

# **Your questions answered on registration of post secondary and tertiary education institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

All post secondary and tertiary level institutions, local or transnational/foreign, operating in Trinidad and Tobago must be registered by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).

Post secondary or tertiary institutions must first submit an application for registration in Trinidad and Tobago. If necessary, the post secondary or tertiary institution must obtain ACTT's approval to use the institutional title that it wishes to be registered under.

The institution is required to submit to an evaluation by ACTT to ensure compliance with the minimum quality requirements for post secondary and tertiary institutions. If the institution meets these requirements for registration, it is issued a *Certificate of Registration* by ACTT. Registered institutions are placed on the Register of Post secondary and Tertiary Institutions.

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

Provider is a person or body offering programmes or courses leading to an award or credit.

Tertiary education means the teaching and learning process following the completion of secondary education or its equivalent and leading to the awards at the sub-baccalaureate, baccalaureate and post baccalaureate levels.

### ***Q: Why is registration by ACTT mandatory?***

A: One of ACTT's responsibilities is to improve the quality of post secondary and tertiary education delivered in Trinidad and Tobago. By raising the standard of post secondary and tertiary education, ACTT is protecting the interests of students, parents and other stakeholders in the tertiary education sector. Registered institutions are required to establish, document, implement and maintain a Quality Management System (QMS). A working QMS ensures that the institution effectively delivers training at a consistently high level. An institution which fails to register with ACTT by 8<sup>th</sup> July 2008, will be guilty of an offence and according to subsection 26 (5) of Chapter 39:06, in addition to any other penalty imposed by this section will be liable on summary conviction to a fine of twenty thousand dollars and to a further fine of five hundred dollars for each day that such offence is continued after written notice of the offence has been given by ACTT.

### ***Q: What are ACTT's criteria for registration?***

A: Registration criteria fall into 7 categories:

- Legal, Policy and Regulatory Requirements
- Governance and Administration
- Quality Management System
- Resource Management
- Teaching-Learning Process
- Review
- Continuous Improvement

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***Q: How does ACTT determine if an institution meets the registration criteria?***

A: A gap analysis of the completed Application for Registration and subsequent evidence is conducted to determine if the minimum requirements for registration have been met. If the minimum requirements have not been met, additional assistance may be obtained from a Quality Enhancement Officer from ACTT before re-submitting the application. If the institution has met the minimum requirements for registration, a site evaluation is conducted and if ACTT issues a Certificate of Registration to the institution.

***Q: What does registered status mean?***

A: An institution that is issued a Certificate of Registration will be placed on a Register of *Post secondary and Tertiary Institutions* in the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (MTEST).

A registered institution may seek accreditation from ACTT, at which stage, on the basis of having met the criteria for registration, it would be subject to an interview to determine eligibility for the status of Candidate for Accreditation and allowed to proceed to the next stage in the accreditation process.

***Q: When does an institution's registration status expire?***

A: The institution can be registered for a period of up to 3 years prior to re-application and re-evaluation.

***Q: When should an institution re-apply for registration?***

A: The institution must apply to ACTT for re-registration before the registration period expires. An institution that allows its registered status to expire will be in breach of Chapter 39:06.

***Q: What is the next step for institutions that have had their request for registration denied?***

A: The institution can appeal this decision. According to Chapter 39:06 an Appeals Committee shall be appointed by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Grounds for appeal**

An appeal may be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- that the Council failed to comply with the procedures laid down in the Act or any regulations or rules made under the Act and that the failure amounted to a significant breach of such procedures;
- that the decision of the Council is based on information that is substantially incorrect or of insufficient weight to support the decision; or
- that the decision of the Council was arbitrary, or unreasonable, or inconsistent with or unsupported by the policies of the Council.

**Procedures for filing an appeal**

A duly authorised representative of the institution must:

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- issue a notice of Intent to Appeal in writing no later than 14 calendar days after receiving formal notification from ACTT of the decision;
- file an appeal in writing addressed to the Chairman of the Board of the Council within 30 days of receiving formal notification from ACTT of the decision;
- provide the ground(s) for appeal, including a statement of the reasons for each ground, and supporting documents;
- submit a non-refundable processing fee of TT\$1,000 (TT\$1,500 in the case of transnational institutions) to ACTT.

### **Processing an appeal**

Each party shall bear the cost of its own expenses, including legal expenses associated with the appeal. Upon final disposition of the appeal, the parties shall be provided with a detailed written statement of the costs of the Appeals hearing. Any unused portion of the institution's deposit shall be refunded and any amount due which is in excess of the amount deposited shall be billed to the institution.

Responsibility for costs associated with the Appeals Committee hearing shall be determined by the decision of the Appeals Committee as follows:

- If the decision of the Council is affirmed by the Appeals Committee, the cost of the Appeals Committee hearing shall be borne by the institution.
- If the institution's appeal is upheld by the Appeals Committee, the cost of the hearing shall be borne by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).

### ***Q: What is required of an institution while it is registered?***

A: The institution must submit an annual report on a prescribed form to ACTT. The institution will be informed in writing of the conditions of registration, that is, the conditions under which registration can be revoked or suspended during this time.

### ***Q: Under what conditions will an institution's registered status be revoked or suspended?***

A: The institution must maintain the integrity of its Quality Management System (QMS) at all times. An institution's QMS is a formalised system that documents the structure, responsibilities and procedures required to achieve effective quality management and continuous quality improvement. The result of effective quality management is the satisfaction of the institution's stakeholders, through the most efficient use of resources, while the institution continues to improve its processes.

#### **1. Caution letter**

When ACTT finds that an institution has pursued a course of action that, if continued, could lead to more serious sanctions, it may issue a *Letter of Caution* to the institution advising that it should take immediate steps to correct its deficiencies, to refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities within a specified time period. A Caution Letter does not affect the institution's registration.

#### **2. Probation**

When a registered institution fails to respond to concerns communicated by ACTT (including a *letter of caution*), or when it deviates significantly from ACTT's standards, but not to such an extent as to warrant a

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*show-cause order* or revocation, the institution's registration may be placed on probation/suspension for a specified period of time.

### **3. Revocation or Cancellation**

When ACTT finds that an institution has not taken satisfactory steps to address identified concerns, or when an institution is found to be in serious non-compliance with ACTT's registration criteria, it may require the institution to show cause why its registration should not be terminated. When a *show cause order* is issued, the burden of proof rests with the institution to provide evidence demonstrating why its registration should be continued. The institution will be subject to monitoring and evaluation by ACTT's representatives before a decision is taken to suspend or revoke registration.

When an institution's deviation from ACTT's standards is significant and cannot readily be corrected, or in a case where the institution is unable or unwilling to take the required action to ensure compliance, registration can be revoked.

An institution that has its registration revoked must wait for a period of up to two years before re-applying and cease operations immediately.

#### ***Q: What are the registration fees?***

A: The following fees are for national (local) institutions and institutions in CARICOM territories. There is an application processing fee which must be paid at the time of submitting the application; a certification fee and additionally the institution is required to bear the cost of the evaluation exercise. Fees for overseas (foreign) institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago are set at a flat rate (not adjusted to enrollment statistics). An overseas/foreign institution seeking to operate in Trinidad and Tobago, that has an established institutional site in its country of origin, may also be required at the sole discretion of ACTT to bear the cost of a visit to that overseas site by an officer of ACTT.

#### **Application processing Fee (non-refundable, *payable every 3 years*):**

##### National/Local

- Institutions with less than 5,000 students enrolled - \$1,000.00
- Institutions with 5,001 – 9,999 students enrolled - \$3,000.00
- Institutions with 10,000+ students enrolled - \$5,000.00

##### Transnational/Foreign & Overseas

- \$7,500.00

#### **Evaluation fee**

The cost of the evaluation will be borne by the institution. This includes honoraria and expenses paid to evaluators appointed by ACTT.

#### **Registration fee (*payable on registration & annually while status is maintained*):**

##### National/Local

- Institutions with less than 5,000 students enrolled - \$1,000.00
- Institutions with 5,001 – 9,999 students enrolled - \$1,500.00
- Institutions with 10,000+ students enrolled - \$3,000.00

##### Transnational/Foreign & Overseas

- \$4,500.00

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**Certification fee**

A certification fee applies to an institution that meets the criteria and standards for registration. This includes the cost of publication of the registered status awarded and preparation of the certificate.