ACTT

The Accreditation Council
of Trinidad and Tobago
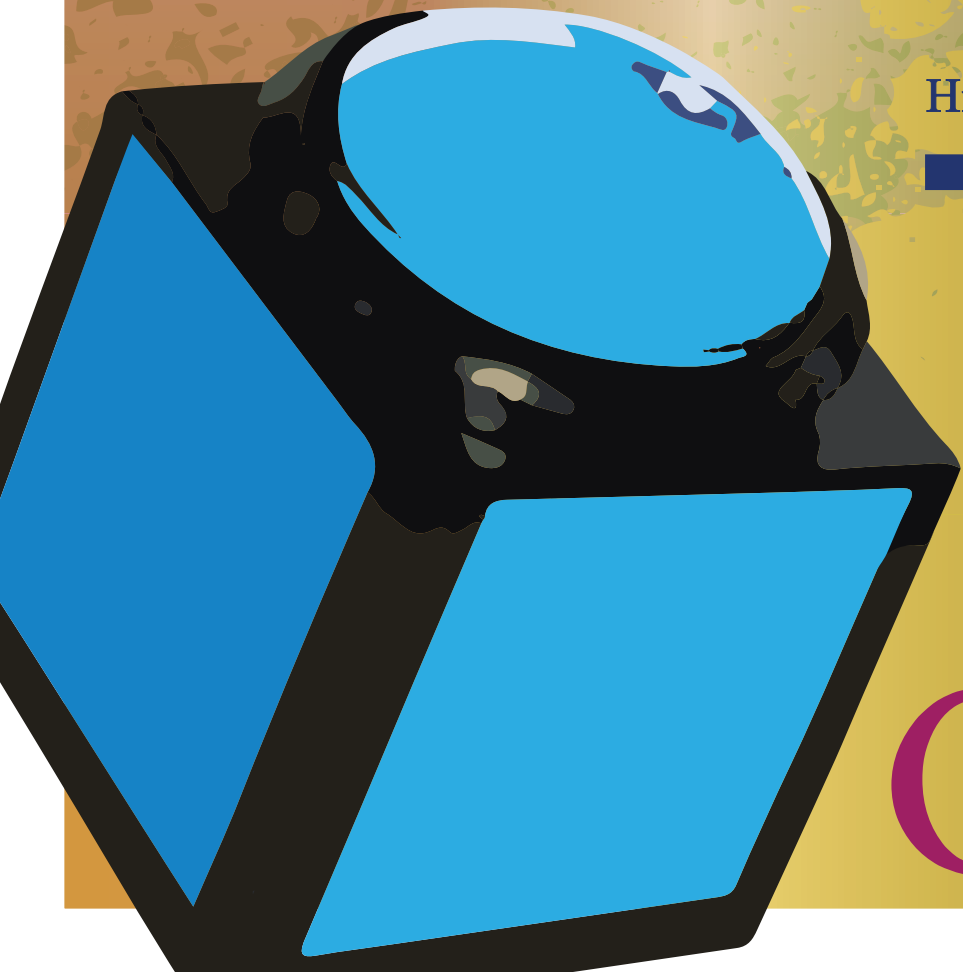
5th
Annual National
QUIZ
on Quality Assurance in
Higher Education and Training
— 2017 —

Study
Guide

Contents

Preface

Overview and Purpose

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) is the regulatory body established by Chapter 39:06 (the Act) to quality assure post secondary and tertiary level education institutions programmes and awards in Trinidad and Tobago. One of ACTT's goals is to increase public awareness of its services. This is done through the education of all stakeholders – especially secondary, post secondary and tertiary level students, their parents, and teachers – on the importance of quality assurance in higher education.

ACTT has an important role to play to ensure that students in Trinidad and Tobago have access to high-quality education. ACTT believes that early exposure to higher education issues will assist students in making informed decisions on their education. Therefore, ACTT has introduced the National Quiz, now in its fourth year, for secondary school students. ACTT anticipates that the National Quiz will have a positive impact on the lives of secondary school students, the future leaders of the nation, and other stakeholders.

Aims

- To increase awareness among students and other stakeholders of the importance and benefits of quality assurance in higher education and the role of ACTT as the regulatory body in Trinidad and Tobago for the quality assurance of post secondary and tertiary education
- To highlight the contribution of quality higher education in developing the national workforce to perform at or beyond international standards

Outcomes

- Students and other stakeholders will be more knowledgeable about the benefits of quality assurance to the higher education sector and the country
- Secondary school students will be inspired to make informed choices when selecting quality higher education institutions and programmes of study
- Students and other stakeholders will be more knowledgeable about ACTT's key services and its contribution to national development

ACTT has developed this Study Guide, which provides details on quality assurance in higher education in Trinidad and Tobago and includes information on ACTT's role and functions. Students, teachers, and coaches are encouraged to utilise this Study Guide, as well as ACTT's website, www.actt.org.tt, to prepare for the National Quiz

How to use this Book: A Note

Thank you for your continued feedback on our National Quiz Study Guide over the past four (4) years! You help us improve this resource with each Quiz – and this time is no different.

The Study Guide is divided into eight (8) main chapters. All topics contained within these chapters will be tested.

A major change to this iteration is the elimination of the Glossary at the back of the Study Guide. Important terms are now highlighted in pink throughout the book instead, with helpful definitions in the side column. These definitions are meant to assist you to better understand the content.

We have also introduced a mini-competition to include more students in the Quiz fun! At the back of the Guide, you will find a fun activity for each team member to share with a fellow student at school, along with guidelines on how to enter.

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CHAPTER

About ACTT

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (ACTT) & HISTORY OF LEGISLATION

Quality assurance is a collective term used for activities that ensure functions are carried out effectively and efficiently.

The need for *quality assurance* in higher education in Trinidad and Tobago was recognised as far back as 1971. Cabinet, through Cabinet Minute No. 1297 of December 09, 1971, directed the then-Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs to establish the National Commission on Accreditation.

Subsequently, in 1979, the Committee on the Recognition of Degrees (CORD), originally called the Committee to Assess University Degrees, was established, with the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) as its Executive Secretariat. The committee was chaired by Sir Arthur H. McShine.

In 1994, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago authorised NIHERST to establish a national accrediting agency to perform "Full Accreditation Functions". In 2001, the National Commission on Accreditation was established and a committee chaired by Dr Anna Mahase was appointed to create criteria for accreditation, develop mechanisms for the accreditation of tertiary level institutions and identify priority areas for training.

In 2002, Cabinet appointed a team chaired by Dr Ruby S. Alleyne with responsibility for establishing The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. On March 12, 2004, the bill for the establishment of an accrediting agency in Trinidad and Tobago was introduced in the House of Representatives and on July 09, 2004, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Act No. 16 of 2004 (the Act) was proclaimed, thereby legally creating The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).

The Act was subsequently amended by Act No. 16 of 2007 and Act No. 10 of 2008, which were assented to on July 05, 2007 and July 07, 2008, respectively.

The Law Revision Commission revises the laws in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Once this is done, the existing laws are given a Chapter number. Act No 16 of 2004 was assigned the Chapter number 39:06.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE OF ACTT

ACTT's role is to conduct and advise on the registration, accreditation and recognition of *post secondary* and tertiary education institutions, programmes and awards. ACTT was formally launched on November 28, 2005, and its key functions include:

Post secondary refers to all education and training programmes which are not at tertiary level, but are offered to secondary school leavers to meet their vocational or continuing education needs.

- Conferment of Institutional Title
- Registration of Post Secondary and Tertiary Level institutions
- Accreditation of Post Secondary and Tertiary Level Institutions
- Accreditation of Programmes
- Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and Awards
- Programme Approval
- Equivalence Assessments

These key functions provide the basis for ACTT to evaluate and monitor the quality of institutions and educational programmes to safeguard the interests of students and other stakeholders. Additionally, these functions provide an assurance of, and foster improvement in, the quality of education and training.

ACTT'S VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES
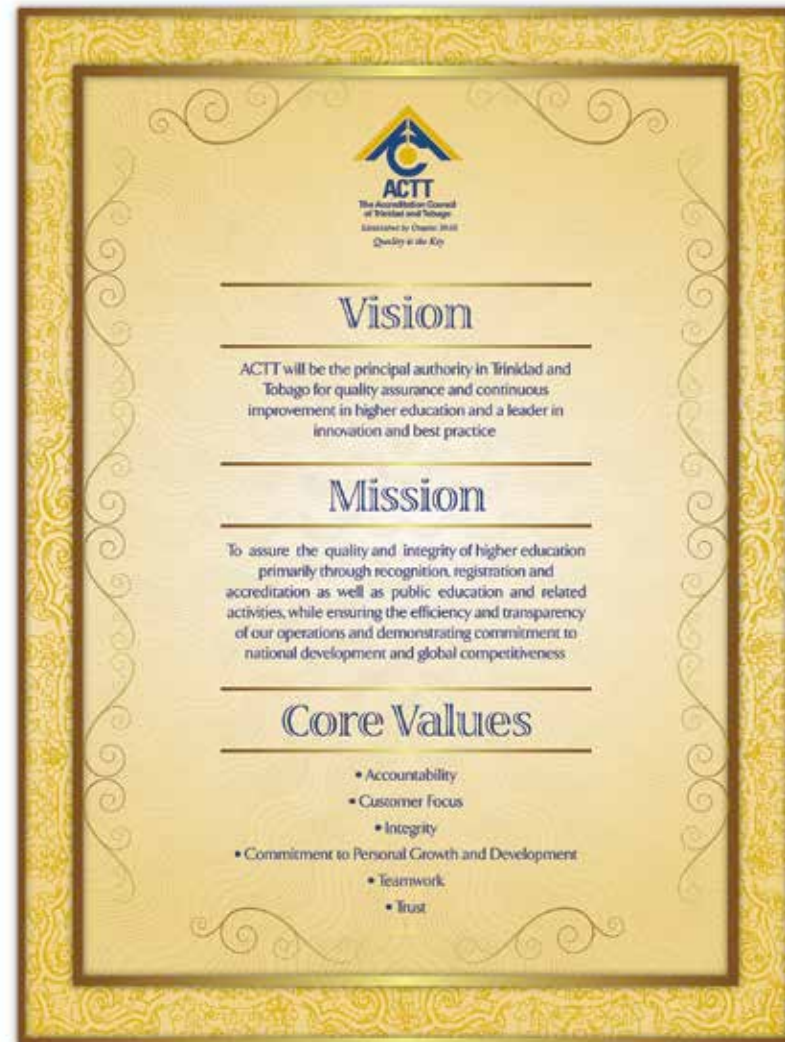
OFFICES

ACTT currently has three (3) offices, two (2) in Trinidad and one (1) in Tobago:

- Head Office
  Ground Floor and Level
  3, Building B
  Pan American Life Plaza
  91-93 St Vincent Street
  Port of Spain

- South Outreach Office
  2nd Floor SSL Building
  40-44 Sutton Street
  San Fernando

- Tobago Office
  Tobago Technology
  Centre
  79 Milford Road
  Canaan

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

Governed by a Board of Directors, ACTT is a key player in assuring and promoting quality in the higher education sector of Trinidad and Tobago. The Board of Directors comprises not less than ten (10) nor more than thirteen (13) members appointed by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, as follows:

- two (2) or three (3) persons from tertiary institutions or institutions involved in technical or vocational education or training, including a nominee of the association most representative of tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago;
- two (2) persons with expertise in accreditation and quality assurance at the tertiary level;
- one (1) or two (2) persons nominated by professional associations involved in education;
- one (1) person nominated by the line ministry;
- one (1) person nominated by the organisations most representative of employers and one (1) person nominated by the organisations most representative of trade unions;
- two (2) representatives of the general public; and
- ACTT's Executive Director

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

ACTT is recognised regionally and internationally and has established relationships with several international agencies for quality assurance in higher education, including:

Regional
- Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC)
- Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE)
- University Council of Jamaica (UCJ)

International
- American Council for Education (ACE)
- American Society for Quality (ASQ)
- Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
- Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
- Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE)
- European Association for International Education (EAIE)

- International Association of Universities (IAU)
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- North Central Association – Higher Learning Commission (NCA-HLC)
- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
- United Kingdom National Recognition and Information Centre (UK NARIC)

Memoranda of Agreement/Cooperation

In addition, the Council has formalised its collaborative relationships with the following international higher education agencies by virtue of Memoranda of Cooperation, which were signed as follows:

- United Kingdom National Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC)
  – May 01, 2013
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), United States of America
  – May 01, 2013
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), United Kingdom
  – April 15, 2015

Further, the Council signed a Memorandum of Agreement to enhance collaborative efforts between itself and the National Training Agency (NTA) on July 14, 2010.

Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are organisations that have been given powers, either through written laws or through other legally binding arrangements, to regulate entry into and set standards of performance for various specialist professions ranging from medicine and engineering to surveying and accounting.

The Council has always recognised the importance of collaboration with all relevant PSRBs and has been mindful of the potential mutual benefits to be derived from a collaborative approach to the assessment of international qualifications, as well as qualifications directly within each agency's jurisdiction.

The idea to formalise a collaborative approach with PSRBs was borne out of the desire to promote technical cooperation between ACTT and these organisations in matters related to:

- quality assurance
- recognition of qualifications
- approval of programmes
- specialised accreditation
- information sharing

As a result, seven (7) associations signed Memoranda of Cooperation with ACTT on July 09, 2014. These are as follows:

- Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA)
- The Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professionals Association (TTGPA)
- The Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago (APETT)
- The Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago (NCTT)
- The Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago (MBTT)
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago (ICATT)
- The Trinidad and Tobago Association of Professional Psychologists (TTAPP)

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CHAPTER

ACTT's Services

Introduction

ACTT monitors and evaluates the quality of post secondary and tertiary level institutions, programmes and awards through the following core services:

- Conferment of Institutional Title
- Registration of Post Secondary and Tertiary Level Institutions (TLIs)
- Accreditation of Post Secondary and Tertiary Level Institutions and Programmes
- Programme Approval
- Recognition of Foreign Awarding Bodies and Institutions
- Statements on Recognition
- Equivalence Assessments

ACTT also encourages continual quality improvement by providing support to post secondary and **tertiary level institutions**. ACTT's services generally place emphasis on:

- design and development of programmes of study
- the quality of teaching
- competencies of teaching staff
- assessment of student learning
- the learning environment and support systems for students

Details of each service are provided in the following sections.

A tertiary level institution is one that offers educational programmes beyond the secondary level.

CONFERMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL TITLE

> **Conferment of Institutional Title is the granting of authorisation to an institution to use a protected title based on the nature and level of the programmes that it intends to offer.**

When a post secondary or tertiary level institution is established, the institution indicates the title it wishes to carry. However, there are some titles, protected by Chapter 39:06, which an *institution* cannot use without prior authorisation from ACTT. These titles are:

- College
- Community college
- Polytechnic
- Technical college
- Technical institute
- Technical university
- Tertiary college
- University

Chapter 39:06 states that a post secondary or tertiary level institution that wishes to use one of the protected titles must first seek ACTT's approval.

An institution is an organisation with a structure that provides for the administration, governance and delivery of a range of educational programmes leading to the granting of awards.

Characteristics of Institutions that carry Protected Titles

A **technical college**, **polytechnic** or **technical institute** is a *higher education institution* that offers programmes in **technical and vocational** areas of study that lead to qualifications below that of a bachelor's degree, for example, certificates; diplomas; advanced diplomas and associate degrees. Examples of registered technical institutes in Trinidad and Tobago are **Advanced Solutions Technical Institute**, **ARIA Technical Institute Limited** and the **Technical Institute for Learning Limited**.

A **tertiary college** or **college** is a higher education institution that offers programmes leading to qualifications below that of a bachelor's degree, such as certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees. An example of a college is the **College of Ultrasound Sciences Limited**.

A **community college** is a higher education institution that primarily offers programmes leading to qualifications below that of a bachelor's degree, such as certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, and two-year *associate degrees*, all of which are designed to meet the needs of the community. Programmes at

A higher education institution offers programmes at the post secondary and tertiary levels.

Associate degrees are 2-year programmes that may provide career preparation or ready students to transfer to a bachelor's degree programme.

a community college are often designed to prepare students for direct entry into an occupation/job. An example of a community college is the **College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT)**.

A **university** is a higher education institution that offers programmes leading to *bachelor's degrees* and post bachelor awards, such as post-graduate diplomas and certificates, *master's* and doctoral degrees. A university differs from other higher education institutions, in that, it has wider curricula and is usually involved in research. The three (3) universities in Trinidad and Tobago are **The University of the West Indies** (**UWI**, public), **The University of Trinidad and Tobago** (**UTT**, public) and the **University of the Southern Caribbean** (**USC**, private).

A **technical university** is a higher education institution established primarily to offer technical, vocational and professional programmes that lead to bachelor's degrees and post bachelor awards to prepare students for occupations in technological fields. It also conducts research related to the needs of society.

A bachelor's degree is a qualification usually earned for a course of study at the post secondary level that normally requires three to five years of study, depending on institution and field of study.

A master's degree is a qualification that builds on the knowledge and skills of a bachelor's degree and requires more demanding and intensive study and includes supervised research.

Criteria for Conferment of Institutional Title

The following table outlines the four (4) *criteria* against which post secondary and tertiary education and training institutions are evaluated.

Criteria are statements that identify the minimum expectations set by a quality assurance body that must be met by any institution or programme.

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Governance and Administration	• Certificate of Incorporation bearing the name under which the institution wishes to operate • Cabinet Minute or Act of Parliament which establishes the institution • Sections of the institution's signed and dated bye-laws and/or Board-approved policies • Approved current organisational chart • Job descriptions for all positions reflected on the organisational chart • Documented and approved Mission Statement • Documented and approved goals • Documented and approved Human Resources Policy and/or Plan • Documented and approved Physical Resources (Plant and equipment) Policy and/or Procedures • Documented and approved Finance Policy and/or Procedures • Quality Management System policies and procedures • Stakeholder feedback forms	• Protects against attending institutions that are not legally established • Ensures that the institution has structures in place allowing it to be governed and managed effectively

Table 1

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

Academic Standards	• Policies for:
	  – Admission
	  – Tuition, Compulsory and Other Fees
	  – Class Attendance
	  – Dropping/Adding courses
	  – Leave of Absence or Withdrawal
	  – Award and Transfer of Credits
	  – Award of Qualifications
	  – Processing and Disbursing Transcripts
	• Institutional goals
	• Goals for all programmes
	• Programme specifications
	• List of programmes offered specifying the levels
	• Teaching and learning policy that may include the following:
	  – Programme approval, monitoring and review policy and procedures
	• Staff mentoring and professional development plans
	• Physical resources allocation list
	• Proposed student enrolment data
		• Ensures that the institution has the required policies and procedures to inform and guide students during their course of study
		• Ensures that the institution has rules and structures to address complaints, grievances and any claims of discrimination
		• Guarantees that there are no barriers to accessing programmes on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, etc.
		• Ensures that an opportunity is given to provide feedback to the institution on their lecturers and programme. (This will assist the institution in taking remedial action regarding the lecturer/programme, if necessary.)
		• Provides an avenue for queries in the event that there is dissatisfaction with examination results
		• Ensures that the programmes of study (course work and assignments) are equivalent to similar programmes offered regionally and internationally

Table 1, cont'd

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Scholarship and Pedagogical Effectiveness	• List of faculty indicating the highest level of qualifications and/or experience attained in the relevant area as well as programmes and courses assigned • Curriculum Vitae of all teaching staff • Assessment and evaluation procedures • Examination reports • Training Plan • Research papers or plans	• Suitably qualified lecturers, adequate learning resources and other forms of learner support • Solutions exist for dealing with pedagogical issues encountered in the past • Mechanisms in place for the institution to be proactive in dealing with challenges faced.
Supporting Environment for Programme Delivery	• Budget statement • Plan for allocation of resources • Documented and approved procedure(s) for maintaining its infrastructure at all sites, including what aspects of the infrastructure are maintained; who is responsible and frequency of maintenance activities • Sample instruments used to record maintenance activities for all sites, e.g. a checklist • Agreements with external maintenance providers for all sites, if applicable • Quality Management System • Listing of student support services • Monitoring plan/procedure for student support services • Training plan for academic and administrative staff • Performance management and appraisal process/procedure	• Access to a venue for attending classes • Adequate funds for continued operations • Adequate and maintained physical and material resources to meet student needs • Well-trained academic staff for effective curriculum delivery • Academic and non-academic support to students • An established and implemented Quality Management System for delivering quality education

Table 1, cont'd

REGISTRATION

> Registration is a compulsory process whereby post secondary and tertiary education and training institutions demonstrate that they have met the requirements to operate legally as an educational entity in Trinidad and Tobago.

There are many post secondary and tertiary education and training institutions that form part of the education sector. Chapter 39:06 mandates that these institutions be registered by ACTT. Institutions undergoing registration must provide evidence that they have the systems and resources to deliver quality education. A student attending a registered institution is therefore assured that the **qualification** he/she receives will be recognised. Any post secondary or tertiary institution that is not registered is operating illegally and any qualification awarded will not be recognised.

A qualification is an award that is granted by an institution to a student who has met the requirements of an approved programme.

Understanding the Registration Process

• Before an institution applies for Registration, ACTT must first determine if the programmes to be offered fall within its purview. The institution must therefore submit an **Institutional Data Form (IDF)** which provides information on the:

  – name of the institution
  – name of the head of the institution
  – address of the institution
  – number of sites the institution has
  – programmes and level of programmes to be offered

• ACTT's registration process involves the institution's submitting an application for registration based on ACTT's criteria. The application will include an explanation and relevant evidence which demonstrate how the institution

The Institutional Data Form (IDF) is a document used to collect general information about an institution and the programmes it offers.

intends to provide quality education and **training**. Some examples of evidence/documents required by ACTT are outlined in **Table 2** below.

• A **site visit** is conducted to verify that the institution has adequate and appropriate systems and resources to provide quality education and training. This site visit is conducted by at least two (2) experts called External Evaluators who verify the **evidence** submitted in the application, including:

  – provisions for students' health and safety
  – proper lighting and ventilation
  – overall cleanliness of the facility
  – adequacy and appropriateness of physical resources (desks, chairs, computers, laboratories, etc.)
  – suitability of qualifications and experience of teaching staff

• Based on the report prepared by the External Evaluators after the site visit, an institution may be granted **registered status** for a maximum period of three (3) years. If the institution is being registered for the first time, it is referred to as **Initial Registration**. Before the expiration of the registered status, the institution must apply for **Continuing Registration**. The Continuing Registration process seeks to ensure that the institution continues to effectively deliver quality education and training at a consistently high level.

Criteria for Registration

The following table outlines the seven (7) criteria against which post secondary and tertiary education and training institutions are evaluated, identifies some examples of evidence that institutions are required to provide and lists some of the benefits:

Training refers to the acquisition of knowledge, practical skills, and competencies in vocational fields.

A site visit is a method of institutional evaluation where all physical locations and associated resources are examined based on a set of criteria and standards.

Evidence refers to any data, information, documentation or resource that demonstrates that the requirements of a standard have been met as part of any quality assurance activity.

Registered status is granted to an institution that has met ACTT's criteria and standards for registration.

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Legal, Policy and Regulatory Requirements	• Certificate of Incorporation bearing the name under which the institution wishes to operate • Cabinet Minute or an Act of Parliament which establishes the institution • Deed or rental agreement for premises • Evacuation Maps • Evacuation Procedures	• Protects against attending institutions that are not legally established • Ensures access to a venue for attending classes • Provides guidance in the event of an emergency
Governance and Administration	• Signed and dated Bye-Laws • A documented and approved Vision Statement • A documented and approved Mission Statement • An approved, current organisational chart	• Ensures that the institution has systems to be governed and managed effectively

Table 2

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Quality Management System	• Documented and approved *Quality Policy* • Documented and approved Equal Opportunity Policy • Documented and approved Grievance Policy • Assignment of a *Quality Management* representative who is appropriately qualified	• Ensures that the institution has rules and structures to address complaints, grievances and any claims of discrimination • Guarantees that there are no barriers to accessing programmes on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, etc • Provides a means of recourse in the event that there is dissatisfaction with examination results • Ensures that the institution has a framework for delivering quality education to the students
Resource Management	• Documented and approved Human Resources Policy • Documented and approved Financial Policy • Documented and approved Student Support Policy • Academic certificates and résumés of lecturers	• Ensures that the institution has adequate funds for continued operations • Ensures that institutions provide suitably qualified lecturers, adequate learning resources and other forms of learner support

Table 2, cont'd

A Quality Management System is the documentation of the structure, responsibilities and procedures required to achieve quality.

An institution's Quality Policy is its overall educational philosophy, purpose, goals in relation to quality.

Quality Management is the application of a system to achieve maximum customer satisfaction at the lowest overall cost.

The Teaching-Learning Process includes all activities that an institution undertakes to ensure that learning takes place.

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

Teaching-Learning Process	• Documented and approved Programme Approval Procedure
	• Documented and approved Programme Monitoring Procedure
	• Documented and approved Programme Review Procedure
	• Documented and approved Programme Specifications
	• Student policies for:
	  – Admission
	  – Tuition and other fees
	  – Attendance
	  – Dropping/Adding Courses
	  – Leave of Absence/ Withdrawal
	  – Award and transfer of Credits
	  – Award of Qualifications
	  – Processing and disbursement of Transcripts
		• Ensures that the institution has the required policies and procedures to guide students during their course of study

Review	• Documented and approved internal quality audit procedure • Samples of instruments used to collect feedback from stakeholders • Documented and approved procedures used to monitor stakeholder satisfaction • Documented and approved procedures for monitoring student *learning outcomes*	• Provides an opportunity for feedback that could improve the operations, services of the institution and its programmes
Continuous Improvement	• Procedure for addressing past problems • Procedure to avoid potential problems	• Ensures that there are mechanisms to address problems that can affect students

A learning outcome is a statement that describes what a student should know, understand, or be able to do at the end of a course or programme.

Table 2, cont'd

What happens when an institution is granted registered status?

• An advertisement is placed in two (2) daily newspapers.
• The institution is listed on ACTT's website and in ACTT's *Compendium of Registered, Accredited and Recognised Institutions, Awarding Bodies and Programmes*.
• The institution is issued a Certificate of Registration for each of its sites.

What happens when an institution is denied registration?

ACTT will inform members of the public that the institution has been denied registration. This will assist students to make an informed decision on whether or not they should attend the institution.

Can an institution's registered status be revoked?

ACTT may revoke an institution's registered status under the following conditions:

• Non-compliance with the criteria for Registration
• Non-payment/late payment of fees
• Failure to submit annual reports
• Fraud or breach of contract
• Declaration of bankruptcy or insolvency
• Non-compliance with internal systems, policies, processes and procedures that affect the quality of the institution's offerings to students

Consequences of Revocation of an institution's status

An institution whose registered status has been revoked shall:

• have its name removed from ACTT's list of registered institutions, website and publications
• neither advertise programmes nor enrol new students in any post secondary and tertiary programmes within ACTT's purview
• have teach-out arrangements to allow its students to complete their course of study

> **What happens if a post secondary or tertiary institution is not registered and is in operation?**

In accordance with Chapter 39:06, any post secondary or tertiary level institution operating in Trinidad and Tobago that is **not registered** is guilty of an offence. Such an institution, if convicted, would be liable to pay an initial fine of twenty thousand dollars ($20,000.00) and a further fine of five hundred dollars ($500.00) for each day it continues to operate without being registered by ACTT.

Overall Benefits of Registration

Students

- obtain value for their investment
- are provided with suitably qualified lecturers, adequate learning resources and other forms of learner support
- access State funding more easily
- are more readily accepted by employers

Institutions

- are bestowed with the legal right to operate
- benefit from recognition of its programmes
- gain enhanced image which can lead to increased student enrolment
- are provided with access to ACTT's various resources (workshops, publications, manuals and conferences) which can be used to strengthen the institution's Quality Management System

The Country

- is assured that graduates possess the necessary competencies for employment
- is assured that state funded institutions and programmes are quality assured
- is guaranteed of the development of the post secondary and tertiary education sector, comparable with international standards

ACCREDITATION

> **Accreditation is a process through which registered post secondary and tertiary institutions and programmes are evaluated to determine whether they meet internationally accepted standards of educational quality.**

Students and other *stakeholders* need to have confidence in institutions that offer post secondary and tertiary education. In many countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, accreditation provides the assurance that institutions are reputable and deliver quality programmes.

A stakeholder is a person or group with a direct interest in something.

There are two (2) types of accreditation for which an institution may apply: Institutional Accreditation and Specialised/Programme Accreditation.

Eligibility indicates that an institution has met the requirements to participate in or qualify for a particular process.

Institutional Accreditation

Institutional Accreditation is an evaluation of the institution's capability to deliver quality educational programmes at the post secondary and tertiary levels. It is both a **process** and a **status**.

A Self-Study Report is prepared by an institution after it has completed its self-study process.

To be *eligible* for accreditation by ACTT, an institution must satisfy three (3) main conditions:

- a minimum of eighteen (18) months remaining on its registered status
- students enrolled in at least one (1) approved locally-developed degree programme
- graduated at least one (1) cohort from the approved locally-developed degree programme

Institutions that offer only foreign programmes are **not** eligible for accreditation.

Standards refer to the specific requirements that must be met by the institution/provider.

Institutional Accreditation is a *voluntary* **process** through which ACTT evaluates registered post secondary and tertiary institutions and programmes to determine whether they meet internationally accepted standards of educational quality.

The process is generally conducted in two (2) key phases:

- The institution reviews its operations and produces a report called a *Self-Study Report* based on the Criteria and *Standards* for Institutional Accreditation

A Comprehensive Site Visit is an evaluation of an institution seeking institutional accreditation where all physical locations and their associated resources are examined to determine whether the criteria for accreditation have been met.

Accredited status indicates that a higher education institution has met a quality assurance agency's criteria for accreditation.

• External Evaluators conduct a ***Comprehensive Site Visit*** to the institution to verify whether it has satisfied the Criteria and Standards for Institutional Accreditation.

Institutional Accreditation is also a **status** that is conferred on an institution that has met internationally accepted standards of educational quality set by an accrediting agency. In Trinidad and Tobago, for an institution to maintain its ***accredited status***, there must be a process of continual improvement by the institution and periodic review by ACTT.

Institutions can be initially accredited for a period of five (5) to seven (7) years. After that period, institutions may be accredited for seven (7) to ten (10) years.

Criteria for Accreditation

Table 3 below outlines the five (5) criteria against which a post secondary and tertiary education and training institution is evaluated for institutional accreditation, identifies some examples of evidence that institutions are required to provide and lists some of the benefits:

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Mission and Purpose	• Documented and approved mission statement • The mission is effectively communicated to the relevant stakeholders • Clearly defined institutional goals which are congruent with tertiary level education and training • Consistency of the mission with institution's purpose and goals • The levels of certification offered are consistent with the requirements of tertiary education • The mission statement clearly identifies the stakeholders whom the institution serves • The institution has clearly defined the roles of the internal stakeholders in achieving its mission and purpose	• The institution has the required systems necessary for good governance and effective management • The institution is guided by a mission and goals that fit the sector • The student knows the direction and intent of the institution • Student expectations are reflected in the mission statement • Provides the necessary information for students to make informed decisions • Protects against attending institutions that offer programmes that are below internationally accepted benchmarks

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Governance and Administration	• Legally constituted board/ governing body • System of governance which makes provision for consideration of the views of all stakeholders • Documented policies and regulations • An Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer • Mechanisms to continuously evaluate and improve the operations of its governing body • Adequately qualified, trained and experienced technical staff • Provision of adequate and appropriate resources for the programmes being offered • Established mechanisms, processes and procedures for procurement, storage and allocation of resources • Financial viability of the institution • Plans for administering and monitoring its budget • Functioning student governing body/guild • Constitution outlining the student governing body/ guild's governing structure and operations • Feedback from students	• The institution has structures in place to be managed effectively • Protects against attending institutions that are not legally established • Ensures completion of programmes undertaken and enables response to financial emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. • The institution has an adequate means of addressing complaints, grievances and any claims of discrimination • Guarantees that there are no barriers to accessing programmes on the basis of ethnicity, gender, age, etc. • The institution has mechanisms and procedures to control its financial resources and to allocate them appropriately to achieve its educational objectives • The institution is financially sound for continuation of its operations • The institution has mechanisms to ensure financial integrity through regular audits and reports • The roles and responsibilities of the student governing body/ guild are clearly defined in the institution's constitution or other supporting documentation • Provides an avenue for queries in the event that there is dissatisfaction with examination results

Table 3, cont'd

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Teaching and Learning	• Regularly evaluated academic programmes • Faculty input in academic programmes • Defined learning outcomes • Effective communication of programme content • Continuous professional development of staff • Mechanisms and procedures to evaluate and reward effective teaching • Faculty members' participation in professional organisations • Teaching approaches that reflect consideration for the diversity among students • Students evaluate teaching effectiveness • Faculty engaged in research • Well-developed educational programmes • Clearly defined outcomes for each programme • Multiple levels of assessment of student learning • Procedures for assessment and evaluation of student learning • Adequate and appropriately qualified academic and non-academic personnel • Access to teaching and learning resources • Sufficient financial resources	• Access to a venue for attending classes • Programmes are well-planned; regularly evaluated and revised • Sound student assessment • The institution has an adequate means of addressing complaints, grievances and any claims of discrimination • The programme is of a high quality and comparable with similar programmes offered regionally or internationally • Lecturers are qualified, experienced and current in the field of study • The institution has allocated funds for offering the programme

Table 3, cont'd

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Preparedness for Change	• Effective systems for collecting, analysing, storing and distributing institutional information • Planning reflects the impact of changing and/or emerging trends on the organisation • Planning reflects a sound understanding of the capabilities of institution's staff • An internal environment conducive to change and innovation • Review of the implementation of its strategic plan • A budgetary plan to meet future needs • An established system for acquiring resources • Specific personnel for acquisition and disbursement of resources • Regularly updated and upgraded technology, learning support services, pedagogical skills and instructional facilities	• The institution provides suitably qualified lecturers, adequate learning resources and other forms of learner support • The institution has adequate funds for continued operations

Table 3, cont'd

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Commitment to Continuous Improvement	• Appropriate and adequate resources for its planning, monitoring and evaluation efforts • Strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation that are appropriate to its goals and purposes • Appropriate financial management systems • Records of planning, monitoring and evaluation processes • Involvement of relevant stakeholders to inform needs • Usage of data to inform plans • Relationship among quality in education, student learning and trends in society all influence planning • A focus on the development of employees' skills and abilities • The institution develops a training plan based on employee needs and institutional priorities	• The institution has allocated resources for its efficient functioning • There are mechanisms in place by the institution to be proactive in dealing with challenges faced • Opportunity is given to provide feedback to the institution on their lecturers and programme • The institution provides suitably qualified lecturers, adequate learning resources and other forms of learner support • Stakeholder feedback information is considered in planning • Plans are influenced by current information

Table 3, cont'd

Specialised/Programme Accreditation

Another type of accreditation is Specialised/Programme Accreditation, which usually applies to disciplines for which there are licensing/registration requirements for employment (e.g. medicine, psychiatry, dentistry, nursing, law, engineering, social work and architecture). The accreditation of programmes relies significantly on the involvement of the relevant professional body/association for the specialised knowledge field, as well as educators and practising professionals in the field.

The Specialised/Programme Accreditation process usually places emphasis on:

- the quality of teaching and the support of learning
- design and development of the programmes of study
- assessment of and feedback to learners
- the learning environment and learner support systems

Table 4 below outlines the five (5) criteria against which a post secondary and tertiary education and training institution is evaluated for Specialised/Programme Accreditation, identifies some examples of evidence that the institution is required to provide and lists some of the benefits:

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Mission and Purpose	• Alignment of programme objectives and learning outcomes with the institution's mission and purpose • Consistency of the programme's objectives and learning outcomes with tertiary education goals • A focus on the needs of the stakeholders in the learning outcomes of the programmes • Evidence of stakeholder input in curriculum development • Documentation of programme details in the student handbook, faculty handbook, catalogues, manuals and other publications • Clearly defined policies and procedures for programme	• Greater sense of commitment from the staff since they directly contribute to quality improvement exercises • Creates awareness of the processes and the steps to be followed in relation to pursuing a programme of study • Opportunity for students to have their learning needs addressed • Easy access to programme information

Table 4

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Governance and Administration	• Clear policies for programme development, implementation and evaluation • Board approval of the programme • A qualified and experienced committee to monitor the quality of the programme • Minutes of meetings of the programme committee • Facilities match the requirements of the programme • Resources are adequate for the achievement of the goals of the programme. • Adequate and appropriately qualified and experienced faculty members • Appropriate financial management systems for each programme	• The institution is managed effectively to afford easy access to resources in an environment that is conducive to learning • Programmes have been well-developed • Programmes are comparable to similar programmes offered regionally and internationally

Table 4, cont'd

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Teaching and Learning	• A programme/curriculum committee • Policies for programme planning, implementation and evaluation • Programme requirements and objectives in documents, catalogues and handbooks • Easily available and user friendly catalogues and handbooks • Appropriately qualified and experienced faculty members • Faculty members' participation in professional organisations and current and relevant professional development activities • Policy for recruiting and developing new staff • Mechanisms for identifying and rewarding effective teaching • An assessment/evaluation committee • Appropriate procedures for assessment of students at each level of the programme • Data from assessment activities to inform teaching and learning • Assessments cater for the diverse needs of the students • Appropriate physical resources	• The programme(s) is/are relevant, current and aligned with similar programmes regionally and internationally • Teaching performance is monitored to ensure quality in the delivery of the curriculum • Learning outcomes are documented and well communicated • Staff members are able to refer to current practices in the field • Institution has an adequate means of addressing complaints, grievances and any claims of discrimination • Entry requirements are stated and allow for fairness in selection • Allows for the option to query examination results • A focus on developing fair assessments • Emphasis is placed on meeting the needs of all students

Table 4, cont'd

A curriculum is a group of related courses with instructional content, resources, and processes for evaluating the attainment of educational objectives often in a specific field of study.

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Curriculum **Effectiveness**	• Appropriate programme objectives • Clear and consistent programme content and learning outcomes • Curriculum committee to periodically review the programme • Multiple and appropriate student assessment methods • Scholarship/bursaries and awards for outstanding academic performance • Learning activities and resources cater to student diversity • Budget includes expenditure on modern learning technologies	• The opportunity is given to provide feedback to the institution on their lecturers and programmes which will assist the institution in taking remedial action regarding lecturers/programmes, if necessary • Opportunities for students to display their knowledge, skills and abilities • Access to programmes and scholarships is more readily facilitated • The institution focuses on current teaching learning modes • Emphasis is placed on meeting the needs of all students
Commitment to Continuous Improvement	• A policy for evaluating the programme • Planning, monitoring and evaluation activities are well-planned and documented • Easily accessible programme evaluation and student assessment records • A budget related to the programme • A system for resource allocation • Use of data for programme development and review	• The institution is focussed on improving the facilities • Policies and procedures to inform and guide students during their course of study • Documented solutions for dealing with issues encountered in the past to avoid reoccurrence • Provides a sense of security for students to continue their course of study

Table 4, cont'd

PROGRAMME APPROVAL

Programme Approval is the process whereby the quality of a locally developed programme is evaluated.

Programmes of study or training are made up of a series of courses that lead to *awards* such as diplomas, associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees.

An award is any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of competence or achievement.

A 'course' refers to a unit of knowledge and experiences related to a series of topics. The primary aim of Programme Approval is to ensure that locally-developed programmes, to be offered by post secondary and tertiary level institutions within Trinidad and Tobago, meet the standard of the field of study. A registered or accredited institution must have its new locally-developed *programme* approved by ACTT before it is offered to the public.

A programme is an approved 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.

A programme undergoes two (2) stages of approval:

- Internal – The process by which an institution evaluates its programme after which the programme is sent for external evaluation
- External – The process by which an *external quality assurance agency*, such as ACTT, evaluates and makes a decision on the quality of a locally-developed programme

An external quality assurance agency is an organisation or agency that has legislated or delegated authority to perform quality assurance functions.

Criteria for Programme Approval

Table 5 below outlines the six (6) criteria against which a post secondary and tertiary education and training institution is evaluated for programme approval, identifies some examples of evidence that the institution is required to provide and lists some of the benefits:

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Authorisation to offer the programme has been given by the governing body or relevant authority	• Signed letter of authorisation from a relevant authority • Signed and dated minutes of meeting of the Governing Body showing authorisation was granted	• Ensures that internal permission was granted for offering the programme
The programme is consistent with the mission of the institution	• Mission statement of institution • Mission statement of Programme • Programme aims	• The institution offers the types and levels of programmes that match its mission and goals
The institution has a system for internal programme approval, monitoring and review	• Programme approval, monitoring and review policies • Programme Approval Committee • Access to specialised advice • Signed and dated Programme Approval Committee minutes	• The institution has structures in place to design, approve, implement and revise programmes • There are plans for improvement of the programme

Table 5

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
There is a detailed programme specification for the programme	• Programme description • Aims, outcomes, teaching/ learning strategies, and assessment • Structure of the programme including entry requirements • Information about assessment regulations • Quality checks in relation to the programme	• Programmes have been well-developed • Programme is comparable with similar programmes offered regionally and internationally • Clearly defined objectives, content and assessment provides guidance for students • No barriers to accessing programmes on the basis of ethnicity, gender, age, etc • Guides students in selecting relevant subjects, courses or programmes of study • Provides an avenue for queries in the event that there is dissatisfaction with examination results • The institution has an adequate means of addressing complaints, grievances and any claims of discrimination • The institution has the required policies and procedures to inform and guide students during their course of study
There are adequate resources to support the programme	• Qualified and experienced academic and support staff including counsellors • Listing of library resources • Budget for the programme	• Institutions provide suitably qualified lecturers, adequate learning resources and other forms of learner support • The institution has plans for management and allocation of funds for continued operations

Table 5, cont'd

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ DOCUMENTS	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
A market case has been made for the offering of the programme	• Report on relevant market research	• Equips graduates with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the workplace • Affords a graduate preferred employment opportunities

Table 5, cont'd

Characteristics of Quality Programmes

Well-developed programmes possess the following features:

- aims, goals and learning outcomes that are relevant to the needs of students and contemporary society
- teaching, learning and assessment strategies that assist students to perform at their best
- guidelines that ensure fair and transparent practices in programme delivery and administration
- methods of evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning
- support for students which enhances learning
- adequate resources which will ensure that the programme can continue to be offered

What is a Programme Specification?

A Programme Specification is a document which sets out information about a programme of study. It outlines the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will be developed by students as they pursue the programme. Programme specifications also provide details of the teaching, learning and assessment methods and strategies.

RECOGNITION OF TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Transnational programmes are offered by foreign institutions and awarding bodies in collaboration with post secondary and tertiary level institutions registered by ACTT.

There are many registered and accredited institutions in Trinidad and Tobago that offer programmes from foreign universities and awarding bodies. Such programmes are known as 'transnational programmes' and it is ACTT's responsibility to safeguard the interests of students pursuing these programmes. ACTT accomplishes this through its transnational recognition process, as mandated by the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

There are two (2) routes to **recognition** of transnational programmes:

- Local institutions may apply to ACTT for recognition of individual transnational programmes.
- Alternatively, a foreign awarding body/institution may seek recognition by ACTT so that its programmes can be delivered through ACTT registered and accredited institutions.

Through this process, foreign institutions, along with their local **partner institutions**, must provide evidence that satisfies ACTT's requirements. These requirements are:

- Students in Trinidad and Tobago should have the same rights as students at the foreign institution.
- The local context should be considered in the design and delivery of the programme.
- Reliable systems should be implemented to avoid academic fraud.
- The quality of programme delivery in Trinidad and Tobago should be monitored.
- Transnational programmes offered in Trinidad and Tobago should be equivalent to programmes at the foreign institution.
- In the cases where the foreign institution withdraws from Trinidad and Tobago, students should be protected by an 'exit policy' which allows them to complete the programme.

Criteria for Recognition of Transnational Programmes

To determine whether a programme or an **awarding body** or **awarding institution** should be granted recognised status, ACTT conducts an evaluation against certain categories or criteria.

Recognition is the approval by an authorised agency of the quality and acceptability of a legitimate educational institution and the qualifications it awards.

A partner institution is a higher education institution that collaborates with an awarding institution in offering programmes that lead to either an award in the name of the awarding institution or joint awards in the names of both the partner and the awarding institutions.

An awarding body is an organisation that develops content and standards for educational programmes that lead to the award of a qualification in its name. An Awarding Body is not directly involved in the delivery of programmes.

An awarding institution is a post secondary or tertiary institution that awards degrees and other qualifications in its own name. An Awarding Institution delivers its programmes.

Table 6 below outlines the criteria against which **transnational programmes are evaluated**, identifies examples of evidence that institutions are required to provide and lists some of the benefits:

CATEGORIES	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Legal Agreement	• A legal agreement between the local institution and the foreign institution	• Protects against providers who are not authorised by the foreign awarding body/institution to deliver a programme • Ensures that students are able to complete their programme in the event that the programme is discontinued
Academic Standards	• Documented policies and procedures for the development of new programmes and revision of programmes • Evidence of a robust system for monitoring the quality of delivery • List of lecturers who have been approved by the foreign institution to teach the programme • Examination regulations	• Guarantees that students have access to programmes that are relevant to the respective industry • The quality of delivery at the local provider is regularly monitored by the foreign partner and ACTT • Ensures that the lecturers are suitably qualified • Ensures that examinations are reliable, fair, transparent and free from fraudulent practices
Equivalence/ Comparability	• Admission requirements into the programme • Programme syllabus • Documents detailing access to further study	• Fair treatment in gaining access to the programmes • Students receive qualifications that are of the same value as if they had studied at the foreign institution • Upon completion, graduates have the same rights to access further study and memberships

Table 6

CATEGORIES	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Relevance	• Reports from consultations with local stakeholders	• Social and cultural contexts are included in the design and delivery of the programme • Local employers are aware of the value of the qualification • Students gain skills and knowledge that are suitable to the local work environment

Table 6, cont'd

RECOGNITION OF
FOREIGN AWARDING BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Table 7 below outlines the criteria against which **foreign awarding bodies and institutions** are evaluated, identifies examples of evidence that institutions are required to provide and lists some of the benefits:

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Governance and Administration	• Documents demonstrating that it is established according to the laws of the country of origin • Documented policies on equality of opportunity • Appeals procedures for students • Financial statements • Formal and legally binding agreements between the awarding body and each centre	• Protects against enrolment in illegal institutions or diploma mills • Guarantees that there are no barriers to access programmes on the basis of ethnicity, gender, age, etc • Provides an avenue for lodging complaints in the event that students are dissatisfied • Gives assurance that the awarding body is financially viable • Protects against providers who are not authorised by the foreign awarding body/institution to deliver a programme • Ensures that students are able to complete their programme in the event that the programme is discontinued

Table 7

CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Assuring Institutional and Programme Quality/ Academic Standards	• Accreditation from an approved/recognised agency in the country of origin • Clearly documented procedures, criteria and standards for approving centres to offer its qualification • Examination regulations • Policy and procedures for approval of lecturers	• Protects students from enrolling in fraudulent institutions or diploma mills • Provides assurance that the local teaching centres have the resources and systems to effectively deliver the programmes • Ensures that examinations are reliable, fair, transparent and free from fraudulent practices • Ensures that lecturers are suitably qualified • Continual professional development for all staff
Plan for Provision	• Documented procedures and processes for the development of new qualifications • Programme syllabi • Reports from consultations with national stakeholders	• Guarantees that students have access to programmes that are relevant to the respective industry • Students receive qualifications that are of the same value as if they had studied at the foreign institution • Social and cultural contexts are included in the design and delivery of the programme • Local employers are aware of the value of the qualification • Students gain skills and knowledge that are suitable to the local work environment

Table 7, cont'd

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CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Equivalence/ Comparability	• Admission requirements • Programme syllabus • Documents detailing access to further study	• Fair treatment in gaining access to transnational programmes • Social and cultural contexts have been considered in the design and delivery of the programme • Graduates are awarded qualifications that are of the same value as if they had studied at the foreign institution • Upon completion, graduates have the same rights to access further study

Table 7, cont'd

Decisions on Recognition
Transnational Programmes

Following the External Evaluators' review of an application for recognition of a transnational programme, ACTT's Board of Directors examines the External Evaluators' Report containing the findings and recommendation on the status to be awarded. The Board of Directors may:

- grant Recognised Status for three (3) years
- grant an Extension of **Candidacy** Status for a period not exceeding six (6) months
- deny Recognised Status after an Extension of Candidacy

Candidacy is a status granted by ACTT to indicate that an institution/provider applying for institutional accreditation, registration or recognition has the potential for achieving the status within a reasonable period.

Foreign Awarding Bodies and Institutions

Following the External Evaluators' review of an application for recognition as a foreign awarding body or institution, the Board of Directors considers the External Evaluators' Report containing the findings and recommendation on the status to be awarded. The Board of Directors may:

- grant Recognised Status for five (5) years
- grant an Extension of Candidacy Status for a period not exceeding six (6) months
- deny Recognised Status after an Extension of Candidacy

Continuing Recognition

In addition to being recognised, foreign awarding bodies and institutions are reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the standards for recognition. Nine (9) months before recognised status expires, the awarding body or institution must apply for continuing recognition if it wishes to continue delivering transnational programmes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Foreign Awarding Bodies Recognised by ACTT

- ABMA Education Limited
- Association of Business Executives (ABE)
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
- Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment (CISI)
- Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS)
- Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada
- City and Guilds of London Institute
- Pearson Education Ltd

Foreign Awarding Institutions Recognised by ACTT

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Australian Institute of Business (AIB)
- BPP University
- Heriot-Watt University
- University of Greenwich
- University of London International Programmes
- University of New Brunswick
- University of Reading – Henley Business School
- University of Sunderland

Students are advised to consult ACTT's online *Compendium of Registered, Accredited and Recognised Institutions, Awarding Bodies and Programmes* at www.actt.org.tt for the most up-to-date information on all transnational programmes and foreign awarding bodies and institutions recognised by ACTT.

RECOGNITION OF PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

> **Recognition is a process through which an authorised agency approves the quality of a legitimate post secondary or tertiary level institution and the programmes it offers.**

There are many options available to persons who would like to study locally and abroad or even online. However, not all institutions or programmes are recognised and may be fraudulent. It is, therefore, important to research/know the institution's recognition status before enrolling. If you have recently completed your secondary schooling, or are a professional seeking to advance your education, researching the recognition status of the institution you are interested in is strongly recommended. Enrolment in a recognised institution ensures that you are attending an institution that is continually reviewed and meets international quality standards. Graduates from recognised institutions qualify more readily for employment.

Sometimes researching the status of an institution can be overwhelming because you may not know where to search for accurate information. ACTT can help with this research. The Qualifications and Recognition department at ACTT issues **Statements on Recognition**.

What is a Statement on Recognition?

A Statement on Recognition is an official document which provides information on whether a post secondary or tertiary level institution is recognised and/or accredited. Statements on Recognition also include information on specialised accreditation of qualifications for professions that require a licence to practise.

Types of Statements on Recognition

ACTT issues Statements on Recognition based on the needs of the client. There are two (2) formats for Statements on Recognition:

- Clients planning to study at a local or foreign institution are issued a Statement on Recognition that is valid for a maximum period of one (1) year. This is because the status of an institution or programme may change before the client enrols in an institution.
- Persons who have graduated from a local or foreign institution are issued a Statement on Recognition specific to a qualification which has been granted. This Statement has no expiration date.

Benefits to Students

Access to scholarships and grants
Agencies that award scholarships and grants, e.g. the government, need to ensure that the institution and programme of study are recognised.

Requirement for CARICOM Skills Certificate
Members of the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM) agreed that citizens with certain qualifications would be able to move freely in the region. Both the programme and the institution must be recognised.

Recognition of qualifications by employers
Employers are assured that the candidates for employment have authentic documents as well as requisite skills and knowledge to perform on the job.

Facilitates transfers between higher education institutions
Students may not always complete their course of study at one institution. To be able to transfer **credits**, the student must have attended a recognised institution.

A credit is a unit of academic measurement of educational value.

Applying for a Statement on Recognition

Application Form and Fees:

- The Statement on Recognition costs TT$100.00
- The process takes a minimum of ten (10) working days
- Processing Fee for the Express option (48 hours) is TT$300.00
- One application form is required for each qualification or programme of study

Required Documents:

- Original certificate if programme has been completed
- Official English translation for a certificate issued in a foreign language
- Deed Poll or Marriage Certificate where there has been a name change subsequent to the award of the qualification

Statements on Recognition Results

A Statement on Recognition indicates one of the following:

INSTITUTION AND QUALIFICATION ARE RECOGNISED	INSTITUTION AND QUALIFICATION ARE *NOT* RECOGNISED
Reasons for Recognition: • Institution is quality assured by a recognised quality assurance agency • Qualifications in a field that requires a licence to practice has Specialised Accreditation • The student graduated when the institution had valid registered/ accredited status • No fraudulent documents were submitted • Verification that student attended the institution and was awarded the qualification	*Reasons for Non-Recognition:* • The institution is not quality assured by a recognised quality assurance agency • There is no specialised accreditation of qualifications for professions that require a licence to practice • Fraudulent academic certificates were submitted for assessment • The institution is a Diploma Mill or fraudulent institution

When an institution/qualification is recognised:
 	
• The student can:
  – be confident that he/she is enrolling in an institution and programme that are not fraudulent
  – apply for funding, e.g. scholarships from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and from the Tobago House of Assembly
  – transfer to another tertiary institution locally or internationally to complete studies
• Employers will be more confident that the qualification is legitimate
	When an institution/qualification is not recognised:
	
	• The student should not enrol in the institution
	• The student may not be able transfer credits for completion of study
	• Government funding cannot be obtained
	• The graduate will not be considered a candidate for employment
	• The matter can be referred to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Fraud Squad
	• Loss of time and finances where the persons have already completed the programme

Summary of the Application Process for a Statement on Recognition
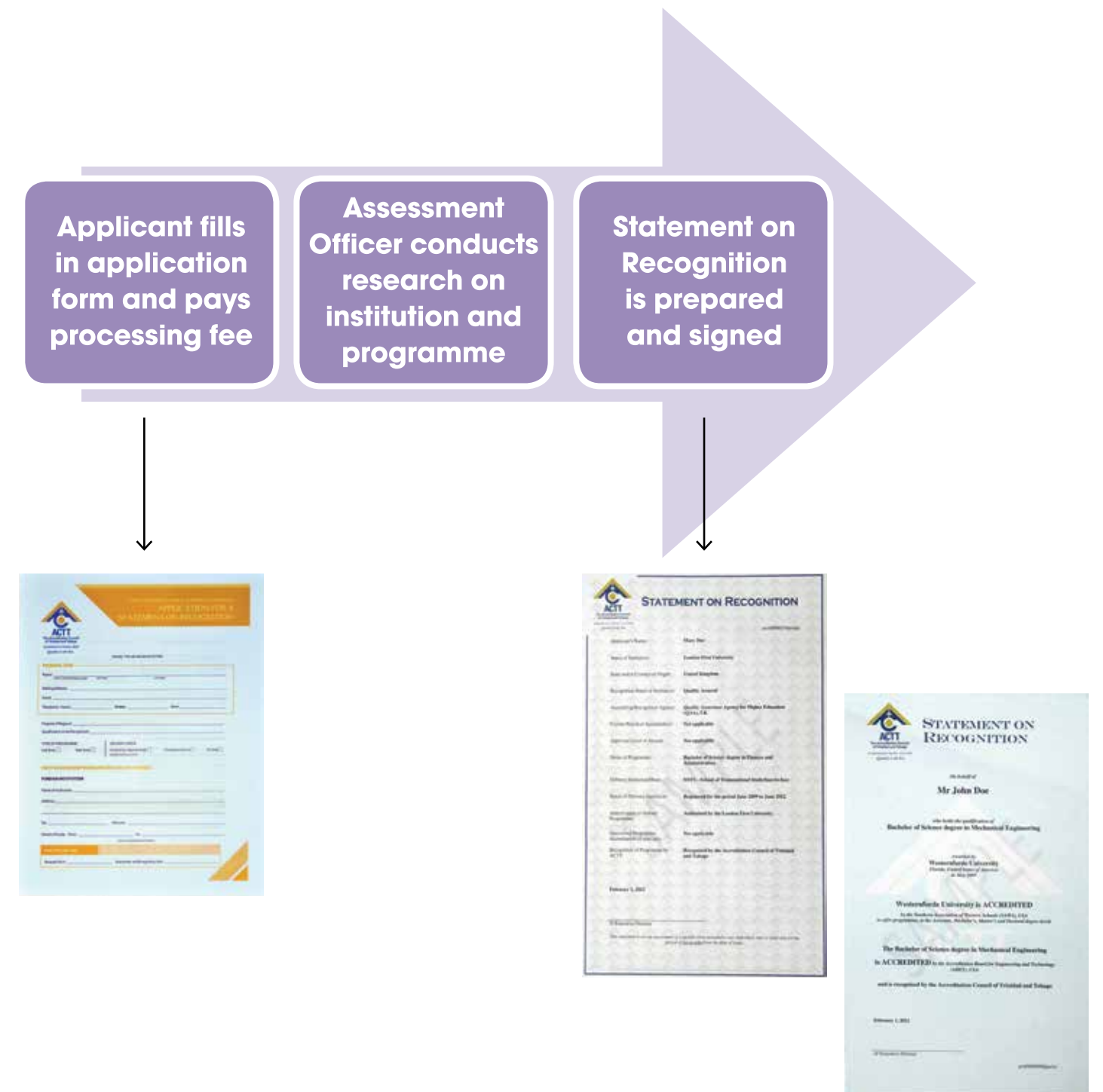
EQUIVALENCE ASSESSMENT

An Equivalence Assessment is an evaluation of a foreign qualification against a local qualification to determine its level and academic value.

An Equivalence Assessment can only be conducted on a qualification which has been awarded. In order to conduct an Equivalence Assessment, ACTT compares the foreign qualification against a similar qualification awarded by a local institution in Trinidad and Tobago.

For example, many persons attend foreign universities and colleges and, upon completion of their programme of study, are awarded such qualifications as: certificates, diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. In most instances, employers and other stakeholders may not always know how these awards equate with each other. As such, the graduate may be asked by his/her employer to apply to ACTT for an Equivalence Assessment to determine suitability for a particular job.

What are the key areas examined when foreign and local qualifications are assessed?

The key areas of the programme examined include:

- level of the programme
- entry requirements
- programme objectives
- courses/modules/units
- total number of credits
- requirements for thesis/practical

As is done for Statements on Recognition, it is also important to confirm whether the institution that awarded the foreign qualification as well as the qualification itself has been quality assured (accredited, approved, or recognised), in accordance with the system in the country of origin.

Benefits of an Equivalence Assessment

An Equivalence Assessment may assist a student to gain access to further study in Trinidad and Tobago. It may assist a student to earn credit exemptions; or, it may be used by a student to enrol in one educational institution to continue his/her studies. It is important to note that the receiving institution makes the final decision on the value of the credits which a student can use in order to complete a programme.

Graduates can use the assessment for employment purposes; it is also used as a requirement for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) Skills Certificate.

An Equivalence Assessment can be used by employers to determine whether an employee or prospective candidate for employment meets the academic requirements for employment.

Applying for an Equivalence Assessment

Requirements:

- Completed Application Form
- Original Certificate
- Original transcript
- Official English translation of documents (where relevant)
- Deed Poll or marriage certificate (where relevant)
- Payment of processing fee

Processing Time and Fee

The processing time for an Equivalence Assessment is a **minimum** of twenty (20) working days. The processing time commences on the date that all the required documents have been submitted by the applicant, or received from the institution which awarded the qualification.

The processing fee is TT$300.00.

CHAPTER

3
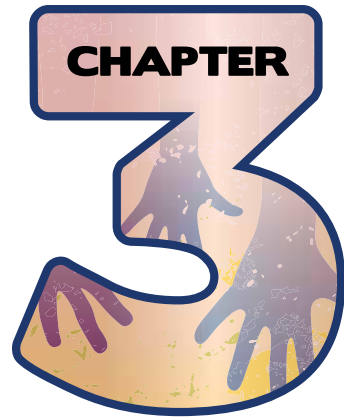
Accredited Higher Education Institutions in Trinidad and Tobago

Introduction

Higher education refers to learning which takes place at universities, academies, colleges, and technical institutes. In Trinidad and Tobago, a number of institutions provide higher education programmes. There are currently twelve (12) institutions that have been *accredited* by ACTT. This chapter profiles the accredited higher education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

To accredit is to evaluate and determine whether a higher education institution, its programmes or awards meet the criteria and standards established by a quality assurance agency.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED ARTS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (COSTAATT)

COSTAATT was initially registered on June 11, 2008 and was conferred institutional accreditation from ACTT on November 18, 2010, for a period of seven (7) years. As a public local institution, COSTAATT has seven (7) *campus* locations spread throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Its main campus is located in Port of Spain. It offers programmes at the certificate, associate, bachelor's and post graduate diploma qualification levels. COSTAATT offers qualifications in diverse subject areas ranging from business and other management related courses to journalism and communication to the social sciences. It also offers qualifications in nursing and other allied healthcare professions.

A campus is a branch of an institution that has its own grounds, buildings and its faculty and administrative services are similar to that of the main site.

Established in 2000 by Chapter 39:56 of the Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, COSTAATT offers full-time and part-time learning options. It currently does not offer any distance education programmes. The institution's programmes of study are designed with industry in mind. COSTAATT works with professionals and organisations to tailor their offerings to provide the most relevant and in-demand knowledge and skills needed by employers.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (UTT)

On June 11, 2008, The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) was initially registered. UTT was conferred institutional accreditation by ACTT on December 17, 2010, for a period of seven (7) years. This public local institution has its main campus located in Arima. UTT has ten (10) teaching campuses, including those at the following locations: Chaguanas, Chaguaramas, Corinth, O'Meara, Point Lisas, San Fernando and Valsayn. The University also continues to maintain a presence in Tobago with the delivery of the Bachelor of Education programme at the Tobago Technology Centre in Canaan.

UTT initially focussed on programmes in engineering and technology. It subsequently introduced programmes outside of the engineering and technology fields, including disciplines in the maritime, social sciences, arts, humanities, education, sciences and agriculture. It currently offers over one hundred (100) programmes collectively at the certificate, diploma, bachelor's, post graduate diploma, master and doctoral qualification levels. Some of the campus programme offerings also carry specialised programme accreditation from external programme accrediting bodies such as Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology (IMarEST) and the Energy Institute. UTT's specially accredited programmes are in the areas of maritime sciences and petroleum engineering.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES (UWI)

The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus is part of a regional four-campus university. The other three (3) campuses are Cave Hill in Barbados, Mona in Jamaica and the Open Campus. The UWI delivers high quality education, research and services to all fifteen (15) contributing countries that support the university, as well as the Turks and Caicos Islands. The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus was initially registered on March 27, 2008 and currently holds institutional accreditation effective from February 05, 2011, for a period of seven (7) years. The St Augustine Campus of UWI comprises a main campus at St Augustine, a satellite campus at Mt Hope and a satellite site at the Academy of Nursing and Allied Health, El Dorado Campus. This last facility is shared with COSTAATT. It offers over three hundred (300) programmes collectively at the certificate, diploma, bachelor's, post graduate diploma, master and doctoral qualification levels across seven (7) faculties of learning. These faculties include law, engineering, social sciences, humanities and education, food and agriculture, science and technology, and medical sciences. The UWI St. Augustine Campus also offers programmes via full-time, part-time and evening university modes as well as via distance education.

As with UTT, some of the campus programme offerings also carry specialised programme accreditation from external programme accrediting bodies such as CAAM-HP, Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE), Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), The Geological Society of London and the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining. The programmes that currently have specialised programme accreditation are in the areas of engineering and health care.

ARTHUR LOK JACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (LOK JACK GSB)

The Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (Lok Jack GSB) has been registered with ACTT since June 01, 2009 and was conferred institutional accreditation on March 15, 2012, for a period of seven (7) years. Lok Jack GSB is a private partnership institution between The University of the West Indies and the private sector of Trinidad and Tobago. This joint venture was established in 1989. However, in October 2005, the Board of Directors and the University agreed to change the name of the business school in recognition of a donation made by Arthur Lok Jack, one of the Caribbean's leading entrepreneurs.

The Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business was established to provide post graduate education in business and management. It therefore offers post graduate certificates and post graduate diplomas and programmes at the master's and doctoral degree levels. The institution provides business and management education, training and consultancy services in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region. The Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business currently offers a complement of twenty-four (24) programmes. It only has one (1) main campus, located in Trinidad. It has teaching sites in Tobago and Guyana and is pursuing new markets. This institution offers full-time and part-time options to learning, as well as distance education programmes. Three (3) of its Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes are specially accredited by the Association of MBAs (AMBA).

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN (USC)

The University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) is a private, faith-based institution operated by the Caribbean Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which consists of the following countries: Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the British and U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Windward and Leeward Islands, excluding the French Overseas Departments.

USC was initially registered with ACTT on September 27, 2007. It subsequently was awarded institutional accreditation on May 17, 2012, for a period of seven (7) years. USC is also fully accredited by the Board of Regents, Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, Washington DC, USA. The university still holds affiliation with Andrews University in USA, in fact, its sole Doctoral programme is offered transnationally from Andrews University. USC has a main campus located in Maracas, St Joseph, Trinidad and *satellite sites* in Barbados and St. Lucia. USC offers a complement of fifty (50) programmes awarded at the certificate, associate, bachelor's, postgraduate diploma, master's and doctoral qualification levels. The institution offers both full-time and part-time programmes. USC offers programmes in the education, social sciences, theology, science, technology, humanities, nursing and allied health.

A satellite site is a branch of an institution which is primarily involved in the delivery of educational content and has minimal administrative function.

CIPRIANI COLLEGE OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES (CCLCS)

The Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies (CCLCS) was initially registered on June 10, 2008 and was conferred institutional accreditation for a five (5) year period commencing November 21, 2012. CCLCS offers full-time and part-time programmes at the certificate, diploma, associate and bachelor's degree levels. As a public local institution CCLCS has one (1) satellite campus located in Tobago, three (3) satellite sites in El Dorado and two (2) in San Fernando. The main campus is located off the Churchill Roosevelt Highway in Valsayn. Established in 1966 to provide education to workers, the College was named after Arthur Andrew Cipriani, a distinguished trade unionist of Trinidad and Tobago. The institution offers a suite of thirty-two (32) approved programmes in subject areas comprising of (but not limited to) Management, Project Management, Security, Safety and Health, as well as Labour Studies.

CARIBBEAN NAZARENE COLLEGE (CNC)

The Caribbean Nazarene College (CNC), located on Sam Boucaud Road, Cantaro, Upper Santa Cruz, was known as the Nazarene Training College in 1951, when it was started exclusively for the training of pastors and other Christian workers. The name of the institution was changed to Caribbean Nazarene Theological College (CNTC) in 1974, which was the same year it issued its first Bachelor of Theology degree. The institution then diversified to offer programmes in different disciplines, including Social Work, Counselling, Music, Human Resources Management and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The College was legally incorporated

in 2006 and the name of the institution was changed to Caribbean Nazarene College (CNC). CNC was initially registered on March 27, 2008 and was conferred institutional accreditation on July 19, 2013 for a period of five (5) years. Apart from its main campus, the College has a satellite or teaching site which is located in Central Trinidad. The institution offers a complement of seven (7) programmes at the qualification levels of diploma, bachelor's and master's. Its current approved programme offerings include Theology, Counselling and Social Work.

ST ANDREW'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE (SATC)

St Andrew's Theological College (SATC) is a faith-based, tertiary level educational institution with its sole campus located in San Fernando, Trinidad. SATC achieved initial registration on July 08, 2009 and was later conferred institutional accreditation on July 19, 2013, for a period of five (5) years. The College offers three (3) full- and part-time programmes at the certificate, diploma and associate degree levels. The College is a private, local institution founded in 1892 to provide training for local pastors of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad. It later opened its doors to students of other denominations. Although the College is administered under the authority of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad, through a Board of Directors, it is committed to theological training within an ecumenical setting with both students and lecturers coming from other Christian denominations.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INSTITUTE (TTHTI)

Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (TTHTI) was formally established by an Act of Parliament on May 31, 1972. The Institute has a main campus which is located in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, and provides post secondary and tertiary level education and training in the field of Hospitality and Tourism. It offers a range of programmes, including two (2) at the baccalaureate level, four (4) associate degrees, five (5) diplomas and approximately fourteen (14) short courses. TTHTI has attracted students from a number of English-speaking Caribbean islands, as well as Canada, Guadeloupe, Malawi, Philippines, Poland, St. Maarten, Suriname and Venezuela.

TTHTI was conferred institutional accreditation by ACTT on September 13, 2013, for a period of five (5) years, after having acquired its initial registration on June 16, 2008. TTHTI's complement of programmes includes one (1) transnational programme at the bachelor's degree level.

TOBAGO HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INSTITUTE (THTI)

Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI), owned by the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), is located at Blenheim, Mount St George, Tobago. THTI has been regarded as the premier institute in Tobago for post secondary and tertiary level education and training in Hospitality and Tourism.

THTI offers a range of programmes, including four (4) associate degrees in applied sciences and two (2) certificate programmes. It also conducts several short courses and workshops in Customer Service and Tour Guiding. After being granted initial registration on July 02, 2009, THTI was conferred institutional accreditation on September 26, 2014, for a period of five (5) years. THTI has the distinction of being the first and only indigenous Tobago institution to have gained accredited status from ACTT.

MIC INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY LIMITED (MIC-IT)

MIC-IT is the training arm of the Metal Industries Company Limited (MIC). It was established in 1974 as a joint venture of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT), the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNDP/UNIDO), and a number of key stakeholders including private and public local industries.

MIC was established with the objective of developing local capability in the making of tools, dyes and moulds, precision machining and manufacturing engineering. In 1994, two (2) programmes were accredited by the German Chamber of Crafts and Trades. These programmes were the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) and the Master Craftsman Programme. MIC-IT provides a complement of four (4) technical and vocational education programmes.

MIC-IT was initially registered as MIC on June 15, 2009 and was conferred accredited status on September 26, 2015, for a period of five (5) years. This Institute has four (4) campuses, with locations in Pointe-à-Pierre, San Fernando, Tobago and Macoya – the latter being its main campus. It also has several teaching sites located throughout Trinidad, which include (but are not limited to) Barataria, Arima and Port of Spain.

WEST INDIES SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY (WIST)

West Indies School of Theology (WIST) is a private, local, faith-based institution with its main campus located in Maracas, St Joseph, and two (2) teaching sites located in San Fernando and Tobago. WIST received its initial registration on January 28, 2009 and was conferred institutional accreditation on June 20, 2015, for a period of five (5) years. The institution offers programmes at the diploma, bachelor's and master's qualification levels and offers, within its complement of programmes, Social Science subjects in addition to the faith-based subjects. The institution also offers a combination of local and transnational programmes with eleven (11) of their twelve (12) programmes being locally developed programmes.

National Qualifications and Credit Framework

CHAPTER 4

One of ACTT's responsibilities is to create and implement a ***National Qualifications and Credit Framework (NQCF)***.

What is a qualification framework?

> A qualification framework is an instrument for the development, classification and regulation of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved[1].

The NQCF aims to establish a common reference point for unit- and credit-based qualifications. It is designed to assist in recognition of, and equivalence between, different qualification systems and their levels. It will regulate all qualifications at various levels of the education and training system in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically those at the higher and technical vocational education and training sectors.

The proposed NQCF is graphically represented as a Qualifications Profile Matrix. The Matrix identifies:

- levels of qualifications from the entry to doctoral levels
- suggested length of programmes and credits at each level
- learning objectives in five (5) areas

These areas are:

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Application and Practice
- Communication, Numeracy and ICT Skills

The National Qualifications and Credit Framework (NQCF) is a document that provides guidelines for the development of qualifications, identifies knowledge and competencies required at each qualification level and assigns credit values for each level

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[1]OECD (2006). *The development and use of 'Qualification Frameworks' as a means of reforming and managing qualifications systems.*

• Life Skills
• Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others

The different levels of education and training in Trinidad and Tobago are monitored through standards established by the Ministry of Education, ACTT and the National Training Agency (NTA). In developing the NQCF, ACTT has ensured that it addresses the education, training and workforce needs of Trinidad and Tobago, in technical vocational, academic and professional fields.

Benefits of the NQCF to students

• Makes mobility and progression possible within the education and training system both nationally and regionally
• Increases access to information on academic, technical vocational and professional qualifications
• Improves the quality of local and transnational programmes offered at institutions
• Facilitates transfer and articulation of learners between institutions and programmes

CHAPTER 5

Distance Learning in Higher Education
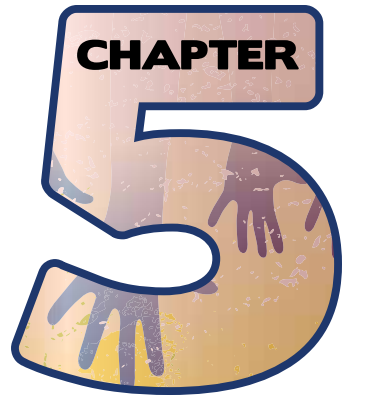
> **Distance education or distance learning is a mode of delivery of programmes of study whereby a student is not physically present in a classroom.**

Many centuries ago, providers of educational programmes realised that there were many persons who would have liked to pursue post secondary and tertiary education, but were unable to do so. Such persons needed a system that would have allowed them to balance their educational pursuits with other responsibilities. From as early as the 18th century, study from home was encouraged; printed material relevant to the area of study was mailed to the student and assignments and examinations returned through the same medium. This came to be known as 'correspondence courses'.

Distance education has evolved tremendously from its humble, early reliance on the postal service to its modern delivery system using current technology. Its impact on higher education has been more than 250 years in the making, with the pace of development accelerating dramatically in recent years.

With the advancement of technology, delivery of academic programmes has been transformed and many universities and colleges now offer programmes through the internet. Students can easily access learning materials and tutorial support electronically and can study at their own pace wherever there is internet connectivity. There is nothing like the comfort of home, even when it comes to getting an education. The age of the internet has transformed the way we do a lot of things, including the way we learn. It is now possible to earn a diploma or degree at home while fulfilling job or family commitments.

One of the most important trends in higher education is the increasing use of information technology in and outside the classroom. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has advanced significantly and has improved the ways in which teachers and students interact. Through the use of ICT, teachers and students are able to view and participate in classes from locations outside

the physical schools, such as their homes. Through this medium, students are able to view and contribute to and engage in classes, engage in group discussions, view assignment requirements and submit assignments through special software packages called Course Management Systems. Course Management Systems are tools that assist in making online learning easier[2], for example Moodle™ and Blackboard Collaborate™.

Moodle™

Moodle™ allows facilitators to post readings, presentations and links to websites on a webpage so that students may download information at their convenience. A facilitator can upload a video or podcast, or post the link to a video which students may access. The system also provides opportunities for discussion as participants can 'talk' to each other using a format very similar to Facebook™. Some Course Management Systems allow video chat, which is very similar to Skype™ or FaceTime™ sessions. Students and teachers are able to have a class 'live' via the internet, rather than using recordings and postings, at times convenient to each person and even share documents on the screen.

Blackboard Collaborate™

Blackboard Collaborate™ is an online collaboration platform that allows for many types of activities, such as distance learning, individual tutelage and meetings. This tool has several features such as recording, attendance registers, instant messaging and chat functions, as well as presentation modes that utilise PowerPoint. Blackboard Collaborate™ can be used in conjunction with Moodle™.

Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOCs)

The introduction of Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOCs) has made education more accessible to a greater number of persons. MOOCs are aimed at large-scale participation in courses, via the internet, from leading universities in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Europe and Asia. Students are not required to be enrolled in the university and there may be no entry requirements. MOOCs, however, do not typically result in the award of formal certification.

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[2]Aggarwal, A., Adlakha, V. & Ross, T. (2012). A Hybrid Approach for Selecting a Course Management System: A Case Study. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice, 11*(1), 283-300.

Mobile Learning

Mobile learning (M-learning) is a form of distance learning which uses mobile devices, e.g. handheld computers, MP3 players, notebooks, tablets and cellular telephones, to provide learning anytime or anywhere, in or outside the classroom. There are several advantages to M-learning that include the following:

- can replace physical books
- facilitates learning outside of the classroom
- provides quicker access to information when the need arises

Benefits and Challenges

While distance education has its appeal, it is advantageous to examine the pros and cons of distance education before choosing the path that is right for you.

Benefits of Distance Education

Flexibility
Through distance education, students can study at a time that works well for them. This level of flexibility facilitates working and studying at the same time. Additionally, students will gain practical experience whilst getting academic knowledge.

Convenience
- No need to commute
  Through distance education, students are able to study from anywhere. The concept of the classroom has changed from being in a fixed location to wherever it is possible to connect to the internet with a smart device, saving time, money and energy.
- Online submissions of assignments
  Submission of assignments no longer requires students to go to a fixed location. This affords students additional time to complete assignments and submit them with the click of a button.

Affordability
- Tuition for distance education programmes may be more affordable than the tuition for traditional face-to-face programmes. This depends on the institution and the programme of study.

- Through distance education, students have access to an overseas education without having to leave home. Commuting and relocation costs, such as, airfare, accommodation and clothing, are eliminated.

Study at your own pace
Not everyone has the same speed of learning. Generally, distance education allows for study at a pace that is comfortable for individual learners.

Increased number of schools offering distance education
With the advent of distance learning, students now have greater access to post secondary or tertiary programmes around the world. Therefore, students should not have a problem finding a programme of study in their chosen field.

24/7 access to study material
As most of the books and course material for distance education are available online, students gain instant access to the material, provided they have the required technology and internet connection to log-in to the institution. This significantly reduces the need to carry around textbooks.

Access to global perspectives
Institutions delivering distance education programmes provide opportunities for students to email or chat online with lecturers and international students. This allows for discussion and exchange of ideas from different parts of the world.

Challenges of Distance Education

Not suited for every type of learner
Studying through distance learning requires a high level of discipline and time management skills. Some students can function easily in this type of learning environment, but others require the structure of a formal classroom.

Greater risk of isolation
Some students fear that the distance education experience can be impersonal. The separation of students from lecturer and other students may cause feelings of detachment.

Greater risk of enrolling in a diploma mill
It is important to verify before enrolment that the distance education institution of choice is not a diploma mill. Qualifications attained from this type of institution will not be recognised by any regulatory body or employer.

High technology requirements
Students need access to up-to-date equipment, e.g. computer with reliable internet access and high bandwidth speed. Students will need to quickly become comfortable with the functions of the course management system used by the institution. Meeting these technical requirements may be difficult for some students who may be overwhelmed or challenged if they are not sufficiently computer literate. Technical difficulties and glitches within an unfamiliar learning environment may cause stress and frustration.

Inappropriate for some programmes
Distance education is not suitable for all fields of study. For example, one can study history completely online but some courses require physical facilities such as laboratories or practical training.

Reduced college/university experience
Most students believe that entering a university or college should be an 'experience', which includes more than classroom learning. Distance education lacks the on-campus atmosphere and 'college experience' that is, for some students, just as important as the classroom learning.

Distance education requires more reading
Distance education requires students to be proficient in reading since all texts and course materials are posted online. Students will be required to read all information prior to any 'classes'.

Quality Assurance of Distance Education Programmes

Originally, distance education institutions and programmes were viewed with suspicion and scepticism, especially because of the existence of diploma or degree mills. In addition, persons doubted whether qualifications earned through distance education were of the same value as those from traditional face-to-face institutions. It is therefore critical to verify that an institution delivering distance education programmes is legitimate and has systems to deliver them, **before** enrolling. Once this has been established, prospective students can feel confident that they will not be wasting valuable time and money.

The search to determine the legitimacy of an institution can be overwhelming. However, ACTT can assist as it provides information on the status of all post secondary and tertiary institutions, including those that deliver online programmes. Through its Statements on Recognition, ACTT verifies whether an institution and programme are recognised. In this way, ACTT also protects students' investment in post secondary and tertiary education.

There are several key factors that ACTT must consider in deciding whether institutions delivering distance education programmes are recognised:

- ACTT must first determine whether the institution and programme have been quality assured by a legitimate quality assurance body. In the USA, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) accredits distance learning institutions. The Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (ODLQC) performs this function for UK-based institutions.
- Entry requirements for the programme are appropriate for the level of the programme, e.g. CAPE/A' Levels or Associate degrees are usually required for entry into Bachelor degree programmes.
- Learning and assessment strategies are suitable for the programme. For instance, laboratory or practical work is necessary for the technical and vocational training and assessment.
- The institution awarding the qualification has systems to ensure that assignments and examinations are actually completed by the student and not by someone else.
- There is a rigourous system for supervising examinations and safeguards are put in place to prevent cheating or other irregularities.
- Graduates have the same access to further study as those who have earned qualifications through the traditional modes of study.

In quality assuring institutions and programmes, including those delivered via distance learning, employers are assured that prospective employees possess credible qualifications and competencies to perform in the workplace.

CHAPTER 6

Academic Fraud

Introduction

In today's world, there are people that have a desire to gain quick access to post secondary or tertiary education and qualifications. There have been instances where employees have used fake degrees to be eligible for employment or promotions. Trinidad and Tobago has not been excluded, as there have been several occasions over the past few years when persons have been accused of presenting false documents. There are also instances where persons who have the desire for better employment opportunities and higher pay have altered their certificates to reflect higher grades. In addition, some students use other people's work, claiming it as their own. These are all forms of academic fraud that are discussed in the following sections.

DIPLOMA (DEGREE) MILLS

What is a diploma mill/degree mill?

A **diploma mill**, also known as a **degree mill**, is a fraudulent institution that is not regulated by national or professional agencies. This type of institution offers bogus educational degrees. Diploma mills claim to give credit for life and work experience. Any certification obtained from a diploma mill is worthless and would **not** be considered for employment or further study.

Generally, diploma or degree mills:

- are not quality assured by any recognised accrediting body
- operate without being monitored and evaluated by official agencies
- use names similar to recognised higher education institutions
- provide minimal contact information, usually supplying only an email address

or P.O. Box mailing address instead of a street address for a physical administration building
- offer programmes at a much lower cost than a recognised higher education institution
- award academic diplomas and degrees which require little or no study

Diploma mills are most times supported by **accreditation mills**. An accreditation mill is an organisation that grants 'Accreditation' to higher education institutions without having government authority to operate as an accreditation agency.

How to spot a Diploma Mill

The following are advertising ploys used by diploma mills to attract prospective students:

GET A DEGREE FOR YOUR EXPERIENCE! Some diploma mills grant degrees for 'work or life experience' alone. Accredited universities will not award an entire degree based on a student's 'work or life experience'.

NO EXAMS, NO STUDIES, NO INTERACTION! If an institution is willing to award you a degree without any course work or examinations, chances are you are dealing with a diploma mill. Legitimate colleges or universities and online schools require extensive course work and interaction with lecturers.

GET YOUR DEGREE NOW! NO WAITING! If a university promises to award a degree to you in a few days, weeks, or even months, it is probably a diploma mill. Legitimate degrees, whether accessed face-to-face or online, take a much longer time to complete.

ONE-TIME FEE Many diploma mills quote a flat rate for an entire degree. Legitimate universities charge by the credit, course or semester.

CHEAP, CHEAP, CHEAP!!!
MANY DIPLOMA MILLS OFFER QUALIFICATIONS AT A COST THAT IS MUCH LOWER THAN A LEGITIMATE INSTITUTION.

Diploma mills may use aggressive marketing and sales tactics. Accredited institutions, including those that offer programmes via distance learning, will not aggressively advertise through spam. They will also not have 'limited time' offers where potential students are forced to make hasty enrolment decisions.

(https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0206-college-degree-scams)

How to avoid being trapped by diploma mills

Ensure the institution is accredited
Check to see if the institution is accredited by a *recognised* agency. Most legitimate accreditation agencies provide information on their accredited institutions information online. Accredited institutions in the United States of America may be found on the *Council of Higher Education Accreditation* (CHEA) website (http://www.chea.org/search). The United Kingdom's information may be accessed on the *Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education* (QAA) website (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports).

Institutions accredited by recognised agencies go through a meticulous review. Diploma mills may claim to be accredited but the accreditation may be from an accreditation mill.

Research the institution online
Make sure the institution has an online and a legitimate physical presence.

Consult with the Experts
Contact The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). Apply for a Statement on Recognition.

CREDENTIAL FRAUD

There has been an increase in the number of fraudulent certificates presented by persons who are seeking quick and easy access to employment, promotion or further education. With the advances in technology, the ability to produce false documents has been greatly enhanced. As a result, it may be difficult to distinguish between fraudulent and authentic documents.

Any document that has **not** been issued by an authorised representative of a bona fide institution, in the traditional format, containing the appropriate stamps, seals and signatures, is not legitimate.

There are several types of fraudulent academic documents:

- **Altered documents** – These are legitimate documents, e.g. certificates and transcripts, to which changes are made. These changes are mainly to grades/marks.

- **Fabricated documents** – These are produced to resemble documents from legitimate institutions or may be produced for institutions that are completely fictitious.
- **Manufactured in-house** – This is an unauthorised document produced by staff of a legitimate institution. The information contained may have been altered or completely fabricated.
- **Interpretive Translations** – This is an inaccurate translation of a document.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago refers instances of fraudulent certificates to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Fraud Squad.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of fraud which involves using someone else's work and claiming it as one's original ideas. For example, copying a passage straight from a text book, research paper or any other source into a paper without using quotations and properly citing the source of the information is considered plagiarism. Students should properly reference all work, ideas and phrases that are not their own.

The following are also forms of plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of one's work, whether credit is given or not
- presenting research data that has been falsified or made up in any way
- submitting the same work in more than one course without proper approval of the appropriate lecturers

Plagiarism also applies to the use of an image, video or music without receiving permission or acknowledging the source.

CHAPTER 7

Quality Assurance: A Regional Perspective

Introduction

The history of accreditation dates back as far as the late 1800s in the United States of America. The history of accreditation within the Caribbean territories, particularly that of institutional accreditation, is more recent. In the Caribbean, two (2) forms of accreditation exist: institutional accreditation and programme/specialised accreditation. There are several agencies in operation regionally that influence the accreditation landscape.

Institutional accreditation examines the overall quality of an institution, including its various sites and student support services (e.g., library, guidance and counselling, parking and safety). In the Caribbean, institutional accreditation is conducted by country-specific quality assurance agencies. The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), The Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC), the National Accreditation Council of Guyana (NAGC), the Antigua and Barbuda National Accreditation Board (ABNAB) and The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) are all agencies that confer institutional accreditation.

Certain disciplines require specialised accreditation and/or recognition in areas where an individual requires a licence to practice. Examples of these qualifications include engineering, medicine and theology. For specialised programme accreditation, the regional quality assurance body for the discipline conducts the evaluation of these specialised programmes.

The regional quality assurance agencies that conduct specialised accreditation include:

- the Caribbean Accreditation Council for Engineering and Technology (CACET);
- the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions (CAAM-HP); and
- the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA)

So, as an example, CAAM-HP is responsible for the quality assurance of all medical and other health professions in the Caribbean. The University of the West Indies and other Caribbean higher education institutions have undergone specialised programme accreditation.

THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF JAMAICA (UCJ)

The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) is a statutory body that was established by an Act of Parliament in 1987 with responsibility for quality assurance of tertiary education in Jamaica. UCJ is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Ministry of Education. It consists of members from various sectors of society, such as the public and private sectors, academic institutions, and professional bodies.

UCJ registers institutions and accredits programmes. It also evaluates credentials at the request of individuals, institutions and employers in Jamaica. The Council has an Accreditation Curriculum and Development Committee that reviews applications for registration and accreditation. Registration demonstrates that an institution has met the standards in order to offer tertiary education. The final decisions on registration and accreditation are made by this Committee.

BARBADOS ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (BAC)

The Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) was established by an Act of Parliament in 2004 and is responsible for the quality assurance of tertiary education in Barbados. BAC is a statutory body under the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. BAC is responsible for the registration and re-registration of institutions, as well as the accreditation and re-accreditation of institutions and programmes in Barbados. It also grants Certificates of Recognition of CARICOM Skills Qualification to persons who meet the conditions for recognition as skilled CARICOM nationals. Specifically, the BAC:

- registers local, regional and foreign based institutions that offer educational courses in Barbados
- maintains a record of all institutions that are registered and accredited by the Council
- accredits and re-accredits programmes of study and institutions operating in Barbados

- provides for the validation of new educational courses and programmes of study being offered by institutions operating in Barbados
- promotes a programme of accreditation and registration
- advises on the recognition of foreign-based institutions and their awards
- enhances the quality of post secondary and tertiary education and training in Barbados
- provides information on the quality and recognition of programmes of study and institutions to the public, including the annual publication of a list of accredited programmes and institutions in order to protect the interests of the public

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF GUYANA (NAGC)

The National Accreditation Council of Guyana (NAGC) is the principal body for quality assuring post secondary and tertiary level institutions operating in Guyana. It was established by an Act of Parliament, No. 12 of 2004. NAGC conducts and advises on the accreditation and recognition of educational and training institutions, providers, programmes and awards, as well as the registration of institutions within and outside Guyana that offer courses in Guyana. NAGC also determines equivalency of programmes and qualifications, in accordance with the framework established for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD (ABNAB)

The Antigua and Barbuda National Accreditation Board (ABNAB) was established in 2006 by an Act of Parliament, No. 4 of 2006 and is governed by a seven-member board of directors. ABNAB exists to guarantee a system of quality assurance in tertiary education in Antigua and Barbuda. The Accreditation Board offers the following quality assurance services: Conferment of Institution Title; Registration and Re-registration of Tertiary Institutions; Accreditation and Re-accreditation of Tertiary Institutions; Program Approval; Recognition of Foreign Programmes and Awards; Equivalence Assessment; and Institutional Strengthening and Development.

ABNAB also engages in visits to schools, colleges, service clubs and other institutions.

CARIBBEAN ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION IN MEDICINE AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONS (CAAM-HP)
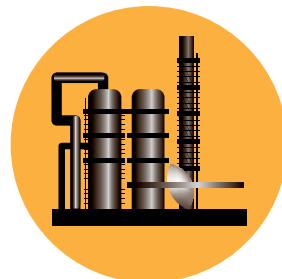
The Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP) is the legal organisation that accredits dental, medical, nursing and veterinary and other health professions required for practice in CARICOM Member States. Launched in July 2004, CAAM-HP was established in response to the growing number of external medical schools in the Caribbean and the need for regulation in the region. The membership of CAAM-HP comprises representatives from the medical, dental and veterinary professions, civil society, higher education institutions, students, members of accreditation bodies and the Caribbean Association of Medical Councils.

CAAM-HP seeks to:

- develop standards for the accreditation of programmes related to education in medicine and other related health professions
- select appropriate individuals as assessors for evaluation of programmes
- encourage a culture of accreditation and quality assurance in participating countries
- form collaborations with professional bodies to develop training programmes designed to create a regional cadre of trained assessors
- develop relationships with bodies external to the CARICOM region in relation to accreditation and quality assurance

CARIBBEAN ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (CACET)

The Caribbean Accreditation Council for Engineering and Technology (CACET) was officially established on November 26, 2009, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at a meeting of primarily members of the Caribbean Engineering fraternity, regional accreditation agencies, academics from regional universities, and representatives of CARICOM. It is a not-for-profit, non-political, non-governmental organisation with the primary purpose of providing accreditation services for the public good. Its main function is to accredit bachelor's and master's level academic programmes in engineering and engineering technology offered by institutions in the Caribbean.

CACET aims to:

- recognise and promote quality in bachelor's and master's level academic programmes in engineering and engineering technology;
- assist the public (including academic institutions, governments and industrial corporations) in making decisions pertaining to higher education in Engineering and Technology;
- encourage innovation, progress and growth in Engineering and Technology education;
- promote cooperation and mutual recognition of accreditation credentials by accrediting bodies, academic institutions, and other relevant organisations worldwide.

CARIBBEAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (CETA)
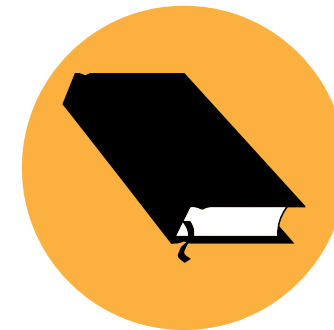
The Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA) was established in the early 1970s and officially launched in 1973 at Victory Heights Camp, Trinidad. It was then known as the Caribbean Association of Bible Colleges (CABC). Representatives from 21 training institutions scattered over 11 different territories were involved in the inauguration. These represented schools from four language areas.

In 1985, the name of the Association was changed from the Caribbean Association of Bible Colleges to the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association to better reflect its broadening services of graduate education and accreditation at all levels.

Seminars, workshops and conferences are held in conjunction with the biennial meetings. These have served as catalysts for examining unique Caribbean theological educational problems, programmes and ideologies.

CETA serves as the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean. The Evangelical Association is a member organisation of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

Important Dates and Milestones

2004
- July 09 — Act No. 16 of 2004 proclaimed
- September 02 — 1st Board of Directors appointed

2005
- February 14 — 1st Executive Director appointed
- Novemebr 28 — Official Launch of ACTT
- November 29-30 — ACTT hosts 2nd CANQATE Conference

2006
- April 24 — Launch of ACTT in Tobago

2007
- July 05 — Act No. 16 of 2004 amended by Act No. 16 of 2007
- November 14 — First institution registered: USC

2008
- July 07 — Act No 16 of 2004 amended by Act No. 10 of 2008
- September 21-26 — 1st Quality Assurance Week

2009
- June 29 — 1st Foreign Awarding Body recognised
- July 08 — TLI Registration deadline

2010
- June 30 — Recognition of Transnational Programme Deadline
- July 08 — MoA between ACTT & NTA signed
- November 01-30 — 1st Quality Assurance Month
- November 18 — COSTAATT accredited
- November 26 — New Board of Directors appointed
- December 17 — UTT accredited

2011
- February 5 — UWI accredited
- May 18 — 1st Accredited Institutions announced
- May 23 — Launch of Student Caravan
- October 13 — Launch of ACTT's online Compendium
- November 17-18 — 1st National Conference

2012
- March 15 — ALJGSB accredited
- April 28 — South Office opened; launch of Digital Map
- May 17 — USC accredited
- June 01 — Launch of Tobago Student Caravan, Digital Map and Tobago Office
- July 25 — Launch of shared IP Database
- November 21 — CCLCS accredited

2013
- April 30 - May 03 — 1st International Conference
- May 01 — MoC with CAEL & NARIC signed
- June 17 — 1st National Quiz
- July 18 — CNC accredited
- July 19 — SATC accredited
- September 13 — TTHTI accredited
- Octotber 30 — 1st issue of JQAHE

2014
- July 09 — ACTT's 10th Anniversary
- July 09 — Signing of MoCs with PSRBs
- September 26 — MIC, THTI accredited

2015
- February 25 — ACTT launches The Quality Institute
- April 14-17 — 2nd International Conference
- July 23 — WIST accredited

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or

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Tel/Fax: 639-1333

For More Information

To learn more about ACTT and the National Quiz, please visit:

Website
  http://www.actt.org.tt

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