



# **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATORS FOR ACTT'S QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICES**

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## **PREFACE**

During the month of August 2019, the staff of Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) had undertaken a review of its external evaluation processes and practices to improve them. Subsequently, members of the Board met in February 2020, reviewed the previously developed Code of Practice for External Evaluators and commended it for action. The Code of Practice is a professional practice code for ACTT's external evaluators and represents the practices which will now form part of the way we engage them. As professionals engaged by ACTT, the services of our external evaluators will be based on established guidelines for their recruitment, selection and engagement/re-engagement. All new external evaluators shall be exposed to training on these guidelines when they attend workshops by ACTT. All members appointed to the ACTT External Evaluator Corps are required to attend annual meetings for updates on policies, standards, processes, practices and methods to ensure that they are continuously appraised of any changes affecting them.

## **1-WHAT IS EXTERNAL EVALUATION?**

External evaluation is an independent form of evaluation of an institution or programme by individuals external to the organisation. The evaluation process considers the quality of different aspects of the institution or programme against established criteria and standards. It requires appointment of qualified, trained and experienced higher education practitioners and other practitioners who provide independent judgement, operate with a high degree of integrity and can add value to assessing and recommending measures for improvement of an institution or programme.

## **2-ROLE OF EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

External evaluation takes place to provide an accreditation agency with the advice needed to make meaningful, reliable and objective determination of whether or not an institution's or programme's quality meets the required standards, such that the institution may be capable of being registered or accredited or its programmes approved for delivery. The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) relies upon external evaluators to support its decision-making processes with respect to conferment of institutional title, initial and continuing registration, programme approval, institutional accreditation, or recognition of transnational programmes.

### **3-WHO ARE EXTERNAL EVALUATORS?**

External evaluators (EEs) are qualified, trained and experienced subject matter and higher education experts/practitioners who are selected and appointed by the accreditation agency. Typically, two to five EEs are appointed depending upon the complexity of the evaluation exercise. EEs are required to treat with an institution's data, materials and information they come into contact with by applying high levels of confidentiality, and declare any conflicts of interest with the institution. Accordingly, integrity is the fundamental principle governing an individual's conduct as an evaluator in his/her dealings with the accreditation agency, the institution and its personnel. EEs provide independent judgement and have limited contact with the institution during the evaluation process. They assess and make recommendations for improvement of an institution or programme.

### **4-RECRUITMENT OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

The ACTT relies upon different approaches for recruitment of external evaluators. They include the following:

#### *Partnerships with Other Accreditation and Professional Regulatory Agencies*

Given the limited pool of interested, qualified, trained and experienced evaluators in Trinidad and Tobago, the ACTT has established partnerships through Memoranda of Agreements (MOAs) and Memoranda of Cooperation (MOCs)<sup>1</sup>. All these agencies and associations have cadres of qualified evaluators who are accessible to ACTT. Depending upon the nature of an external evaluation exercise and the

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include the National Training Agency, the Association of Professional Engineers, the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago, the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago, the Board of Engineering of Trinidad and Tobago, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom, The Higher Learning Commission, Chicago, Illinois, the Barbados Accreditation Council, the University Council of Jamaica, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Tertiary Education (CANQATE), Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA), the Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professionals Association (TTGPA).

demand for a regional or international EE, ACTT makes contact with these agencies through conferences and by exchange to access their evaluators from their external/peer evaluator databases.

### Referral

The ACTT has established a referral process through which ACTT-approved EEs can recommend and refer others whom they deem as possessing the qualities of peer evaluators for ACTT's quality assurance services. Evaluators are invited to nominate such individuals who in turn submit their Curriculum Vitae (CV) to ACTT by contacting [evaluators@actt.org.tt](mailto:evaluators@actt.org.tt). These evaluators may be contacted to participate in prior scheduled training as EEs.

### Self-Nomination

Practitioners from locally registered and accredited institutions or professional regulatory bodies who think that they are suitably-qualified and have the requisite qualities to serve as a EE in an external evaluation may apply directly to ACTT by sending their Curriculum Vitae (CV) by email to [evaluators@actt.org.tt](mailto:evaluators@actt.org.tt). Other qualified persons from industry may also serve as EEs, although not ideally peers, but on specific subject matter areas/fields where their expertise may assist. They are usually required for programme-specific quality assurance processes and can also self-nominate using the same procedure. Information may be disseminated to institutions through ACTT's eblast service or by correspondence. Such individuals, if suitable, will be invited for EE training when it is next scheduled.

Persons who have been referred or self-nominated from registered or accredited institutions and have submitted their CVs and Profiles are asked to complete an Evaluator Data Form ([Appendix I](#)) and be screened by ACTT prior to being enlisted for training or appointment as EEs.

## **5-CRITERIA FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

External evaluators may be team chairs, members or observers. The ACTT has established criteria for selection of team chairs or members for external evaluations for its quality assurance services. EEs are selected based on their qualifications; specialist skills and certification; sector and industry experience and prior related experiences as are relevant to the quality assurance service which is being accessed. The criteria concerning their selection are included in Appendix II.

## **6-TRAINING OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

Prior to training, a short telephone screening will occur to determine the eligibility to become an EE. Training of EEs is necessary before any potential EE can participate in any of ACTT's quality assurance services. Training exposes new and continuing EEs to the principles, processes, criteria, standards, practices and methods of external evaluation at ACTT. Training sessions may be scheduled once or more each year depending upon the volume of potential screened peer evaluators and ACTT's needs. New EEs may be mentored by more experienced individuals during the EE process.

## **7-SELECTION OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

Once EEs have been trained, they are entered into ACTT's database as members of the Evaluators' Corps. The database comprises local, regional and international EEs who have either been trained by ACTT and/ or have completed previous ACTT external evaluations. Other experienced EEs for areas not represented on ACTT's database are sourced through partnerships and referrals when there is a need for a specialist evaluator.

The selection process entails the following steps:

- ACTT will identify suitably-qualified and experienced external evaluators from its database of local, regional or international evaluators;
- ACTT will match identified external evaluators to the particular requirements of the peer evaluation exercise. This includes a close examination of previous quality assurance issues, recommendations and annual report data;
- ACTT will make contact with the external evaluators matched to the institution's quality assurance requirements to determine their willingness to serve as an external evaluator in an evaluation exercise and to determine any likely conflicts of interest with the institution;
- The institution will be provided with a short-list of external evaluators who have consented to serve as an evaluator at the institution. The Profiles of such persons will be provided and consider approval/objection to the recommended members giving sufficient evidence for such;
- ACTT will inform the institution if there is no suitably-qualified individual willing to serve. Efforts will have to be made to identify individual external evaluators from the region or internationally who are suitably qualified. The institution will have to consent to this arrangement, which may have implications for the logistics and cost of the external evaluation exercise, including the site visit.



## **8-APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

EEs are volunteers who support ACTT in a specific external evaluation assignment. Once ACTT has identified EEs to serve on an assignment, an agreement is established for the specific assignment. The EE then signs the specific agreement which outlines the terms and conditions of the engagement.

## **9-TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

EEs who have formally agreed to serve for a specific evaluation assignment, agree to the following general terms and conditions:

1. To serve on the specific assignment and be committed to seeing it through to completion;
2. To declare any conflicts of interests at the time of selection;
3. To abide by the ACTT code of conduct for external evaluators, such as collegiality, open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, and receiving and giving feedback, to which they are exposed during peer evaluator training;
4. To be familiar with the criteria, standards and evidence requirements stipulated for the specified external evaluation process and the external evaluation report templates provided by ACTT;
5. To access, use and apply any information with which they come into contact during the self-study report reading/analysis phase and the prior, during and post-site visit with confidentiality and fairness in judgements;
6. To spend sufficient time, as agreed, to prepare for a site visit, participate whilst on the actual visit and discuss and write the external evaluators reports and submit to ACTT within the agreed timeframe;
7. To be paid an honorarium and, wherever applicable, travel and accommodation for the service rendered in accordance with the established fee schedule for team chairs/members of an external evaluation exercise which is borne by the institution;

8. Upon completion of an ACTT external evaluation exercise, external evaluators agree not to be engaged in any formal employment, contracts or working relationships with the institution which they have evaluated for no less than one calendar year from the date of completion of the last evaluation process. However, external evaluators may serve on a related external evaluation exercise with the same institution during this period, if a follow-up visit is required;
9. Peer evaluators will be subject to an assessment of their conduct and performance following an assignment (Appendix III). The ACTT representative, institutional QM representative and external evaluation team members participate in the assessment and satisfactory performance will determine the need for further coaching or team assignment in future activities.

## **10-DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?**

Any questions regarding the external evaluation guidelines or any related matters can be brought to the attention of the Director-Accreditation and Quality Enhancement by email to [evaluators@actt.org.tt](mailto:evaluators@actt.org.tt).

**APPENDIX I – External Evaluator Data Form**

**NAME IN FULL**

| First Name | Middle Name | Surname |
|------------|-------------|---------|
|            |             |         |

**PERMANENT ADDRESS**

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| House/Apartment Number: | Street Name: |
| Town:                   | City:        |
| State/Country/Region:   | Postal Code: |

**POSITION**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**INSTITUTION**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

|        |            |         |
|--------|------------|---------|
| Email: | Telephone: | Mobile: |
|--------|------------|---------|

**SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

*(Please state any medical conditions which may affect your performance)*

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**DISABILITIES**

*(Please state any disabilities which may affect your performance)*

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**DIETARY REQUIREMENTS**

*(Please state any dietary requirements)*

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICE INTERESTS**

*(Please check the ACTT external evaluation service which you may be interested in)*

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Title Conferment/Registration |  |
| Registration                  |  |
| Institutional Accreditation   |  |
| Programme Approval            |  |
| Transnational recognition     |  |

**PERIOD OF AVAILABILITY**

*(Please check the period during the year in which you may be willing to serve)*

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| All Year Round        |  |
| January to April      |  |
| May to August         |  |
| September to December |  |

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest is defined as any set of circumstances that create undue risk that affects a peer evaluator's professional judgement or actions with respect to the conduct, performance or decisions regarding an institution's external evaluation process or result. Such circumstances may be financial, familial, employment, ownership, legal or otherwise that may lead to bias in favour of or against any institution or deemed to be corruption. Typically, in situations of prior employment, a peer evaluator should have ceased employment with the institution at least five years before being eligible for serving as a peer evaluator with that institution.

The following constitutes conflicts of interest if there is:

- evidence of prior employment at or with the institution being evaluated;
- evidence of prospective employment with the institution being evaluated;
- evidence of current or prior service in connection with the institution being evaluated;
- personal or financial interest in the ownership or operation of the institution;
- personal or immediate familial relationship with any members of the institution;
- existence of prejudice, e.g. involved in legal battle with the institution;
- evidence of receipt of remuneration, honoraria, honorary degrees, honours or other awards from the institution; and
- any other personal or professional relationships that may be perceived as conflict of interest.

*Please name below any institutions for which there may be a conflict of interest if you were placed on assignment. Give any reason(s) why the conflict of interest may arise*

**PREVIOUS SERVICE**

*Have you previously served as an external evaluator with ACTT or any other regional or international external quality assurance agency?*

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| Yes |  |
| No  |  |

**Date(s)/Institution(s)/Agency(ies)**

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Institution</i> |
|-------------|--------------------|
|             |                    |
|             |                    |
|             |                    |

**NARRATIVE**

*In 200-300 words why do you wish to be considered to serve as a peer evaluator with ACTT?*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of prospective peer evaluator*), declare that information provided on this form are true and correct and that I will be willing to abide by any terms and conditions established by ACTT for my service as an external evaluator.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Date



**APPENDIX II- Minimum Criteria for the Selection of External Evaluators for ACTT's Quality Assurance Services**

| <b>Evaluation</b>    | <b>Qualifications</b>   | <b>Specialist Skills/<br/>Certifications</b>   | <b>Sector/Industry Experience</b>  | <b>Prior Related Experience</b>  |
|----------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Registration</b>  | <p>Master's or earned Doctorate* in an area related to the institution's specialisms or in a broad area such as education or management which is recognised by ACTT</p> <p>(one level higher than highest degree offered by institution)</p> <p><i>*Honorary doctorates/ doctoral qualifications granted Honoris Causa are not same</i></p> | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the criteria and standards e.g. corporate governance, management, curriculum being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's registration criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p>  | <p>Suitable experience at the level of executive leadership, management, curriculum or student affairs from an accredited or registered tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or the Caribbean region e.g. President/CEO/ED, Vice President, Dean</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Suitable experience at the level of corporate governance, executive leadership or management in a private or public sector organisation in the programme areas of the institution</p> | <p>Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national regulatory or-regional/ international accreditation body</p>  |
| <b>Accreditation</b> | <p>Same as above</p>  | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the criteria and standards e.g. corporate governance, management, curriculum being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's accreditation criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p> | <p>Suitable experience at the level of executive leadership, management, curriculum or student affairs from an accredited tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or overseas e.g. President/CEO/ED, Vice President, Dean</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Suitable experience at the level of corporate governance, executive leadership or management in a recognized private or public sector organisation in the programme areas of the institution</p>                | <p>Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national or international accreditation body</p> <p>Team Chair- Has participated in at least one accreditation site visit as team chair for appointment as team chair</p> <p>All members must have participated in at least two registration site visits</p> |

| Evaluation   | Qualifications | Specialist Skills/<br>Certifications   | Sector/Industry Experience   | Prior Related Experience   |
|--|----------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Transnational Programme Evaluation</b>                  | Same as above  | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the programme criteria and standards e.g. education, social sciences, management, computer science, being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's transnational programme evaluation criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p> | <p>Suitable experience at the level of management or curriculum from an accredited or registered tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or overseas delivering indigenous and/or transnational programmes e.g. Dean, Programme Director, Department Chair</p>   | <p>Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national regulatory or regional/international accreditation body</p> |
| <b>Recognition of Foreign Awarding Bodies/Institutions</b> | Same as above  | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the criteria and standards e.g. corporate governance, management, curriculum being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's transnational recognition criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p>                                 | <p>Suitable experience at the level of management or curriculum from an accredited or registered tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or overseas delivering indigenous and/or transnational programmes e.g. Dean, Programme Director, Department Chair<br/>OR</p> <p>Suitable experience at the level of corporate governance, executive leadership, or management in a private or public sector organisation in the programme areas of the institution.</p> | <p>Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national regulatory or regional/international accreditation body</p> |

| Evaluation   | Qualifications | Specialist Skills/<br>Certifications   | Sector/Industry Experience  | Prior Related Experience  |
|--|----------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Registration of Local Awarding Bodies</b>               | Same as above  | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the criteria and standards e.g. corporate governance, management, curriculum being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's registration of local awarding bodies criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p>               | <p>Suitable experience at the level of management or curriculum from an accredited or registered tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or overseas delivering indigenous and/or transnational programmes e.g. Dean, Programme Director, Department Chair</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Suitable experience at the level of corporate governance, executive leadership, or management in a private or public sector organisation in the programme areas of the institution.</p> | Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national regulatory or regional/international accreditation body |
| <b>Accreditation of Local Awarding Body Qualifications</b> | Same as above  | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the criteria and standards e.g. corporate governance, management, curriculum being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's accreditation of local awarding body qualifications criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p> | <p>Suitable experience at the level of management or curriculum from an accredited or registered tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or overseas delivering indigenous and/or transnational programmes e.g. Dean, Programme Director, Department Chair</p>  | Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national regulatory or regional/international accreditation body |

| Evaluation                | Qualifications | Specialist Skills/<br>Certifications  | Sector/Industry Experience  | Prior Related Experience   |
|---------------------------|----------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Programme Approval</b> | Same as above  | <p>Any specialist professional certifications e.g. CPA/ACCA, FCCA, PMP or documented skills related to the programme criteria and standards being evaluated</p> <p>Must have knowledge of ACTT's programme approval criteria, standards, policies and practices including the National Qualifications Framework obtained via training</p> | <p>Suitable experience at the level of management or curriculum from an accredited or registered tertiary education institution in Trinidad and Tobago or overseas delivering indigenous and/or transnational programmes e.g. Department Chair or tenured senior faculty e.g. associate to full professor or senior lecturer to professor</p> | <p>Trained as an ACTT evaluator or team chair or from another national regulatory or regional/international accreditation body</p> |

### Appendix III- Performance Measures for External Evaluators on ACTT's assignments

| Service   | Time to complete draft report in working days (post site visit) | Number of drafts or iterations         | Report Quality   | Attributes of the evaluator  | Knowledge and understanding  | Commitment to the task                                  | Score |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|---|-------|
|   | Weighting- 15   | Weighting- 5                           | Weighting- 40  | Weighting- 30  | Weighting- 5   | Weighting- 5  | 100   |
|   | <i>Who assesses?<br/>Staff Liaison</i>                          | <i>Who assesses?<br/>Staff Liaison</i> | <i>Who assesses?<br/>Staff Liaison/Line manager/Institution<br/>(Where applicable)</i> | <i>Who assesses?<br/>Peer Evaluators,<br/>staff liaison,<br/>observer,<br/>institution</i> | <i>Who assesses?<br/>Peer Evaluators,<br/>staff liaison,<br/>observer,<br/>institution</i> | <i>Who assesses?<br/>Staff liaison,<br/>institution</i> |       |
| Programme Approval                                  | 10  | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3             | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria  | 100   |
| Registration  | 10  | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3             | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria  | 100   |
| Accreditation                                       | 20  | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3             | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria  | 100   |
| Conferment of Institutional Title                   | 10  | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3             | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria  | 100   |
| Recognition of Foreign Awarding Bodies/Institutions | 7   | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3             | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria  | 100   |
| Transnational Programme Evaluation                  | 10  | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3             | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria   | All criteria  | 100   |

|   |    |                            |              |              |              |              |     |
|---|----|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Registration of Local Awarding Bodies               | 10 | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3 | All criteria | All criteria | All criteria | All criteria | 100 |
| Accreditation of Local Awarding Body Qualifications | 10 | Minimum – 1<br>Maximum - 3 | All criteria | All criteria | All criteria | All criteria | 100 |

### Standards for report quality

- Grammar, syntax and construction of the report (weighted 5%)
- Accuracy of facts (weighted 10%)
- Findings/observations- Context, evidence, judgement and impact (weighted 50%)
- Formatting (weighted 5%)
- Cover all criteria and standards (weighted 30%)
  - Scoring for all above exceeds = 1, met = 0.5, did not met = 0

### Attributes of the evaluator

- Confidence and trust in the team, the ACTT and the institution’s clients (weighted 3%)
- Ability to be thorough and complete in the task including preparation of the report (weighted 5%)
- Punctuality on the assignment (weighted 2%)
- Ability to conduct interviews with different groups of persons (weighted 5%)
- Ability to work in diverse teams with divergent views and ideas (weighted 5%)
- Confidentiality and ethics in handling information and dealing with clients (weighted 5%)
- Courtesy and respect to team members and clients (weighted 5%)

### Knowledge and understanding of assignment, site logistics, and report writing including:

- Ability to write in a concise and technical manner (weighted 1%)
- Demonstrated ability to write grammatically sound documents (weighted 1%)
- Demonstrated ability to address the relevant ACTT standards in evaluative as opposed to descriptive writing (weighted 1%)
- Awareness of the uniqueness of each institute (weighted 1%)
- Knowledge of ACTT’s procedures with respect to Site Visit protocols (weighted 1%)

### Commitment to the task that is accessibility, reliability, loyalty, and preparation