standards for registration.
2. The narrative should clearly identify how the standards are met by the institution/provider.
3. The following is a suggested format. Institutions/providers **may modify** format or layout based on preferences and style. However, the submission should provide all relevant information to justify the claim for registration.
 - a. Table of Contents
 - b. Introduction and Background of Institution/Provider
 - I. Provide a brief history of the institution/provider
 - c. Fulfilment of criteria and standards

Criterion 1.0 Legal, Policy and Regulatory Requirements

Criterion Statement: The institution's activities comply with legal, policy and regulatory requirements

Standard 1.1: The institution has been established as a legal entity.

For each Standard the institution/provider will have to provide:

I. Narrative

The Narrative is an evaluative account of the institution's/provider's practice and explains how the evidence provided satisfies the requirements of the respective standard.

II. Evidence

- *must be relevant to the institution/provider*
- *must be directly related to the specific standard*



- *must support an effective evaluation of the fulfilment of the standard*
- *includes but is not limited to: copies of legal documents, policies, procedures, plans, tables, forms, minutes of meetings, published materials that provide evidence of existence of the institution's/provider's practice and that will be available for inspection by ACTT's evaluators which will enable them to determine compliance with the relevant standard*

III. Appendix

- *is a compilation of evidence for each standard as referenced in the narrative by letters, numbers, Roman numerals, unique codes, etc.*

Standard 1.2: The institution demonstrates the ownership of, and responsibility for, assuring access to the learning facilities that support and facilitate the learning expected of its students.

I. Narrative

II. Evidence in Appendix

Criterion 2.0 Governance and Administration

Criterion Statement: The corporate governance body and management actively show their commitment to achieving the development and continual improvement of the Quality Management System.

Standard 2.1: Institution has a governance structure.

I. Narrative

II. Evidence in Appendix

Repeat for all other criteria

- d. List of documents submitted by the institution/provider

NOTE: If the content evidence format defined in this section for the submission of applications for registration has not been met, the application will not be processed by the Council.

5.5 Resubmitting an application

- An institution/provider is required to resubmit evidence to satisfy the standards for registration that it has failed to satisfy in its first application.
- An institution/provider is required to resubmit evidence in all areas identified as requiring follow-up in the Gap Analysis Report.
- Re-submissions are to be addressed to the Executive Director following the requirement of submitting an application to the Council.

NOTE: Institutions/providers are urged not to hastily re-submit an application without careful consideration of the Gap Analysis Report.

6.0 Understanding the criteria - Introduction

ACTT firmly believes that adoption of the registration criteria will benefit institutions/providers by providing:

1. a structured and systemic framework for the planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement of quality
2. basic guidance on quality assurance in higher education for institutions/providers
3. benchmark criteria for new institutions/providers
4. independent third party assurance that basic standards are met and are in place for sound educational management and provision.

6.1 Understanding the criteria - Documentation Requirements

The following items must be documented for an institution or provider to successfully demonstrate that it meets the criteria for registration. The institution must have documented:

1. vision and mission statement
2. quality policy

3. student policies to ensure quality services are provided
4. policies or procedures for resource management
5. procedure for maintaining infrastructure
6. quality plan for the teaching and learning process
7. programme specifications for **all** programmes whether local or foreign award
8. policies to support the teaching and learning process method/process for monitoring student learning outcomes
9. process for handling non-compliances to established criteria and standards for registration

NOTE: If these policies or equivalent documents are not submitted, the institution/provider will not be able to demonstrate fulfilment of the criteria.

6.2 Understanding the criteria - Other Requirements

The following items must also be clearly demonstrated in an institution's/provider's application in order to successfully satisfy registration requirements. The institution/provider must demonstrate that it:

1. is compliant with the laws of Trinidad and Tobago
2. has a structure with defined roles and responsibilities to ensure sound academic and corporate management.
3. has appropriate, sufficient and adequate resources with sound mechanisms to allocate and manage those resources.
4. has a system implemented to evaluate, plan and improve its teaching-learning process.
5. has a system to monitor and review its systems and stakeholder satisfaction.