



ACTT
The Accreditation Council
of Trinidad and Tobago

Established by Chapter 39:06

Quality is the Key

ACTT CELEBRATES QUALITY ASSURANCE 2011

*"Promoting a Culture of Quality Through Continuous
Improvement of the Higher Education Sector."*

OCTOBER 2011

UPCOMING EVENTS



On-line Launch of ACTT's Compendium of Registered, Accredited and Recognised Institutions, Awarding Bodies and Programmes 2011-2012

October 12, 2011 • 10:00a.m. - 12:00noon
Penthouse, 7th Floor, ALGICO Plaza
91-93 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain



External Evaluator Workshop
October 18-20, 2011 • 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.
Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business
Uriah Buttler Highway (North West), Mt. Hope



Forensics of Academic, Credential and CV Fraud Workshop
November 01, 2011 • 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.
Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business
Uriah Buttler Highway (North West), Mt. Hope

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Panel Discussion - "The Role of the State in the Provision of Higher Education"
November 02, 2011 • 5:00p.m. - 7:00p.m.
Daaga Auditorium, University of the West Indies
St. Augustine Campus

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, CALL ACTT TO REGISTER AT 623-2500



National Conference on Quality Assurance
November 17-18, 2011 • 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.
National Academy for the Performing Arts
Queen's Park South, Port of Spain

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ACTT's Student Caravan will be visiting Secondary Schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago



Include **ACTT** In
Your Higher Education
Decisions

Highlights

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- pg 14 Continuous Quality Improvement: Post Institutional Accreditation
- pg 17 An Overview of Transnational Programmes in Trinidad and Tobago



The Ministry of Science,
Technology and Tertiary Education

"Providing a World of Opportunity"



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Greetings from the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education

Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim



Our nation has recently celebrated its 35th year as a Republic and this publication by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) has presented the ideal opportunity for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to reiterate its commitment to providing citizens with the competitive edge required to thrive in the 21st century. Securing this edge relies largely upon the cultivation of a “more diversified, knowledge intensive economy – building on the native genius of our people”, as identified in Pillar 5 of the 7 interconnected Pillars of the People’s Partnership framework for sustainable development.

The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has been charged with the responsibility of delivering on this mandate. Thus, the Ministry is currently in a state of transition as tertiary education, technical and vocational education and training and lifelong learning are rationalised and harmonised into a seamless national system that eliminates duplication and enhances the overall student experience.

Government maintains its pledge to attain at least a 60 percent participation rate by 2015, but there will be no compromise on the quality of instruction provided by local tertiary level institutions. As such, the role of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) as the guardian of higher education in this country must be underscored during this year’s Quality Assurance Month.

ACTT has facilitated the introduction of important regulatory frameworks through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Training Agency (NTA) in July 2010. The Council has further propelled the sector forward with the awarding of accreditation to College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and The University of the West Indies (UWI) in April 2011.

The expansion of ACTT’s Quality Assurance Week into a month-long event speaks volumes of this organisation’s allegiance to education and training. The month ahead offers a range of activities designed with the theme in mind, “Promoting A Culture of Quality Through Continuous Improvement of the Higher Education Sector”. I encourage all stakeholders to participate in this edifying programme designed to enhance the level of quality and best practice in a sector crucial to the growth of this nation.

The launch of this, the second annual Quality Assurance Month, takes Trinidad and Tobago yet another step closer to a unified post secondary education sector that caters to the diverse needs of our dynamic population. I would like to sincerely thank the Chairman, Dr. Michael Dowlath, directors, management and staff of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for their invaluable contributions to the regulation process.

I commend ACTT for its continued efforts in its quest to “stimulate our knowledge economy by engendering global competitiveness in higher education”.



The Ministry of Science,
Technology and Tertiary Education

“Providing a World of Opportunity”



An Address from Dr. Michael Dowlath Chairman of the Board of Directors, ACTT

Quality Assurance month provides an opportunity for The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) to reinforce its leadership role in the higher education sector, and opens many opportunities for all interested citizens to contribute to the discussion on quality higher education in Trinidad and Tobago. The Board of Directors of ACTT is justifiably satisfied with the work of the Council over the past ten months and congratulates the newly appointed Executive Director, Mr Michael Bradshaw on his commitment to maintaining the integrity and quality of the Higher Education sector. ACTT continues to fulfil its mandate to ensure that the seventy-eight (78) registered and three (3) accredited Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are being monitored for compliance with the established standards for the delivery of quality higher education.

Citizens of a developing country like Trinidad and Tobago have a right to access a quality higher education sector that is fit for its purpose and can transform individual students to become better human beings through an empowering democratic process. This Government envisions a higher education sector that is efficient and effective and gives value for money, e.g. HEIs must produce high graduation rates. The work of ACTT as a quality assurance agency perpetuates the commitment by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to improve quality in the higher education sector.

A quality assurance agency like ACTT has the significant responsibility of supporting both public and private HEIs in achieving their missions. This year's Quality Assurance Month's theme of "Promoting a Culture of Quality Through Continuous Improvement in the Higher Education Sector" lends itself to that

responsibility. The activities of the month are focussed on ensuring the HEIs registered or accredited with ACTT are encouraged to continually engage in professional development, capacity-building initiatives and research activities.

In addition, it is the hope of the Council that the idea of building a quality culture becomes entrenched into the fabric of the institutions as these organisations make a difference in the lives of citizens, and help those citizens to realise dreams and achieve ambitions. In developing the human capital of Trinidad and Tobago, HEIs must continuously re-assess their Quality Management Systems (QMS) to ensure that, in being student centred, the students are well served. As a consequence graduates of HEIs will be well prepared, not just to fit into the existing labour market but to become innovative entrepreneurs who would dramatically improve the global competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago.

ACTT in its continuous thrust towards promoting and enhancing quality education in Trinidad and Tobago will continue its efforts to reach all segments of the population by extending the activities of Quality Assurance Month into November 2011. The Council will organise multiple community outreach and student caravan initiatives as well as host ACTT's 1st National Conference on Quality in Higher Education from November 17-18, 2011.

There are great expectations for the success of ACTT's Quality Assurance Month and beyond, but, more significantly, the expectation is that the activities, serve as a catalyst in promoting a progressive, quality higher education system in Trinidad and Tobago.



ACTT's BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Front Row (l-r):

- Lennon Ballah-Lashley - Board Member
- Michael Bradshaw - Executive Director
- Dr. Michael Dowlath - Chairman
- Azim Ali - Deputy Chairman
- Jane Murray - Corporate Secretary/Legal Officer

Back Row - Board Members (l-r):

- Dr. Bheshem Ramlal
- Mervyn Extavour
- Veena Badrie-Maharaj
- Dr. Joycelyn Rampersad
- Hatim Gardner
- Missing from photo is Rodney Amar

A Message from Michael Bradshaw

Executive Director, ACTT



The theme for this year's observance of quality assurance in higher education, "Promoting a Culture of Quality through Continuous Improvement of the Higher Education Sector" focuses on the process of institutional development. ACTT's seventy-eight (78) registered institutions are constantly challenged to improve their quality management systems. In keeping with this, the year 2011 has been marked as a significant milestone, as institutional accreditation was granted to three (3) public institutions - the College of Science Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago; The University of Trinidad and Tobago and The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. This is not only an accomplishment for Trinidad and Tobago but for Quality Assurance Agencies regionally. These three (3) institutions represent sixty percent (60%) of the 70,000 students enrolled in post secondary and tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago to date.

While we celebrate this milestone, ACTT remains committed to its primary stakeholders. In this regard, we continue to implement initiatives to protect tertiary level students and develop higher education institutions. Another significant step towards student protection is the on-line launch of ACTT's "Compendium of Registered, Accredited and Recognised Institutions, Awarding Bodies and Programmes 2011-2012", on October 12, 2011. This publication is a compilation of institutions, awarding bodies and programmes that have undergone ACTT's quality assurance processes and also provides information on specialised programme accreditation. Further, it provides students with information to make informed decisions about their higher education pursuits.

ACTT has recently intensified its efforts to disseminate information to secondary school students with the launch of three projects. Firstly, ACTT re-designed its website to include portals for both students and institutions. Secondly, ACTT, through the creation of Facebook and Twitter accounts, has taken advantage of the social media revolution, to attract and inform students and other stakeholders.

ACTT has gone one step further and re-launched its Student Caravan in order to reach students in remote areas. These initiatives reflect ACTT's desire to be innovative in reaching and fulfilling the needs of all its stakeholders, especially students transitioning from secondary school to higher education.

The dynamic nature of education provides the impetus for ACTT to implement best practice from international Quality Assurance Agencies, located in Europe and the United States. Currently, ACTT is spearheading an inter-ministerial committee established to create a National Qualifications and Credit Framework (NQCF) which lists and categorises qualifications to enable a seamless transition from early childhood to higher education. Creating a NQCF promotes and facilitates access, transfer and progression for all learners. It clarifies entry and exit points and supports the development of progress routes from one qualification to the next. Additionally, it enables a coherent system of credit accumulation and transfer between programmes. Such an endeavour will benefit the sector and ensure the application of standards for qualifications that promotes national consistency in educational outcomes. This committee comprises representation from ACTT, National Training Agency (NTA) and the Ministry of Education.

ACTT's involvement and investment in developing the culture of quality within the sector can only result in the stimulation of our knowledge-based economy. Our initiatives continue to position ACTT as a regional leader in quality assurance and we expect that stakeholders in the sector will partner with us in developing the higher education sector in Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Chairman, Board of Directors, Executive Leadership Team and staff of ACTT. I take this opportunity to invite you to participate in the activities throughout October and November 2011 as we continue to enhance the higher education sector.



ACTT'S EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM (ELT) AND MANAGEMENT:

Front Row (l-r):

Simone Primus - Manager, Registration (Ag.) (ELT)
 Karel Stephen - Corporate Communications Specialist (ELT)
 Jane Murray - Corporate Secretary/Legal Officer (ELT)

Back Row (l-r):

Denise Lewis - Human Resource Officer
 Curtis Floyd - Director, Registration, Accreditation and Quality Enhancement (Ag.) (ELT)
 Vonrick Knights - Information Technology Officer
 Dr. Ronald Brunton - Director, Qualifications and Recognition (ELT)
 Michael Bradshaw - Executive Director (ELT)
 Emily Pascal - Director, Finance and Administration (ELT)



The Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

HELP

Higher Education **Loan** Programme

The Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) offers financial assistance to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago enrolled in approved tertiary level programmes.

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Safeguarding the Integrity of ACTT

Jane Murray, Corporate Secretary/Legal Officer, ACTT

The Legal Department of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) safeguards the integrity of ACTT by ensuring that all its operations are in compliance with Chapter 39:06 and the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. The Legal Department serves as counsel to ACTT by assisting the various departments in incorporating relevant legal principles into the organisation's decision making. The Department also advises on general legal and risk management matters as they relate to ACTT's vision, mission and strategic plan.

Having managed to successfully complete the enormous assignment of quality assuring eighty-one (81) post secondary and tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago by the statutory deadline of July 9,

2009, this Department sees that greater challenges still lie ahead for ACTT. Those post secondary and tertiary institutions registered and accredited in accordance with Chapter 39:06 must now recognise that they have an important role to play in the development of a quality culture in the tertiary education sector. Registered and accredited institutions must ensure that the standards and criteria they have met are maintained and improved and that Registered Institution Annual Reports (RIAR) are submitted. Institutions must also ensure that the General Terms and Conditions of all Agreements entered into with ACTT on registration or accreditation, namely the Trademark Licence Agreement and the Terms and Conditions of Registration or Accreditation

Agreements, are followed. Institutions that wish to expand their offerings of both local and international programmes must ensure that all new programmes, that is, programmes that were not listed at the time of registration or accreditation, are recognised by ACTT prior to being offered to the public by the institutions.

Moreover, whilst ACTT continues to monitor and evaluate the registered and accredited post secondary and tertiary institutions, ACTT intends to expand its focus by:

- continuing to develop greater collaboration among regional accrediting bodies and possibly enter into Memoranda of Understanding with them, such that these bodies could assist institutions in data collection and reporting;

- addressing the issue of amending ACTT's existing technical policies and practices in response to ACTT's findings and observations made during the registration, recognition of transnational programmes and accreditation processes;

- encouraging the registered institutions to apply for accreditation. To do this, ACTT would need to emphasise to those institutions the benefits and value of accreditation and how the accreditation standards will improve the quality of operations and will assist in enhancing their services to students; and

- expanding the provision of information to the public.

The successful pursuit of the above would be of benefit to the students of our nation.

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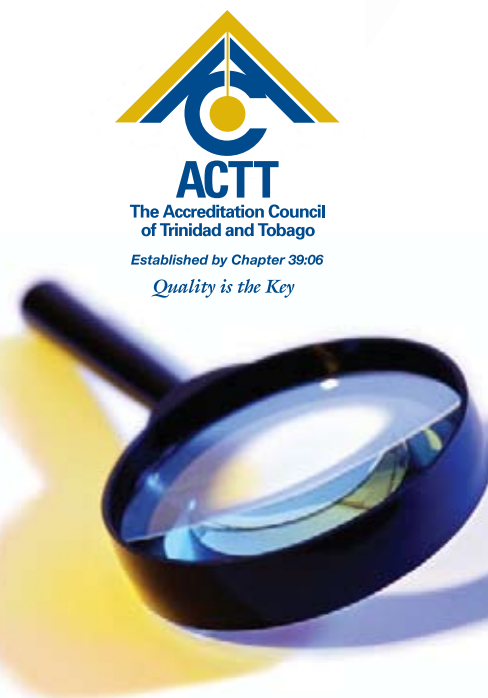
Simone Primus, Manager Registration (Ag.), ACTT and Sharon Delochan, Assessment Officer, ACTT

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago's (ACTT's) system of quality assurance is centred on the philosophy of continuous improvement and encourages all higher education institutions within its purview to subscribe to this philosophy as well. Institutions that have been registered or accredited by ACTT are challenged not only to maintain the registration or accreditation standards, but also to find innovative and creative means of improving their systems and operations. This also applies to those ACTT recognised foreign awarding bodies and institutions whose programmes are offered in Trinidad and Tobago.

While institutions have gained registered, accredited or recognised status, maintaining the standards and improvements do not happen by chance. Consistent and regular institutional review guided by ACTT's standards and criteria is required. On or before the

anniversary of the registration, accreditation or recognition, institutions must submit annual reports to ACTT as informed by the outcomes of the institutional review. These reports document how the institution continues to meet the relevant standards, and may reflect changes made as a result of recommendations by ACTT's External Evaluators at the initial site visit, or through the institutions' review process. In addition, ACTT is authorised to make periodic visits to institutions to ensure that standards are being maintained.

The Council prides itself in being a facilitative organisation, providing quality enhancement support to institutions to ensure that they fully understand the requirements for establishing and sustaining a Quality Management System (QMS). ACTT representatives meet with institutions to help them in this endeavour. ACTT also hosts workshops and



seminars related to strengthening various aspects of an institution's QMS. In this way, ACTT maintains continuous oversight of registered post secondary and tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

ACTT's Student Caravan and Community Outreach Initiative



From left: Michael Bradshaw - Executive Director, ACTT, Dr. Michael Dowlath - Chairman, ACTT, Roy Ramlogan - Principal, Iere High School and students cheer as ACTT launches its Student Caravan.

The Student Caravan and Community Outreach programme is an ACTT initiative which targets secondary school students and the public to provide information about the quality and recognition of higher education programmes and institutions. The Council believes that equipping students with information on quality higher education will ensure that informed decisions are made when selecting a higher education institution and programme of study.

During these sessions, ACTT representatives interact with students and share information on the following:

- Registration of higher education institutions
- Accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes
- Recognition of transnational programmes and qualifications
- Open and Distance Learning
- Degree Mills and fraudulent qualifications

Are you interested in having ACTT's Caravan visit your school or community? Contact: ACTT's Corporate Communications Department at 623-2500 or at customerservice@actt.org.tt



Panel Discussion - "The Role of the State in the Provision of Higher Education" November 02, 2011 • 5:00p.m. - 7:00p.m.

Daaga Auditorium, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus

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CVQ

CARIBBEAN VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

The Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) is an award that represents the achievement of a set of competencies. These competencies define the core work practices of an occupational area consistent with the levels within the Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF).

In an effort to remain competitive within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), a number of CARICOM States have subscribed to the Regional Process for Workforce Training Assessment and Certification leading to the award of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). The institutionalization of this regional system of Vocational Qualification (CVQ) is seen as a crucial element in facilitating the free movement of workers while also contributing to the enhancement of skills training in both institutional as well as on the job settings. The introduction of the CVQ in secondary schools was predicated by a mandate at the fifteenth meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD).

The CVQ is based on a common regional approach to training, assessment and certification as agreed by the National Training Agencies of the region under the auspices of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA). The implementation of the CVQ can be regarded as a catalyst for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) reform. Inherent in this reform is the reorientation of systems to effect a Competency-based Education and Training (CBET) approach to TVET. The CBET approach is demand driven and based on occupational standards developed in collaboration with industry. The standards developed are then incorpo-



Pauline Whiteman
Manager, PDM Dept
National Training Agency

rated into the CVQ and inform the programmes of learning which deliver the standards. The assessment processes used match the performance of individuals to specific standards. The main drivers of such a system are therefore competencies and standards relevant to employment.

The CBET model has been adopted by CARICOM through endorsement by COHSOD for Vocational Training in CARICOM Member states since 2002. Successful implementation of the CVQ is therefore dependent on the acceptance of the CBET philosophy, the adaptation and comprehensive knowledge of the regional occupational standards, the provision of adequate resources and the clear delineation and execution of the roles and responsibilities of the partnering entities involved in implementation.

There are several facets, some aforementioned, that are essential to the implementation of the CVQ. These include:

- **Occupational areas:** general groups of work activity that are identified and recognized as highly relevant to the respective industry by employers. The occupational areas are clearly defined by a set of established standards.

- **Occupational standards:** describe the different activities someone working in the respective discipline would be expected to master. Each occupational standard consist of units, which reflect the functions or duties within the occupational area. The standards represent current best practices that are relevant to the world of work and are benchmarked internationally. A National Occupational Standard (NOS) that receives endorsement/approval from CARICOM becomes a Regional Occupational Standard (ROS). The ROS forms the basis of the CVQ.

- **Regional Qualification Framework (RQF):** define the different levels of the occupational standards. There are five (5) established levels of the RQF and are identified as follows: Level 1 (Semi skilled worker/assistant – e.g. a tradesman assistant), Level 2 (Skilled independent worker - e.g. a mason), Level 3 (Supervisor/technical worker – e.g. a construction supervisor), Level 4 (Manager, skilled professional – typically degree level, e.g. a civil engineer), Level 5 (Executive professional – typically advanced degree level, e.g. a registered or chartered engineer).

- **Competency Based Education and Training (CBET):** philosophy posits that all learners will learn equally well if they receive the type of instruction they need. Training pro-grammes therefore identify exactly what trainees should learn, provide high quality instruction, facilitate mastery of skills before going on to the next and requires candidates to demonstrate competency in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. The CBET approach also allows for flexibility on the instructor's part since it provides opportunities to employ different methods of teaching that are in sync with the learners' style and abilities. CBET complements and improves upon the traditional academic approach.

The CBET model used in implementing the CVQ is criterion referenced. The assessment for certification is based on performance criteria and conditions under which achievement will be assessed are all explicitly stated and made public in advance. The CVQ system advocates a more holistic outcomes-based curriculum which includes career guidance, entrepreneurship training. It also impacts the affective domain as it also focuses on socialization for citizenship, for example, behaviours necessary to ensure teamwork and cooperation, effective inter personal skills, proper work ethic and occupational health and safety. Indeed the CVQ subscribes to the view as articulated in UNESCO's four pillars of Learning: to know, to do, to be, and to live together. This philosophy will create the ideal CARICOM Citizen/Worker as promulgated by the CARICOM heads in 1997 who:

- *Is capable of seizing the economic opportunities which the global environment is presenting*

- *Demonstrates multiple literacies, including foreign language skills, independent and critical thinking*

- *Has developed the capacity to create and take advantage of opportunities to control, improve, maintain and promote physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being: and to contribute to the health and welfare of the community and country*

- *Nourishes in him/her and in others, the full development of each person's potential without gender stereotyping: and embraces differences and similarities between females and males as a source of mental strength*

- *Has informed respect for our cultural heritage and that of others*

The CVQ can be pursued by secondary school students (from the fourth year), school leavers, employees or persons seeking new skills. The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) awards the CVQ in secondary school systems and the three (3) established National Training Agencies (NTAs) in the region certify persons in industry, other institutions and community based programmes.

A unit award is issued for each unit achieved. A CVQ certificate is awarded when a candidate has been deemed competent in all of the units specified by the industry standards for the relevant occupational area. There is no fixed / grade used to determine the award of the CVQ. The individual is assessed and judged only as "competent" or "not yet competent", as such it is not possible to "fail" given that repeat assessments can be facilitated until the person achieves competence. The CVQ transcript provides a comprehensive skills profile of the graduate enabling employers or educational institutions to make informed decisions about graduates.

There are no time constraints for when an individual must achieve all the units for a CVQ. Several units can be acquired in one programme and the remaining units then completed at a different time or in some other programme. This system therefore promotes the notion of lifelong learning.

The NTAs in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have also developed significant

expertise to assess and certify persons using Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). The competence based assessment embedded in the CVQ allows it to be used to certify individuals who did not acquire their skills within a formal programme. In such a case, a portfolio of verifiable evidence as well as a programme of controlled observation and testing is conducted to determine whether the candidate has the required competence for a CVQ award.

The CVQ system represents a significant shift in the current educational paradigm from the traditional academic approach to one that emphasizes skills and competencies required for the workplace. A direct consequence to this change in paradigm is the need for the allocation of significant financial and human resources to successfully implement the system and for strategies to achieve the necessary buy-in from all educational sector stakeholders.

The training curricula, assessment and certification for the CVQ are based on internationally benchmarked occupational standards. This ensures that every certificate issued guarantees the awardees' competence to perform at whatever given level of occupation anywhere in the world. The graduate is therefore rendered internationally competitive in the occupational area pursued.

The CVQ encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes in its training modality. The academic component of training increases as one moves up the levels of the qualifications framework. Consequently, the higher levels reflect the superiority of the CVQ over traditional purely academic qualification in that the latter represent the educational base of the CVQ that, by its very definition, requires both knowledge as well as competence in the application of knowledge. A key example of this is at Level 5 which reflects long established practice in engineer registration in which one must first acquire the educational base followed by a specified number of years of demonstrated competence as an engineer as evidenced by a portfolio authorized by another registered engineer.

The CVQ allows smooth matriculation to various levels of employment and work and truly empowers and recognizes the workforce contributing to the development of human capital, individual and regional competitiveness. The NTA's are positioned to respond in a timely manner to facilitate training or re-training as new occupations emerge or old occupations or skills sets become obsolete and thus maintain the currency, relevance and competitiveness of the CSME workforce.



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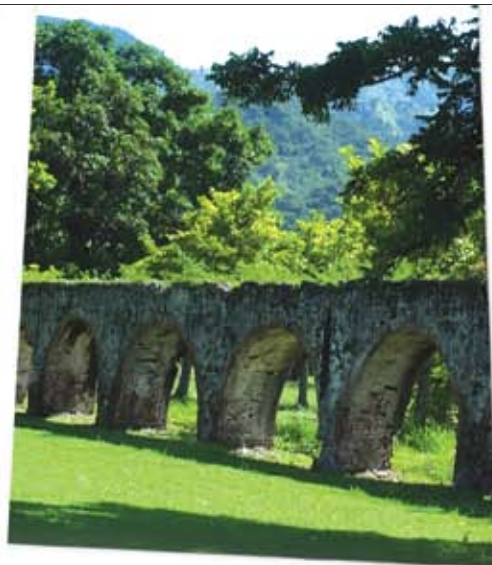
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Continuous Quality Improvement: Post Institutional Accreditation

Curtis Floyd, Director, Registration, Accreditation and Quality Enhancement (Ag.), ACTT

In 2011, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) created history, not only in Trinidad and Tobago but also in the Caribbean, by being the first Quality Assurance body in the region to award the status of Institutional Accreditation. This was awarded to three (3) local institutions:

- *College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT);*
- *The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT); and*
- *The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus*

The status of Institutional Accreditation is testimony that an institution has met the educational standards established by a recognised quality assurance body.

The road to Institutional Accreditation for these institutions was not an easy one nor was the journey short. Each of these institutions began the process at least two (2) years prior to receiving accredited status, with the collection and transposing of data into information. This culminated in the production of their Self-Study Report prepared by several working groups representing a wide cross section of the institution. These groups were also responsible for acquiring feedback from all the key stakeholders to produce the report. This was followed by a Comprehensive Site Visit by a team of foreign and local External Evaluators, who are professionals trained to conduct evaluations of the institutions and their programmes. The purpose of this site visit is to verify the information documented in the Self-Study Report.

Having gained accredited status, an institution must demonstrate that it continues to meet ACTT's prescribed standards.

To this end, ACTT has introduced mechanisms to assist with the continuous monitoring of the institutions. These include:



Senator the Hon. Fazal Karim, Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (2nd from left); Dr. Michael Dowlath, Chairman of the Board of Directors, ACTT (1st from left); and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT (1st from right) congratulate (from left to right) David Moses, Deputy Registrar at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus; Professor Kenneth Ramchand, President of the University of Trinidad and Tobago; and Emmanuel E. Gonsalves, Esq., President of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago who proudly hold Certificates of Institutional Accreditation presented at ACTT's press conference.

• *Progress Reports -*

On completion of the Comprehensive Site Visit, the External Evaluators compile a Site Visit Report, which details the degree to which the institution has met the Standards for Institutional Accreditation. They may include in their Site Visit Report, recommendations and suggestions to address any areas for improvement in meeting the Standards for Institutional Accreditation. The institution is given a time frame in which to address these recommendations and this information is provided in the form of a Progress Report, which is sent to ACTT. A desktop review is conducted and a focussed visit may be necessary to verify that the institution has sufficiently addressed the issues identified in the Site Visit Report. Subsequent to the desktop review or the focussed site visit, the institution is given feedback on the issues for which further evidence is required.

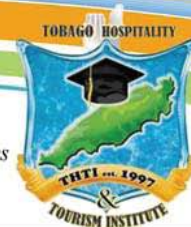
• *Annual Accredited Institution Report (AAIR) -*

Each accredited institution is required to provide ACTT with an Annual Accredited Institution Report (AAIR) at the end of each year, for every year that it is accredited. The institution records, inter alia, any changes with respect to its governance, enrolment, finances, programme offerings and operational sites, to name a few. ACTT, in reviewing this report, will determine if any of these changes are substantive enough to warrant notification that this may result in the institution's status of Institutional Accreditation being compromised. In such a case, ACTT advises the institution what has to be done to remedy the situation and/or imposes conditions on the institution until such issues have been rectified. Only when ACTT is satisfied that the issues have been adequately addressed that the conditions are removed.

• *Monitoring and Compliance Officers -*

ACTT will be introducing Monitoring and Compliance Officers who will visit institutions to verify that standards are being maintained. These officers may also address complaints made against the institution, the aim being to determine whether there is any credence to the claims, and to work with the institution to have the issues resolved.

Quality Assurance at institutions must be continuously monitored to ensure that standards are being maintained and institutions are keeping abreast of international best practice. ACTT is committed to working with post secondary and tertiary institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago towards implementing, monitoring, evaluating and improving their Quality Management Systems.



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An Overview of Transnational Programmes in Trinidad and Tobago

Ronald Brunton PhD., Director, Qualifications and Recognition, ACTT and Alisha Ali, Research Assistant, ACTT

According to UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education, transnational education includes 'all types of higher education study programme, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including distance education) in which learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based'. Transnational programmes are delivered via collaborative arrangements with local partner institutions. Over the past decade there has been a rapid growth in the number of transnational programmes worldwide. This increase is due to a number of factors, including the revolution in information technology, the competitiveness of transnational education, the demand for lifelong learning and the international recognition of transnational qualifications.

In Trinidad and Tobago, transnational programmes must be either individually quality assured, or recognised through a quality assurance process applied to the entire operations of the foreign awarding body/institution. In both instances, transnational programmes must undergo a rigorous quality assurance process by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) before it can be granted recognition status for delivery in Trinidad and Tobago.

The responsibility for quality assuring transnational programmes is shared among

ACTT, the local partner institution and the quality assurance authority in the country from which the transnational programme originates. Firstly, the local partner institution involved in the delivery of the programme must be registered by ACTT. Additionally, the foreign awarding body/institution must be recognised in its country of origin in accordance with its quality assurance system. These fundamental prerequisites are amongst other established criteria and standards set out by ACTT.

The recognition of a transnational programme by ACTT involves the submission of an application, inclusive of a self study report, by the local partner institution, with input from the foreign awarding body/institution. ACTT conducts an assessment of the application and informs the institution of the degree to which the standards have been met. The institution is given the opportunity to provide information to address any deficiencies, subsequent to which a review by external evaluators is conducted. This review focuses on the quality of the programme and institutional arrangements designed for monitoring and ensuring quality. The recognition of a foreign awarding body/institution follows a similar process.

There is a wide variety of recognised transnational programmes currently being

offered in Trinidad and Tobago, from certificates and diploma programmes to bachelor's master's and doctoral level programmes, in subject areas that range from academic and technical vocational education and training (TVET) to professional programmes. To date, ACTT has quality assured thirteen (13) foreign awarding bodies/institutions and four-hundred and seventy-three (473) transnational programmes. These programmes originate from the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Canada and Australia.

Internationally, the impact of transnational education has been widely debated, and several positive and negative impacts have been identified. Some positives include a wider range of subject areas to choose from, an improvement in the education system due to greater competition, innovative methods of delivery, and establishment of links with foreign universities. There are, however, a number of negative impacts which have been internationally observed, such as incompatibility with the local environment, poor job market preparedness and disruption to accepted structures of higher education. As gate-keepers of the tertiary sector, ACTT introduced a comprehensive quality assurance system, for the recognition of transnational programmes, developed to protect and safeguard the interest of students.

Are You Thinking about pursuing Higher education?



You need to make informed decisions and have no regrets. Check to ensure your local institution of choice is registered or accredited with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). It is important that you complete your programme at a registered or accredited institution to ensure you earn a recognised qualification.

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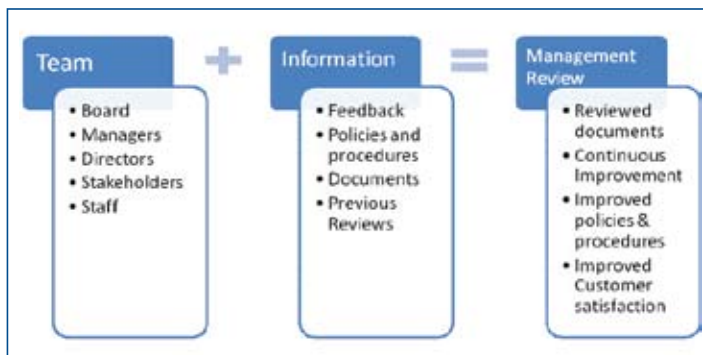
Marissia Alexander –Wilkinson, Quality Enhancement Officer, ACTT

Quality is a journey, a series of many events that, when multiplied, culminate in a culture that is able to attain and sustain higher levels of performance which make your customers enthusiastic about your product/service, your employees passionate about their jobs and your stakeholders excited about the return on their investment. Failure to provide this level of performance may encourage customers to look at your competitors' products/services.

Once established, a Quality Management System (QMS) has the capacity to preserve and enhance the quality of any institution. As part of the registration criteria, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) requires that all post secondary and tertiary institutions establish, implement and maintain a QMS.

What is a Quality Management System (QMS)?

A QMS is a set of policies and procedures that manage the structure, responsibilities and resources required for planning, managing and executing quality objectives in the core business area of an organisation. (i.e. areas that can impact the organisation's ability to meet customer requirements). Therefore, it is not an addition to an organisation but an integral part of management and production.



How can an institution maintain its Quality Management System?

Management Review: A Process not an Event.

The management review process of a QMS is often misunderstood and underutilised, but it is the primary process that supports continuous improvement and improved customer and stakeholder satisfaction.

Management reviews involve more than weekly summary meetings between supervisors and their staff. While summary meetings serve to ensure that the day-to-day operations run smoothly, management reviews require a more proactive approach. Therefore, the management review process focuses on planning for the 'what if' in order to make the required improvements to the QMS. This process includes identifying all possible causes of non-conformities to the QMS and developing effective corrective actions to prevent re-occurrence and

preventive action to avoid occurrence of non-conformities. This process should involve members from the Board of Directors, directors and managers who have the power and decision-making responsibility for managing an institution. These persons are required to revise policies or procedures as one of the outputs of the management review.

To be effective, a management review should be performed at regular intervals (three to four times a year) and address the following areas:

- an assessment of opportunities for improvement
- the need for change to the QMS
- stakeholder feedback
- curriculum review and approval
- review of policy and procedure
- review documents and agreements
- income and expenditure to date
- the status of preventive and corrective actions

- follow-up actions from previous management reviews

The management review of a QMS tends to create its own documents. These documents should be viewed as the inputs for the next management review. Therefore, management review should be viewed as a cycle rather than a series of unrelated meetings. The following are possible outputs of the management review process:

- minutes of the meeting itemising all the decisions, actions and future actions to be implemented
- reviewed QMS
- new/revised documentation, forms, templates etc.
- new/revised agreements
- reviewed curriculum and programme specifications
- revised income and expenditure statements
- infrastructural changes
- staff changes

After management review of the QMS, changes should be communicated to all employees. This assists in ensuring the culture of quality is maintained and accepted by all members of staff.

Institutions that conduct management reviews of their QMS position themselves for growth and long-term success because the management focusses the institution on continuous improvement and meeting the needs of stakeholders.



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- Engine Tune-Up/Troubleshooting
- Joinery, Furniture Design & Construction
- Patient Care Assistant
- Small Business Management

PENAL SECONDARY

- Fabricating
- Festival Arts
- Joinery, Furniture Design & Construction
- Photography
- Small Business Management
- Vegetable Production (Grow Box System)

UNION CLAXTON BAY SECONDARY

- Joinery, Furniture Design & Construction
- Sound Engineering Assistant
- Small Business Management

CHAGUANAS TRAINING & ENTERPRISE ACADEMY

- Child Care Attendant
- Patient Care Assistant

MARABELLA SECONDARY

- Child Care Attendant
- Engine Tune-Up/Troubleshooting
- Events Decorating
- Masonry
- Patient Care Assistant
- Plumbing
- Small Business Management

PLEASANTVILLE SECONDARY

- Child Care Attendant
- Dressmaking & Design
- Patient Care Assistant
- Small Business Management

POINT LISAS TRAINING & ENTERPRISE ACADEMY

- Electrical Installation
- Plumbing

SIPARIA WEST SECONDARY

- Child Care Attendant
- Dressmaking & Design
- Engine Tune-Up/Troubleshooting
- Patient Care Assistant
- Small Business Management

154,446 persons trained as of Cycle 34



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Diploma Mills

Stephen enrolled in a local tertiary institution to pursue a degree in business management. Chris, however, had discovered a university that promised a degree that he could earn from home. Chris was very excited because the university's website also stated that the student could complete the degree in a few months at a cost that was significantly lower than other universities. What more could he want?

A year later, Chris informed Stephen that he had received his Bachelor's degree in Information Systems Analysis and was ready to begin his search for a job. His friend was amazed that he had finished his degree so quickly, as he knew that it could take at least three years, but was happy for him.

Over the next two months Chris attended several interviews and finally received an offer from a firm he longed to be a part of. However,

before he could be hired, the Human Resource Officer indicated that she required a 'Statement on Recognition' from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) that would tell her whether Chris' university and his qualifications were accredited or recognised. A little puzzled since he felt that he could do the job, Chris telephoned Stephen.

Stephen was able to provide some information on ACTT, having visited the offices prior to starting his degree programme. It was there that he received a 'Statement on Recognition' on the status of both the institution he was studying at and the programme. The information he received on the 'Statement on Recognition' had assured him that his investment would be well worth it.

Having gained an understanding of why the 'Statement on Recognition' from ACTT was so important,

Chris applied for this Statement. He read the Statement expectantly, only to learn that neither the university nor the programme he pursued was accredited and therefore not recognised by ACTT. The first question he asked was, "How could this be?"

ACTT's Customer Service Representative explained the facts to him. The university that awarded him the degree was a 'diploma mill' or 'degree mill'. This, the Representative stated, is an institution that awards academic qualifications without recognition from a legitimate quality assurance agency. She further explained that institutions such as these have little or no academic admission requirements, may state that some or no academic study is necessary, may offer programmes at reduced costs and the option for completion in a few weeks or months.

Chris admitted that these were what had attracted him to the university, and regretted not having done more research. He realised that this would cost him the dream



**The Accreditation Council
of Trinidad and Tobago**

Established by Chapter 39:06

Quality is the Key

job and that he would have to start over. He still wanted to pursue an on-line programme, but was at a loss to know how to proceed.

To help him, the ACTT Representative provided some warning signs to determine what may be a diploma mill. Chris expressed his gratitude and stated that he felt more confident that he would be able to make a wiser choice the second time around. Nevertheless, he was strongly advised to return to ACTT once he decided on a university and a programme, so that he could obtain a 'Statement on Recognition' that would state whether his institution and programme of choice were recognised.

Thinking of higher education? Always check with ACTT first.

How to spot a Diploma Mill

A DIPLOMA MILL

- offers a cheap degree with little or no examinations and promises to be completed in a few months
- has no physical address, but rather a postal box or mail forwarding service or suite number
- has a name that sounds like a legitimate recognised institution

For further information contact The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago

TRINIDAD: Level 3, Building B ALGICO Plaza, 91-93 St Vincent Street, Port of Spain
Tel: (868) 623-2500/5282/8389 Fax: (868) 624-5711

TOBAGO: #79 Milford Road, Canaan, Tobago Tel/Fax: (868) 639-1333

E-MAIL: customerservice@actt.org.tt • **WEBSITE:** www.actt.org.tt

What then are the benefits of acquiring a 'Statement on Recognition'?

- It confirms whether the institution and the qualifications it awards have been quality assured.
- It states whether the programme has specialised accreditation necessary for membership in a professional body and/or licence to practice.
- It helps facilitate matriculation/entry into another programme.
- It is a requirement for scholarships and financial aid awarded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.
- It enhances opportunities for employment.

Mutual recognition agreements allow ACTT to issue 'Statements on Recognition' on qualifications. ACTT does not accredit qualifications awarded by foreign institutions.