

The University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) and the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (ALJGSB) have become the first registered tertiary level institutions (TLIs) to be accepted as candidates for accreditation by ACTT. Both TLIs are seeking institutional accreditation which will provide the assurance to students, graduates, employers, the public and all stakeholders that the programmes they offer meet national as well as international standards.

On Thursday 13th March 2008, Dr. Trevor Gardner, President, USC, Professor Mark Oakley interim Executive Director, ALJGSB, and senior administrators of both institutions attended pre-candidacy interviews. These interviews with the Executive Director and other officers of ACTT were held to determine the institutions' capacity to submit to the accreditation process.

While all registered institutions are eligible to seek accreditation, there are other conditions that must be met. An institution seeking accreditation must:

- offer tertiary level programmes that lead to the award of its own qualifications (for example a degree in its own name as opposed to a degree awarded by a foreign university)
- have produced at least one cohort of graduates
- satisfy ACTT that it accepts the criteria for accreditation, understands the process and is committed to continuous quality improvement.

HOW DOES ACCREDITATION DIFFER FROM REGISTRATION?

Registration is just the first step in the quality assurance process. Registration by ACTT provides a guarantee that an institution meets the minimum standards for offering tertiary education but it does not evaluate and quality assure the educational outcomes. This can only be achieved when an institution is accredited by ACTT. All institutions offering post secondary or tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago are required by Act No. 16 of 2004 to be registered by ACTT. Accreditation however is voluntary.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR ACCREDITATION?

As candidates for accreditation, both the USC and the ALJGSB will now conduct comprehensive internal reviews of all aspects of their operations while undergoing an institutional self-study or self-evaluation process. They will be guided by an Accreditation Officer assigned to each institution to ensure that the correct procedures are adopted for an effective, valid and meaningful self-study process. When the self-study has been conducted, the institutions will submit their reports to ACTT and a team comprising local, regional and international evaluators will be appointed to examine the documentation and visit the institutions. Evaluation teams interview a wide cross-section of administrators, faculty, staff, students, graduates and other stakeholders in order to assess inter alia the quality of governance and administration; teaching and learning; faculty; student support as well as the institution's physical facilities and financial viability. An institution can be accredited by ACTT for a maximum period of seven years after which the institution must be re-accredited. Accredited institutions will be monitored annually to ensure that standards are maintained. For more information on the criteria for accreditation please visit www.actt.org.tt.

ACTT congratulates the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) and the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (ALJGSB) on this bold step forward that demonstrates a commitment to quality and a vision for the future.

University of the Southern Caribbean and Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business Accepted as Candidates for Accreditation by ACTT



PRE-CANDIDACY INTERVIEWS BETWEEN ACTT AND INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVES SEEKING ACCREDITATION

- 1) L to R: Michael Bradshaw, Director Accreditation and Quality Enhancement ACTT; Professor Mark Oakley, Interim Executive Director, ALJGSB and Kamla Mungal, Manager Academic Administration, ALJGSB.
- 2) L to R: ACTT Representatives - Jason Stafford, Research Associate to the Executive Director; Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director; Michael Bradshaw, Director Accreditation and Quality Enhancement and Curtis Floyd, Accreditation Officer.
- 3) L to R: USC Representatives - Carlton Drepaul, Vice President Academic Administration (Ag.); Matthew Greaves, Vice President Finance Administration; Dr. Jennifer Paul, Dean - Science and Technology and Dr. Trevor Gardner, President.

CARIBBEAN UPDATE

CARICOM HEADS MOVE TO HARMONISE QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR TVET

Following an earlier decision to include artisans among the categories of workers eligible to move freely throughout states in the CSME, CARICOM Heads of Government, in Nassau, Bahamas on 7-8 March 2008, agreed that all member states would implement the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system. The Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) will now be offered in all territories to harmonise quality assurance and accreditation of vocational qualifications and facilitate the free movement of artisans in the region.

To qualify as an artisan an individual must possess a Caribbean Vocational Qualification or a National Vocational Qualification issued after January 2004 based on the approved regional standards.

The National Training Agency (NTA) is the national body in Trinidad and Tobago with specific responsibility for the national TVET system. ACTT is committed to working with the NTA to facilitate the implementation of quality assurance processes for institutions and programmes in the national TVET system.

At the Bahamas meeting, the Heads of Governments also urged member states and regional tertiary institutions to work assiduously to achieve the integration of the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN) and the Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education (CUPIDE). This would harmonise the region's approach and the creation of increased access to tertiary education and training opportunities.



WHO WE ARE

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) was established by the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 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" (Section 8 (1), Act No. 16 of 2004). ACTT is a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAHE) and the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE).

For a full list of our functions you can find a copy of the Act at www.actt.org.tt

WHAT WE DO

Primary services offered by ACTT are:

- Registration of post secondary and tertiary institutions and providers
- Accreditation of institutions and programmes
- Recognition of foreign qualifications
- Conferment of institutional title
- Quality enhancement support for institutions and providers

HOW TO CONTACT US

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You can also visit our website at www.actt.org.tt

IN THIS ISSUE WE HIGHLIGHT

- UWI St. Augustine Campus Registered by ACTT
- Conversations on Registration
- 102 Institutions Attend ACTT's Registration Fora "Preparing The Application For Registration"
- University of the Southern Caribbean and Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business accepted as Candidates for Accreditation by ACTT
- Caribbean Update: CARICOM Heads Move To Harmonise Quality Assurance For TVET

ACTT NOW

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MARCH 2008



EVALUATION TEAM AND SENIOR UWI ADMINISTRATORS FOLLOWING A 4-DAY SITE VISIT

L to R: Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director, ACTT; Dr. Sandra Gift, Senior Programme Officer, UWI; Prof. Frederick Emshousen, External Evaluator; Prof. Gurmohan Kochhar, Deputy Principal, UWI; Dr. John Randall, Evaluation Team Chairman; PVC Prof. Clement Sankat, Principal, UWI; Jeremy Callaghan, Campus Registrar, UWI and Dr. Trevor Gardner, External Evaluator.

UWI St. Augustine Campus Registered By ACTT

The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus was recently registered by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) for the period of three years, March 27th 2008 - March 26th 2011. The St. Augustine campus is now eligible to seek institutional accreditation by ACTT.

This is the second UWI campus to have been evaluated and registered by one of the national accrediting bodies in the Caribbean region. The Mona campus was recently registered by the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) (the national accrediting body for tertiary education in Jamaica). Dr. Ethley London, Executive Director of the UCJ described this as a milestone in the life of the Council, established in 1987. The UWI Cave Hill campus is also preparing for an evaluation by the recently established Barbados Accreditation Council, headed by Mrs. Valda Alleyne.

UWI St. Augustine became the seventh tertiary education institution to be registered in Trinidad and Tobago as the July 8th deadline rapidly approaches. A three-member team was appointed by the Council to conduct the evaluation of the university against ACTT's criteria for registration. The team was chaired by Dr. John Randall, former Executive Officer of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom. Dr. Randall chaired the team for the Mona visit and is expected to serve in the same capacity with regard

to the registration of the Cave Hill campus. Other members of the team were Professor Frederick Emshousen, an experienced evaluator with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Illinois (the HLC is the largest regional accrediting body in the USA); and Dr. Trevor Gardner, President of the University of the Southern Caribbean. The team was accompanied during the visit by Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director and Mr. Michael Bradshaw, Director Accreditation and Quality Enhancement, ACTT.

The team spent four days evaluating documents submitted to ACTT by UWI and visiting the campus. They interviewed PVC Professor Clement Sankat who was appointed Principal of the St. Augustine campus earlier this year as well as senior administrators, Campus Council representatives, faculty, staff, union representatives, students and alumni. All faculties were reviewed including the Faculty of Medical Sciences.

In the context of the Caribbean, UWI is a mature institution with an international reputation and an academic heritage of which it is proud. The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago congratulates the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus on this achievement and looks forward to supporting the institution's continued quality enhancement thrust.

Conversations on Registration

Dr. Trevor Gardner, President, University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) sat down with Jason Stafford, Research Associate to the Executive Director, ACTT, in an interview to give his views on issues related to registration and quality assurance at USC and in the local tertiary education sector in general.

JS: What does it mean to be the first institution to be registered by ACTT in Trinidad and Tobago?

TG: The University has been quietly doing its work for many years but registration places USC in a position of national prominence, operating in tandem with other major tertiary institutions. It re-introduces the university as another viable choice for prospective national, regional and international students.

JS: Prior to registration, USC (formerly Caribbean Union College) was conferred with the title of university by ACTT. What impact did this have on the institution?

TG: The title conferred a new level of authority and responsibility on the institution which had previously operated under the wings of Andrews University, Michigan, USA. It provided an opportunity for us to re-engineer our future in the context of the country's national development goals. Although we are the oldest tertiary institution in Trinidad and Tobago, this milestone positioned us as one of only three universities in Trinidad and Tobago.

JS: What would you say were some of the challenges you overcame during the registration process?

TG: USC has had a long history of preparation for quality assurance exercises like registration. Our affiliation with the Andrews University has meant that we have had to undergo accreditation evaluations by the North Central Association, Higher Learning Commission regularly. In fact we were scheduled to undergo a similar exercise two weeks after the registration visit by ACTT. Additionally, we are also routinely evaluated by the Adventist Accreditation Association. Nonetheless, there was some level of anxiety by our internal stakeholders because this was our first exposure to ACTT's process.

JS: How does ACTT's registration process compare with similar exercises by international bodies?

TG: I can say categorically that ACTT's process is considerably more rigorous than most.

JS: What are the real benefits of registration?

TG: During the registration exercise USC was forced to examine itself. Firstly, in preparing for registration we examined whether our current governance structure adequately met the needs of our constituents. Our assessment has resulted in some changes. The university was also required to take a closer look at its programmes

in relation to how they stood up to international scrutiny. Additionally, the level of participation within the university while preparing for registration was widespread. This extended to faculty, administrative staff, maintenance and security personnel.

JS: What were some of the major cost items in the registration exercise? Do the benefits outweigh the costs incurred?

TG: USC did not incur many costs in its preparation for registration since it has a long history of similar preparations but the benefits of registration and similar quality assurance exercises to institutions and their stakeholders significantly outweigh the cost that can be incurred.

JS: Act No. 16 of 2004 makes registration compulsory for all tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. Do you agree that it should be?

TG: It should be mandatory. There is a tendency for us in the sector to develop a culture of self-satisfaction where mediocrity and complacency can become widespread. Mandatory registration gives an assurance to students that tertiary provisions are of high quality based on independent external evaluations.

JS: Do you view the registration process as largely one that results in compliance with minimum standards or does it also promote continuous improvement?

TG: I have been very impressed with ACTT's approach. The level of helpfulness and guidance provided to institutions establishes a relationship that can facilitate quality improvement long after the registration exercise is completed.

JS: What can students expect as a result of the developments that have taken place at USC during the registration process?

TG: The opportunity for students to ensure that they receive quality provisions is indispensable.

JS: Who benefits most from registration?

TG: Students are undoubtedly the greatest beneficiaries of the registration process.

JS: USC is now a registered institution. What is the next step?

TG: USC recently completed a pre-accreditation interview to submit to the voluntary accreditation process. We hope to be awarded candidacy for accreditation. We are excited to face the challenges of the accreditation process which goes further than registration in



evaluating the quality of the USC provisions. Additionally, USC has developed a strategic plan which seeks to increase our enrolment from 3,200 to 10,000 students in the next seven years. We also intend to expand our programme offerings and to develop satellite sites to target under-served communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The commute for some students living in communities far away from the St. Joseph campus is extremely difficult. The speed of this projected increase in enrolment will require buy-in from all faculty and staff. We will also be required to collaborate with ACTT to ensure that our expansion and quality improvements are simultaneous.

JS: What role do you see ACTT playing in the tertiary education sector now and in the future?

TG: The rapid development of ACTT as a quality assurance body is remarkable. I have been exposed to other quality assurance bodies in the region and I can say that the quality of ACTT's work far exceeds others in the wider region. One of the challenges ACTT faces is the pressure placed on it by Parliament to meet strict deadlines for the registration of all tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. The speed at which it must achieve this mandate has the potential to negatively impact on the quality of its work. Additionally, there have been some teething problems which suggest a need for greater clarity in ACTT's relationship with the Ministry of Science Technology and Tertiary Education and GATE funding.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ►

L-R: Jason Stafford, Research Associate to the Executive Director, ACTT and Dr. Trevor Gardner, President, University of the Southern Caribbean (USC).



THE INTERVIEW IN PROGRESS

CONVERSATIONS ON REGISTRATION

◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

JS: Recent government initiatives have been aimed at increasing participation in tertiary education. How have these initiatives impacted on your institution and the sector as a whole?

TG: Just about two and a half years ago our student population stood at 850 students, today we have a population in excess of 3200 students. This rapid expansion has meant that infrastructural projects have had to keep pace. We have outgrown our temporary student activity centre and we have had to recruit faculty to meet this expanded demand. It is by no means a complaint but as demand has expanded rapidly, the major challenge has been our ability to make the necessary resources available at a similar rate. The GATE programme has been a good thing for nationals. However, it brings challenges.

JS: What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing the local tertiary education sector in relation to improving quality?

TG: Where do I begin? The sector needs to produce knowledge. There needs to be a shift from consumption to production and dissemination of knowledge. We need to produce and export the work of more poets, novelists, and scientists focused on innovation and invention. Research and development initiatives should be producing more applied research results. Critical social scientists need to solve societal problems. The private sector needs to give back more to society. There is too much dependence on government in the sector. Additionally, and most importantly there is a need for a greater emphasis on values in curriculum development or we risk producing educated, God forbid, animals.

JS: USC's vision statement aims to produce "An academy fit for God's approval". Some have argued that the high moral values of the institution have been eroded. What challenges has the University faced in realizing this vision in the context of its rapid expansion bolstered by state-supported student and institutional grants?

TG: There have been challenges but many persons define morality differently. The University has evolved over the years. There was a time when students of different genders could only walk on different sides of the street on campus and were not allowed to hold hands but these things have changed. Females were not allowed to wear pants, that position was also modified. We cannot judge standards by dress but by virtue. There will always be a small percentile of students that do not follow the rules, significantly less than one percent. When the population was 800 this was a handful of persons; at 3200 students it is still only a few persons. We are currently developing a document that speaks to the institutional spiritual ethos of the university. This document should guide how we move forward in this area. While there have been challenges, USC continues to maintain the highest moral standards. This is our heritage and we are sticking to it.

JS: What are your views on the increasing phenomenon of private for-profit institutions operating in the sector and its impact on quality?

TG: There seems to be a dichotomy between the concepts of for-profit and education. How do we define profit? If profit means paying decent wages to staff and faculty, then there is a space for these institutions in the sector. If it means profiteering, then there is no place for these institutions. There needs to be public dialogue on what role these institutions can play in the sector. They make a contribution that public institutions cannot make.

JS: Thank you for giving ACTT NOW the opportunity to obtain your views on registration and other important issues related to tertiary education quality. Let me say that the Council remains committed to working with you to enhance the quality of tertiary education at UCS and in the sector.

TG: It was a pleasure. USC will continue to work with ACTT to improve the quality of the tertiary education sector and by extension the nation.

Look out for the interview between Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director, ACTT and Dr. Anthony Bowrin, Executive Director, ROYTEC in our next issue.

102 Institutions Attend ACTT's Registration Fora "Preparing The Application For Registration"

The Council hosted three fora on January 31st, February 25th and March 17th, 2008, to provide critical assistance to institutions preparing their applications for registration. One hundred and two tertiary education institutions were represented at these events.

With less than four months before the mandatory deadline, forty-two institutions have applied for registration. The time from receipt of an application to a determination by ACTT depends significantly on the quality of the application received. High quality applications are processed at a significantly faster rate than those that are poorly structured.

When an application is received, ACTT's technical officers ensure that it is consistent with submission guidelines. If it is, they conduct an analysis to determine what gaps, if any, exist between the submission and ACTT's quality criteria. A gap analysis report is then sent to the institution. At this point the institution has the opportunity to obtain assistance from a Quality Enhancement Officer at ACTT on how best it should address identified deficiencies. After the institution is satisfied that it has addressed all the gaps, it submits additional evidence to the Council.

Following the institution's final submission, an evaluation team of trained, independent, professionals are assigned to conduct a site visit. During this visit interviews are conducted to determine how far the physical evidence at the site is consistent with the paper-based submissions. The team then prepares a report and submits a recommendation on the status to be awarded. The Board of the Council makes the final determination on the registration of the institution. The process is extremely transparent and based on international best practice. Institutions not satisfied with the determination have an opportunity to appeal. Within the next month all institutions should submit their applications for registration, if a determination is to be made by the mandatory deadline 8th July 2008.

Deadline for Registration
8th July 2008

ACTT'S REGISTRATION CRITERIA

Criteria	Criterion Statement
Legal, Policy and Regulatory Requirements	The institution's activities comply with legal, policy and regulatory requirements.
Governance and Administration	The corporate governance body and management actively shows their commitment to achieving the development and continual improvement of the Quality Management System.
Quality Management System	The institution has a well planned Quality Management System that is in keeping with its vision, mission, policies, processes, organisational structure, responsibilities and resources, in order to assure the quality of educational outcomes.
Resource Management	The resources essential to the institution's operational activities are identified and available.
Teaching-Learning Process	The institution has a plan for the various stages in its teaching-learning process.
Review	The institution's management reviews the Quality Management System at planned intervals to ensure that it is suitable, adequate and effective. Records of the review are kept.
Continuous Improvement	The institution continually reviews its Quality Management System.