

QUALITY ASSURANCE MONTH SUPPLEMENT 2017

Advancing Quality in Higher Education in
Times of Economic Uncertainty



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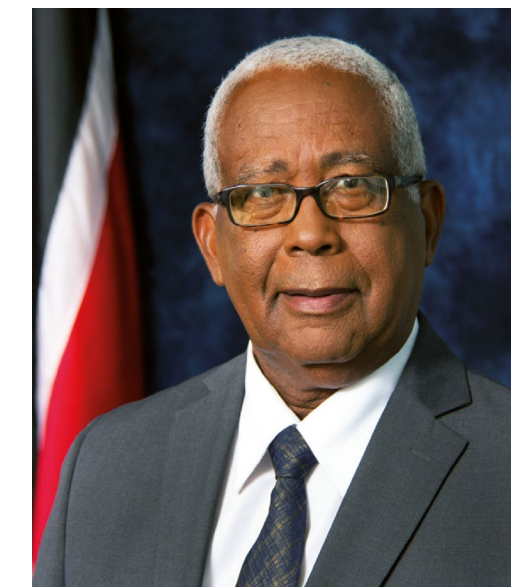
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UPCOMING EVENTS

- / 5th National Quiz: October 4 - November 2, 2017
- / Essay and Poster Competition: October 16, 2017 (Submission Deadline)
- / Excellence in Higher Education Awards Ceremony: October 31, 2017

A Message from The Honourable Anthony Garcia, Minister of Education



Quality, access and inclusion have been the guiding principles of the Ministry of Education for the past two years. To this end, the Ministry has made strides at every level of education, from ECCE to tertiary, to ensure that these principles are at the forefront of all its undertakings. The ideology of quality has permeated the higher education sector and is most apparent with the adjustments made to the Government Assisted Tuition Expenses (GATE) Programme.

The Ministry, committed to delivering the best possible education to our students, through stakeholder consultation and recommendations, made adjustments to the GATE programme that will better serve its recipients. The programme remains available to continuing students and is available to new students at all of the ACTT-accredited institutions across Trinidad and Tobago.

Understanding the importance of higher education and accessibility, the Ministry has reintroduced a Means Test to the GATE programme, which will benefit students in need of financial aid for their academic pursuits. Additionally, students who may be in a better financial position to support their own tuition expenses can still access between fifty to seventy-five percent financial assistance from the government—a noteworthy attainment for an island in the Anglophone Caribbean.

The Ministry of Education understands the economic challenges that have become a reality across Trinidad and Tobago and is steadfast in its efforts to ensure educational opportunities remain available to

all citizens. Through our training agencies, such as the Metal Industries Company Institute of Technology (MIC-IT), the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) and the National Energy Skills Center (NESC), the Ministry has provided multiple avenues for students to pursue both academic and technical/vocational studies, taking into account the interests of many of our stakeholders.

The financial situation of the country has not daunted the Ministry of Education. We will continue to pursue opportunities to ensure citizens can contribute to revenue generation for themselves and the economy. With a view to meeting the evolving needs of the twenty-first century learner and the deployment of such initiatives as STREAM, which focuses on Science, Technology, Research, Arts and Mathematics, the Ministry's gaze is fixed on ensuring our education sector is innovative and relevant.

Visit [The Ministry of Education](#) to keep abreast of what's happening in education and for education-related information such as GATE, training agencies, and more.



A Message from Dr John Prince, Chairman The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago



The importance of protecting citizens from bad, corrupt or unscrupulous organisations is indisputable and even more so, given scarce financial resources. This protection is required even in the area of higher education which is a billion dollar industry in Trinidad and Tobago. As the new Chairman of The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT), let me emphasise that the business of ACTT is the protection of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago through the quality assurance and regulation of the higher education sector. ACTT achieves this by carrying out its mandate under Chapter 39:06 (the Act), the Act which established ACTT. This Act established ACTT as the principal body in Trinidad and Tobago for conducting and advising on the accreditation and recognition of post secondary and tertiary educational and training institutions, programmes and awards, whether local or foreign, and for the promotion of the quality and standards of post secondary and tertiary education and training in Trinidad and Tobago.

To operate legally in Trinidad and Tobago, post secondary and tertiary institutions must hold one of two statuses with ACTT, either registration or accreditation. Further, foreign programmes offered in Trinidad and Tobago must also be quality assured by ACTT through the process of recognition. This signifies that the institutions and programmes have appropriate systems and resources for the delivery of quality education.

In accordance with the Act, registration is mandatory while accreditation is not. In this regard, our current registration system, which is akin to Pre-Accreditation in the United States, is a continuous process such that, after achieving registered status for either one, two or three years, institutions must submit annual reports

demonstrating that they are maintaining the standards required for registration and submit to reassessment prior to expiration of the registered status.

Accreditation examines the effectiveness of a registered institution's quality management system and practices. It is only available to institutions that offer locally developed programmes and meet the eligibility criteria set by the Council. Institutions can be awarded accredited status for five, seven or ten year periods. As with registered institutions, accredited institutions must maintain the accreditation standards and apply for and achieve continuing accreditation prior to the expiration of the previous period.

In addition to the quality assurance of institutions as mentioned above, the Council also quality assures tertiary level programmes which may be either locally developed or offered through partnership arrangements with foreign awarding bodies/institutions. Those that are locally developed must undergo Programme Approval, while those that are offered in conjunction with foreign entities undergo transnational programme recognition. The latter is important to note given that ACTT does not accredit overseas institutions or programmes.

One key feature of all of ACTT services is continual reassessment. As I started this message, I reiterate that the business of ACTT is the protection of the citizens of this country. We cannot achieve this without continually monitoring and reassessing the institutions and their educational offerings on a regular basis. This is our purpose and this is what we will continue to do under my tenure as Chairman.

A Message from Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago



I take this opportunity to welcome the newly appointed Board of Directors of The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). We are indeed excited that such an august group has agreed to take up the call of leading this agency over the next two years, as we face challenging times. The Council's staff and its stakeholders are cognisant of the massive task ahead and are grateful that these individuals have accepted the leadership challenge at this time. ACTT looks forward to providing continued excellent quality assurance service to the sector as has been the custom in its twelve (12) years of existence. The Council shall continue to innovate, adapt and grow with the needs of the sector, keeping excellent customer service at the forefront, while retaining its integrity.

Quality Assurance Month is once again being celebrated by the Council in October 2017. The theme for this year is **'Advancing Quality in Higher Education in Times of Economic Uncertainty'**. This theme is most relevant given the current state of the economy and the continuing debate regarding the funding of higher education and training. Quality Assurance Month will feature several activities aimed at promoting quality assurance in tertiary education and training, the highlight being the presentation of **Excellence in Higher Education Awards**, known collectively as the Quality in Tertiary Education (QuiTE) Awards. These awards are presented to institutions which demonstrate excellence in the implementation of Quality Management Systems, student monitoring and tracking systems, institutional research capacity and innovations in quality assurance. ACTT's recognition of the importance of institutional development in ensuring that students and stakeholders receive value for money drives the continuation of these awards.

ACTT has noted that teaching and learning strategies and research have been major areas of focus in which many institutions have been investing. This is indeed heartening as rapid changes in the education landscape, as well as technological developments, require all teaching professionals to adopt and adapt teaching modalities to facilitate the varying needs of students. In response to this, one of ACTT's QuiTE awards, the award for "Excellence in Teaching and Learning," is specifically designed to encourage institutions to introduce effective teaching and learning modalities for programmes they offer. It is noteworthy that this area has been useful in encouraging institutions to ensure that teaching styles facilitate the desired learning outcomes.

Quality education assurance will always be a driving force for ACTT. Our role is not solely to regulate but also to provide quality assurance support that improves on what exists within the higher education and training sector. As such, the Council continues to press forward with its activities to ensure that a culture of quality exists in the sector. This, in our view, will result in world class institutions and higher quality graduates, capable of contributing to the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

In this regard, it is indeed an honour and a pleasure to extend our sincerest thanks and appreciation to all stakeholders who would have contributed to yet another successful year.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago is headed by a Board of Directors appointed by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. ACTT is pleased to announce the appointment of the following persons:

- / Dr John Prince – Chairman
- / Dr Ruby S. Alleyne – Deputy Chairman
- / Prof. Emeritus Funso Aiyejina
- / Dr Alvin Ashton
- / Lennon Ballah-Lashley
- / Dr Gaynelle Holdip

- / Dr Naseem Koylass
- / Archibald Prime
- / Dr Sandra Reid
- / Dr Dave Seerattan
- / Prof. Emeritus Winston Mellowes
- / Michael Bradshaw – Executive Director (*Ex Officio*)



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**Dr Verleen Bobb-Lewis,
Technical Advisor
Division of Education,
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Tobago House of Assembly**



**RE-DEFINING QUALITY IN TERTIARY
EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Human and institutional interactions may be characterised as a never ending chain of supplier/customer relationships in which suppliers provide goods and services to customers. The quality of the good or service is described in terms of the extent to which the good or service satisfies the needs of customers. Tertiary level institutions provide a wide range of goods and services, including research, the application of knowledge, teaching and preparing students to participate in society and economy. As suppliers, tertiary level institutions establish criteria for the provision of these goods and services based on regional and international best practice that assures the quality of the good or service. The espoused quality serves as a basis for the validation and accreditation of tertiary level institutions.

Quality education has now become a buzz phrase universally, with varied acceptable definitions. Tertiary education quality is intrinsically linked to customer satisfaction and the extent to which institutions are able to meet the needs of students, parents, business and the social and economic sectors. In times of economic uncertainty, universities, as the main supplier of higher education, should rethink their core purpose from the traditional focus on producing academics that seek jobs after graduation, to a more progressive approach as suppliers to meet the needs and support the functions of society. These functions should provide students with intellectual skills to innovate, as well as present suitable learning opportunities that would eventually accrue to the benefit of the students and the society in general.

The nature of the current supply of tertiary education services is reflected in the thousands of energetic and excited university graduates who visit private and public sector institutions eager to be accepted for their dream job but who, eventually, accept any available job within the labour market. Sometimes these jobs are diametrically opposed to their field of study. Most graduates were educated at accredited local, regional or international universities that purport to be advancing quality higher education. Unfortunately, the majority of these graduates were educated to be employees and not employers.

While several underpinning factors such as relevance have exerted significant influence on the quality of graduates, these factors are impacted by policies that are direct responses to contractions in the national economy. New governance structures, automation and communication technologies have been introduced to increase efficiencies and lower costs. Additionally, governments have provided financial support to underserved populations to access tertiary education and needs analyses have been conducted to bring tertiary level teaching in line with national development and the social and emotional needs of students. Taken together, these policies should align the programmes at tertiary level institutions with entrepreneurship and innovative thinking in order to prepare graduates to create jobs rather than depend on public and private sector workplaces for employment.



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The National Energy Skills Center (NESC) was established in 1997 out of a Trust Deed between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Atlantic (formerly known as Atlantic LNG). The objective was to create a skills-development centre which would produce skilled labour consistent with the industrial needs of the country. The NESC has 11 Campuses across Trinidad and Tobago, providing training to over 1700 students annually in various occupational areas. In developing our course offerings, we continue to be responsive to the needs of Industry and have significant assistance from industry experts. Apart from training for the general public, the NESC also provides customised corporate training solutions through its Business Development Department. The NESC has within recent years developed a reputation at the international level with ongoing training for Nigerian Nationals and Training Agreements signed with Public and Private Sector Companies in other parts of the world.



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Gabriel Faria, CEO Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce



BRIDGING THE GAP

Over the last 15-odd years, there has been greater access to educational opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago – more so than in any other previous period. When it comes to the private sector, however, employers, employees and entrepreneurs come face to face with the skills gap between their college/university training and the demands of business.

Despite the rising unemployment rate in T&T, businesses continue to complain about the inability to source skilled labour, which adversely affects the productive potential of the economy. A survey done for Trinidad and Tobago revealed that more than 50% of Social Sciences graduates from a certain long-standing university perceive their degree to be irrelevant to their current job. Even graduates who have ventured into entrepreneurial pursuits have struggled to succeed when confronted with the challenges of the real-world business environment.

Not surprisingly, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has also produced empirical evidence alluding to the existence of a skills gap in T&T. These findings are indicative of the shortcomings that plague our higher education system, signaling the need for a rethink – especially if the private sector is expected to lead the charge in economic diversification.

The T&T Chamber has been doing its part in its attempt to bridge the skills gap by launching two programmes:

- / Consultancy and Mentorship Programme
- / Business Insights Series... training for business by business.

The mentorship component targets both recent undergraduates and entrepreneurs. Mentors with considerable business experience volunteer their services to impart knowledge and guidance to ensure the targets are far more “real world” ready.

Business Insights is premised on the fact that the Chamber harnesses the skills, knowledge and experience of business leaders. Through them, rich, relevant content is then made available, live online or on-demand, for the benefit of tertiary level students, business incubator participants and the wider business community. Key learnings are offered free of charge (in many instances) through informational sessions, webinars and armchair discussions. If Business Insights achieves its intended success, T&T’s next generation of entrepreneurs and corporate go-getters stand to be better prepared – technically and practically – for the unfolding realities of their environment.

Despite these, and initiatives offered by other institutions, there is still the need for better policy alignment with the country’s development goals. At the institutional level, curriculum re-design must be effected in such a way that the skills acquired match job requirements. Greater relevance is critical, therefore, as is employer engagement in the process. Effective partnerships between business and tertiary institutions can narrow the current gaps, while improving on the pool of human capital available locally. To foster a sustainable private sector, the T&T Chamber recognises that some disruption is required to change the predictable outcome. We continue to do our part to impact positively on the national community.



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Nyron Seaton, Accreditation Officer The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago



THE CASE FOR A HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FUND IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Government funding in higher education in many countries is inextricably linked to quality assurance of institutions and programmes. In Trinidad and Tobago, like many other countries worldwide, quality assurance is used as a basis for allocating funding at the tertiary level especially for accredited higher education institutions.

Reflecting on the issue of quality in the context of higher education, Lomas (2001), as cited in Kis (2005), revealed that of the five (5) categories of quality, only 'fitness for purpose' and 'transformation' are applicable to higher education. Within the framework of higher education, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) glossary defines quality assurance as "the process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (input, process and outcomes) fulfils expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements"¹.

In the Caribbean region, small island developing states (SIDS) are challenged in the quality in the provision of tertiary education, according to Michaela Martin (2010). Some of the challenges faced by the SIDS include: international compatibility of qualifications offered by indigenous tertiary education providers, given nationals' propensity for migration; lack of sufficiently trained persons in the quality assurance field, given the populations; a limited number of long-entrenched tertiary education institutions; and, lastly, the inability to realise economies of scale given the smallness of the tertiary education sector.

Campbell and Rozsynai (2002) acknowledged a number of factors that may impact the cost of evaluations for tertiary level institutions, such as remuneration for the subject matter experts, the number and types of institutions, the focus of the quality review and the frequency of the evaluations. An argument may be made that the small size and the lack of economies of scale of the tertiary education sector within the Caribbean – specifically Trinidad and Tobago – drive up the cost of engaging in quality assurance. In the United Kingdom, which is home to a more mature tertiary education sector than Trinidad and Tobago, the burden borne by higher education institutions (HEIs) engaging in external quality assurance is estimated to be in excess of £250 million in 2004. As cited in Kis (2005), "Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995) argue that fully external quality assurance mechanisms are likely to be a costly and inefficient means of achieving lasting quality improvement".

One mechanism by which HEIs can build robust internal quality management systems is Higher Education Quality Improvement Funds. The Higher Education Quality Improvement

Funds are funds dedicated to improving the quality of tertiary level institutions and programmes within countries. Palestine, in collaboration with the World Bank and the European Union, has developed a Quality Improvement Fund², the main objective of which is "to provide support to improve the quality of Palestinian tertiary education institutions and programmes so they are (i) relevant to the job market and economic development of Palestine; (ii) made competitive with international standards; and (iii) capable of developing income generating programs".

Argentina established a Fund for University Quality Assurance (FOMECA), which ran from 1995 to 2004 with the following objectives:

"a) to promote quality improvements at the graduate and undergraduate levels, through technical assistance for curriculum changes; b) to promote an integral vision of university activity focused on all levels of teaching, scientific and technological research, and university links with the community; c) to encourage and facilitate teacher training and updating of their skills; and d) to encourage investment in university infrastructure and modernization of equipment (p. 3)".

In Trinidad and Tobago, the prevailing economic climate will severely hamper investment in higher education for some time. The broad mandate of the Higher Education Quality Improvement Funds will be to provide support to improve the quality of Trinidad and Tobago's post secondary and higher education institutions and programmes so that they are better aligned with the job market and economy of Trinidad and Tobago. Secondly, it will ensure that local institutions are capable of developing internationally competitive, income-generating programmes. The establishment of the proposed Higher Education Quality Improvement Fund would upgrade the human and physical resources of institutions within Trinidad and Tobago and reposition them to engage in meaningful cross-border trade in educational services with its attendant contributions to national income. In conclusion, the creation and implementation of a Higher Education Quality Improvement Fund will strengthen the institutional capacity of the varied HEIs within Trinidad and Tobago.

¹ INQAAHE Glossary. <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/#assurance>
Visited at 24th November 2015.

² http://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/TEP_QAF_perations_Manual_April_2009-Final.pdf
Visited at Thursday 14, January 2016.



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- Bachelor of Applied Science (B.A.Sc.) in Computer Engineering – Network and Telecommunication Engineering
- Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Information and Communication Technology



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Dr Ruby S. Alleyne, Vice-President Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness The University of Trinidad and Tobago



UTT'S ROLE IN UNLOCKING HUMAN POTENTIAL

In May 2017, the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development approved the CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy as a regional roadmap for the development of people. The Strategy holds out a vision of 'Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential', which would be accomplished by "enabling our people as they progress from their earliest years to senior adulthood to reach their full potential in their personal and working lives, contributing to their families, communities and national and regional development (CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy, p.28)" It is a vision which highlights the need for transformation of education and training systems, which play an integral role in producing citizens with the knowledge, competencies and attitudes to participate meaningfully in social and economic development.

The Strategy also sets an agenda for action that seeks the cooperation of regional leaders, through their education and training systems, in promoting the development of attributes of the Ideal Caribbean Person as adopted by CARICOM Heads of Government at their 18th Summit in 1997. The revival of this objective, which seemed to have been either forgotten or ignored over the years, is laudable. Originally recommended as 'a useful lens through which to apprehend the ultimate desirable outcome of the education system', the vision of the Ideal Caribbean Person, in summary, describes one who:

- / respects human life
- / has self-confidence and self-esteem
- / values family life, community unity and lives in harmony with the environment
- / is morally responsible and accountable to self and community
- / embraces diversity in religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- / has an informed respect for Caribbean cultural heritage
- / demonstrates independent and critical thinking and applies innovative skills to solve problems

- / applies creative imagination and nurtures its development in the economic and entrepreneurial spheres in all areas of life
- / demonstrates a positive work ethic
- / seeks to improve his physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and to contribute to the health and welfare of his community and country
- / develops his full potential and seeks to do the same for others
- / embraces differences and similarities between females and males as a source of mutual strength

Although conceptualised 20 years ago, this ideal still resonates with educators throughout the region and, in particular, with those at The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). UTT holds the distinction of being the first university in the English-speaking Caribbean to have been accredited by a national accreditation body on December 17, 2010 and our Mission is focussed on creating an entrepreneurial culture. Through the range of programmes we offer, in areas such as engineering, maritime studies, marine sciences, environmental studies, the performing arts, carnival studies, fashion design, animation, music technology, health administration, aviation, ICT, sports, education, agriculture, food technology and security and public safety, UTT is committed to producing a distinctive graduate.

The recent savage attack on the islands by Hurricanes Irma and Maria has laid bare the Caribbean's vulnerability and the fragility of many of its systems. Amidst the destruction, as the region begins to clear the debris and to direct resources to the rebuilding efforts, it is the indomitable spirit of the Caribbean people that must rise to the challenge. At UTT, we are future-focussed and, in the interest of national and regional development, we seek to develop graduates who are resourceful, resilient and productive workers; adding value to their communities, contributing to nation-building and demonstrating socially responsible and morally acceptable behaviour. This is the ideal to which we are all committed.



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Sharon Delochan, Assessment Officer Qualifications and Recognition Department, ACTT



WHO WILL GUARD THE GUARDS? — EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Quality assurance is an integral part of any country's higher education system. It is the mechanism through which institutions and the programmes they offer are assessed by an external quality assurance agency (EQAA) to determine the degree to which they meet defined quality standards. While this should inspire confidence in the institutions, stakeholders may remain sceptical of the quality of these institutions if they are not convinced of the integrity of the EQAA conducting the evaluations.

International good practice dictates that EQAAs also submit to evaluations undertaken by an independent body. Through this process, agencies would have the benefit of exposure to good practice, resulting in enhancement of operations, greater accountability and transparency and improvement in the higher education sector. Further, stakeholders can be reasonably assured that institutions evaluated and approved by EQAAs that have themselves been quality assured are meeting rigorous education standards.

There are several international organisations which conduct reviews of EQAAs, notably the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is an association of EQAAs and higher education institutions whose main objective is to advance theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education. INQAAHE has developed Guidelines of Good Practice (GGP) against which the operations of EQAAs are reviewed.

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) promotes European co-operation in the field of quality assurance in higher education, and disseminates information and expertise among its members and other stakeholders to develop and share good practice. ENQA has developed Standards and

Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education, which includes Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance Agencies.

Although operating in different contexts, there are standards for review of EQAAs that are common to the two organisations. EQAAs must provide evidence of, inter alia,

- / legal establishment and recognition by a competent external/public authority
- / independence and autonomy in their operations and decisions not influenced by third parties
- / engagement of internal and external stakeholders to inform criteria and standards for review of institutions, as well as their own development and improvement
- / published criteria and standards for review of institutions
- / appropriate and adequate resources to carry out their functions
- / mechanisms for internal review

At the regional level, there is an Inter-Governmental Agreement to establish the CARICOM Accreditation Agency for Education and Training (CARICOM, Secretariat, 21 June 2007) which would, among other things, participate in the external review of national accreditation bodies; seek to harmonise standards of quality and quality assurance procedures and develop guidelines for good practice. However, in the absence of this agency, national bodies will have to seek to have reviews conducted by extra-regional authorities.

ACTT also values the external evaluation process by an internationally recognised agency. Such an activity will involve a comprehensive and critical review of criteria, standards and procedures, with input from all stakeholders. It is envisaged that one of the major outcomes of this process is that EQAAs will be better able to serve the tertiary education sector and the country.

Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professional Associations Ltd. The Professional Centre



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THE PROFESSIONAL CENTRE

WHO WE ARE

The Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professional Associations Limited (TTGPA) is a non-governmental organisation whose membership is open to professional associations of Trinidad and Tobago. Registered in 1974, TTGPA manages The Professional Centre, which is run by a Management Council of fourteen persons, nominated and elected annually by representatives of member organisations. The 2017/2018 Executive team is led by Camille Cumberbatch-Dhoray (President), Tracey Chin (Vice President), Charmaine Gomez-Dolly (Secretary), Leroy Calliste (Treasurer) and Deborah Gamaldo (Assistant Secretary/Treasurer).

Member organisations of the TTGPA currently cover the following professionals: Accountants, Architects, Contractors, Engineers, General Medical Practitioners, Internal Auditors, Registered Nurses, Optometrists, Planners, Real Estate Agents, Surveyors, Dentists, Librarians, Advocates for Women's NGOs, Pharmacists, Reading Specialists, Advertising Executives, Psychologists and Safety Experts. As at September 2009, there

were approximately 8000 individual professionals associated with the TTGPA. This indicates a significant intellectual, creative and economic resource for our country.

The Centre is generally intended to promote local professional cooperation; offer practical facilities, by way of accommodation and shared secretarial services, to professional societies; encourage a joint professional approach to problems of education, training, relations with schools and universities; and foster collective advice to the Government in the fields of legislation, manpower development and planning.

Professional associations have existed in different forms and with different responsibilities in countries around the world for many years. By and large, they form an essential service to the public in regulating professional activities and ensuring that competent professionals are available to practise in the public domain.

WHAT WE DO AND THE ROLE WE PLAY IN SOCIETY

Professional associations have a role in ensuring that members maintain a high level of academic competence and professional experience. Moral standards of the profession must also be monitored to maintain dignity and public confidence in the profession. TTGPA therefore encourages the development of the professional through continuing education and mentorship that will provide a better quality of service to the community. TTGPA recognises the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) as, in this day of expanding technology, professionals need to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills to deliver a professional service to their customers, clients and the community. It helps the professional to remain interested and interesting.

TTGPA also prides itself on its commitment to corporate social responsibility and giving back to the national community. The organisation hosts Professional Services days across the country providing free professional and medical advice to patrons. Our members are willing and happy to volunteer their time and expertise in this regard. Additionally, we have hosted several pre-national

budget events to arm the public and business community with the relevant information on the impact of the national budget. We also host a professional development series that seeks to develop an individual's soft skills.

The TTGPA recognises its role in the wider business and national communities and remains committed to its mandate of supporting the development of professionals in Trinidad and Tobago and, ultimately, society as a whole.

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BUILDING NETWORKS FOR LEARNING FLOWS

Alvin Toffler stated: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." The promotion of learning literacy challenges the traditional emphasis of higher education on content knowledge and points to the need for more emphasis on the processes and places of learning. The higher education environment must be engineered to promote the development of self-transcendence, an affective capability necessary for constant examination of the environment and commitment to solving today's challenges. The Institute for the Future (2013) indicates that the shift required is from learning that takes place in institutions that are stable, hierarchical structures, to learning flows where learning resources and opportunities are abundant and learning occurs in everyday experiences. Learners are encouraged to dip autonomously into continuous learning flows as they seek to resolve problems and grasp opportunities. The higher education organisation becomes an organisational facilitator which provides continual learning and feedback in collaborative, real-world spaces.

Today's environment is often considered to be VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The term tends to convey negative emotions of fear, but each dimension also embodies its mechanisms to enable successful manipulation and empowerment. According to Sean Ness, Director of the Institute for the Future, developing a positive VUCA is not only possible, but necessary for the rapid cycles of ideas to action in innovative environments.

Volatility is addressed by an ongoing urge to understand; uncertainty is reduced and clarity is achieved by collecting and sharing information in large networks; ambiguity is tackled by constantly testing and revising cause-effect relationships; and clarity is obtained by understanding the interconnected variables that contribute to the phenomenon's complexity. Such behaviours and competencies are basic to learning literacy. The passionate learner, with unassailable ethics, positive behaviours and the courage to execute, is at the forefront of the future. Higher education is therefore charged to reduce the physical and psychological distance between the learner and the society, promoting collaboration in problem-solving networks and facilitating the habit of continual learning.



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I wish someone had told me that diploma mills exist.

After years of hard work, time and money, all I have to show for it is a fraudulent qualification!

Before starting the programme, I really should have invested in a Statement on Recognition from ACTT.



Ronald Ramlogan, Team Leader Public Relations and Research, Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago



QUALITY EDUCATION CRUCIAL TO FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Experts the world over continue to describe the global economic landscape as challenging and fragile. The effects of capricious United States policies, Brexit, terrorist activities, natural disasters, rapid technological advancements, the ongoing refugee crisis, continued realignment and reconfiguration of alliances and axes among the world's leading economies have continued to engender economic, social, political and institutional uncertainties, especially in advanced economies.

The resultant shifts will invariably have an impact on developing nations and emerging economies like Trinidad and Tobago, even as we continue to navigate extremely harsh realities due to significantly reduced Government revenue and overall economic stagnation. Moreover, our values, attitudes and behaviours, especially the pervasive culture of dependency, sense of entitlement and complete disregard for the rule of law through corrupt practices at all levels, serve to further impede our efforts at sustainability and transformation.

It is clear that a measure of recalibration is required. This leads to a fundamental question of the steps or actions required to nurture and build a better Trinidad and Tobago. The Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA) contends that education, training, lifelong learning and the overall quality of our higher education system is a key component of this recalibration process.

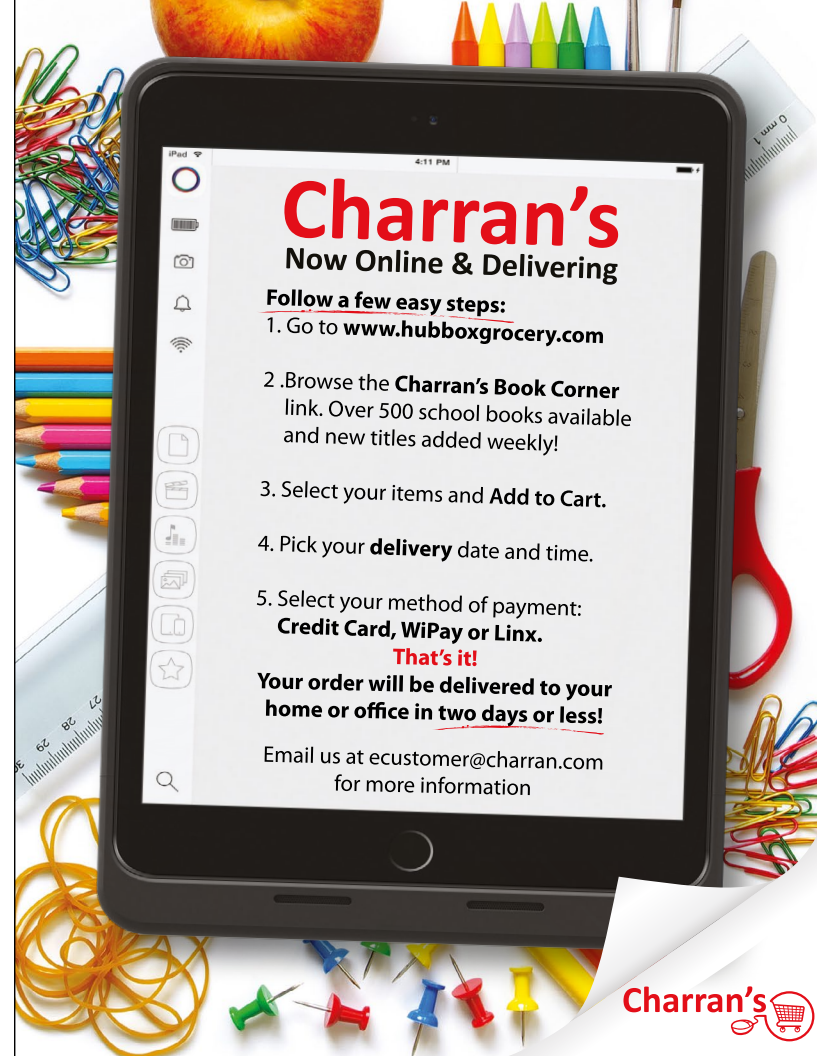
In June 2010, the International Labour Organization (ILO), at the request of G20 Leaders, created an international training strategy as part of a wider effort to strengthen recovery efforts following the global financial crisis of 2008. There was a recognition that quality jobs and an employment-oriented framework was essential for future economic growth and, as a result, this training plan focused on prioritising education, lifelong learning, job training and skills development activities as a vital link to growth related strategies.

Following a further analysis of a significant body of knowledge and discussions on this recovery strategy by G20 Employment and Labour Ministers, the following conclusions were reached:

- / Broad availability of quality education is a key foundation for future training;
- / There is a need to build solid bridges between the world of work and training providers in order to match skills provision to the needs of enterprises;
- / Encouraging continuous workplace training and lifelong learning will enable workers and enterprises to adjust to an increasingly rapid pace of change;
- / There is a necessity to anticipate and build competencies for future needs;
- / Broad access to training opportunities is crucial, for women and men, particularly from vulnerable groups like the youth, lower skilled workers, workers with disabilities and those from rural communities.

Indeed, any quality system of higher education should encompass each of these characteristics. Competitive economies require access to a well-educated workforce with advanced skills, training and differentiated expertise. What is even clearer is that technological innovation will feed directly into the demand for skills in the labour market. It is one of the more worrying paradoxes of the current global crisis in labour markets that, even in conditions of high unemployment, employers are unable to find the right skill sets to fill existing vacancies. Overcoming this problem first requires a national system of manpower planning designed to promote continuous synergies in the links between education, training and the world of work, along with a comprehensive understanding by all stakeholders, of the major changes that are to be expected in the future as the alignment unfolds.

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PROMOTING TVET IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY



Creating alternatives for using and transforming resources to satisfy the needs of a population is crucial to sustainable development. The sustainability of nations demands economic diversity and growth, global competitiveness, social equity and environmental conservation, all of which Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) integrates. TVET must be recognised as a primary platform upon which sustainable practices are to be built, as it cultivates a workforce with the practical skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for sustainable development. The workforce created is therefore more productive and responsive to the needs of emerging and new industries, as well as scientific and technological advances.

Established in 1999, the National Training Agency (NTA) is the central regulating body responsible for coordinating, harmonising, standardising, monitoring and evaluating all TVET in Trinidad and Tobago. The main role of the NTA is to maintain a high-quality TVET system and, in so doing, provide oversight for all formal and non-formal training efforts in Trinidad and Tobago. The NTA implemented a system for quality assurance in TVET based on guidelines from the regional body – the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA) – which are essential in establishing and maintaining credibility in the TVET system.

Given that the role of quality assurance in TVET is to maintain standards in the TVET system, the CANTA guidelines, when applied, contribute to a process-oriented and proactive, demand-led TVET system. The inputs include Labour Market Research and Occupational Standards, which prescribe the competencies to be achieved and contribute to the responsiveness of the TVET system. Emphasis is also placed on the efficient use of resources and cost-effectiveness within the system. This model is used to guide the implementation of the Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification (TTNVQ) and the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). The NTA continually assesses and provides relevant information on TVET and workforce development, which includes the demand for, and supply of, human resources in collaboration with state and other agencies.

A high-quality TVET system, as promoted by the NTA, significantly contributes to poverty reduction by providing more options for, and easier access to, training opportunities that enhance employability and stimulate entrepreneurial activity. In many countries, an improvement in the standard of living is associated with heightened economic activity and higher employment rates contribute to social stability and lower crime rates.

During these tough economic times, diversification of the Trinidad and Tobago economy is critical if we are to overcome the challenges ahead. The diversification agenda demands changing skill requirements in the economy and a sustainable mechanism for maintaining skills development in the informal economy. Through Technical and Vocational Education and Training, the NTA is poised to support this agenda by ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago has an adequate supply of appropriately skilled, certified, innovative, enterprising and entrepreneurial personnel, capable of contributing to the successful navigation of the challenges ahead.



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