January / February 2013



ACTT NOW

A Publication of The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago A Project of the Office of the Executive Director

WHO WE ARE

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) was established by Chapter 39:06 as the principal body in Trinidad and Tobago for conducting and advising on the accreditation and recognition of post secondary and tertiary education training institutions, programmes and awards, whether local and foreign and for the promotion of quality and standards for post secondary and tertiary education and training in Trinidad and Tobago.

WHAT WE DO

- Conferment of Institutional Title
- Registration of Higher Education Institutions
- Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions
- Recognition of Foreign Programmes and Awards
- Programme Approval
- Equivalence Assessment

Institutional Development

View Act 39:06 for our mandate, found on our website:

WHERE WE ARE LOCATED

TRINIDAD

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

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TOBAGO

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



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Executive Director's message

As we start the new year, we at the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT), reflect on our achievements in 2012 and look forward to 2013. In many ways, 2012 was very successful as we accomplished many of our goals that once again affirmed the value and credibility of our mandate of advocating for quality in the field of higher education.

Notable achievements include: Continuing institutional strengthening

- Conferment of Institutional Accreditation to three (3) institutions: The Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, The University of Southern Caribbean and Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies;
- Opening of the South Outreach Office to facilitate our stakeholders in the south, south west, south east and south central areas of Trinidad; and
- Re-commissioning of ACTT's Tobago Office to increase service to our stakeholders
- Provide information and guidance to the public
- Launch of ACTT's Tobago Student Caravan;
- Recognition of three hundred and seventy-nine (379) transnational programmes;
- Participation in twenty-six (26) career fairs/open days; and
- Launch of the Digital Map of Registered and Accredited Higher Education Institutions in Trinidad and Tobago utilising Google Earth

Establishing and maintaining relationships with regional and international stakeholders

- Hosted various activities during the Quality Assurance Month, November 2012. Activities during the month included two (2) panel discussions; three (3) workshops; and ACTT's excellence in Higher Education Awards Ceremony 2012 at which awards were presented to higher education institutions in areas such as preparedness for change and research and innovation.
- Study Tour visits and discussions with North American counterparts and other stakeholders: Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) on matters related to higher education

The highlight event for 2013 will be the 1st International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education entitled 'Quality in Higher Education: From Best Practice to Next Practice'. This Conference will provide a forum for sharing international best practices, presenting research findings and assessing recent developments facing higher education. The Conference is scheduled for April 30 to May 3 2013.



Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director

We also look forward to the publication of **ACTT's** Journal of Quality Assurance in Higher Education. This journal is intended to be the leading scholarly journal on quality assurance in higher education in the Caribbean and aims to provide practical interventions for developing a quality culture, inclusive of strategies for implementation of policies and procedures and continual monitoring and improvement.

I acknowledge the many stakeholders who have been instrumental in the achievement of our goals. We appreciate the support of the Minister and staff of the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. I would also like to thank ACTT's staff for their diligence and dedication. We look forward to 2013 as we enhance our corporate image as the leader in quality assurance in the region.





M.B.: What does it mean for the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies (CCLCS) to be granted accredited status at this time?

I.S.L.: Cipriani College of Labour Co-operative Studies (CCLCS) was awarded Institutional Accreditation status by the Board of Directors of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) on November 21, 2012 for a period of five (5) years. This is truly a momentous achievement in its 46 years history. It is also gratifying to know that CCLCS being a working class educational institution was able to secure this prestigious mark of institutional quality.

Today the institution stands very proud to have undergone such an intensive process of the Self Study and External Site Visit. Accreditation signals to our stakeholders that the College's programmes, operations, procedures and processes met the level of quality set forth by ACTT.

M.B.: How has CCLCS's experience with participating in the accreditation self-study benefitted/changed the institution?

I.S.L.: The accreditation exercise had a positive impact on the College. It allowed the institution to take a critical self-evaluation and to make a determination on how well it was achieving its mission. The Self Study identified the College's strengths and areas for improvement. A culture of continuous improvement was fostered by devising, implementing and monitoring the identified areas for improvement.

Due to the collaborative approach adopted by CCLCS, many stakeholders got a better appreciation for the roles of other functionaries within the College's structure. Individuals were able to identify how their activities contributed towards the mission. This renewed their commitment to the mission of the College.

M.B.: What advice would you give to other institutions embarking on the accreditation journey?

I.S.L.: There are certain ingredients that are necessary to ensure that an institution embarking on the accreditation journey is successful. Collaboration and teamwork are required from all stakeholders. Include as many different types of stakeholder as possible in the process. While individuals would have different roles to play; all stakeholders must be willing to support the process.

Proper planning and strong project management skills are also necessary to realise and monitor the Self Study process. In the planning phase, include the process to be taken, outline responsibilities, identify resources required, identify data and evidence required, specify timelines and targets, identify potential challenges and possible solutions.

An open and honest attitude from stakeholders should be encouraged. The Self Study will reveal both the strengths and weaknesses in the operations and processes of the institution. Emphasise the assessed strengths of the institution but do not overlook the weaknesses. Have a systematic approach to address areas for improvement. This is the intrinsic value of the Self Study process, which is continuous improvement and institutional advancement.

Institutions embarking on this process should establish and maintain professional and collegial relations with accredited institutions. This network will allow for candidate institutions to take advantage of advice, support and encouragement as they undertake the process of institutional accreditation. While no two institutions would be the same, the experience and lessons learnt from others can be immensely beneficial.

The institution should have a strong institutional research capacity. Data and information are required to make determinations and measure the institution's capacity in fulfilling the criteria for accreditation. Institutional research would also be required when implementing and monitoring any corrective action strategies.

Lastly, the writing of the Self Study Report can be a daunting task. An institution needs to have individuals with strong writing and editorial skill sets.

M.B.: How would achieving accredited status benefit students and other stakeholders?

I.S.L.: Students are the primary beneficiaries of being awarded accreditation status. For them, it means that the value and currency of their certificates have appreciated. Students who desire to matriculate into higher level programmes would find that their CCLCS qualifications are more recognised and transferable to other institutions given the stamp of approval by ACTT.

Being accredited will assure our students and potential students that the programme offerings are designed and administered effectively and that they can expect a high quality of teaching and learning.

To our stakeholders, it demonstrates CCLCS's commitment to self evaluation and continuous improvement. It also indicates that the College holds true to its mission since being accredited and maintaining the status ensures that our operations, systems and resources are focussed on achieving it.

M.B.: What impact might the accreditation of institutions have on the local and regional education sector?

I.S.L.: Locally, as more institutions become accredited the expectations from the education sector to provide quality and effective education would increase. This will help achieve the national goal of improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the system.

Regionally, it will enhance the ease of transfer of students and credits among regional bodies. This will encourage the freedom of movement to study throughout the region.

CREDITATION

Sharon Delochan Assessment Officer, ACTT

n recent times accreditation in higher education has captured the attention of students, employers and the general public in Trinidad and Tobago. Increasingly, more and more persons are becoming aware of the importance of quality assurance of higher education institutions. Institutional accreditation is a quality assurance measure that signifies that an institution has met quality standards established by an independent authority. It is both a process and a status. As a process, the higher education institution engages in a self-study of its operations, against defined quality assurance standards. Accreditation involves a review through a site visit by the relevant accrediting or quality assurance body. Following successful evaluation, accredited status is bestowed upon an institution that has met established quality standards. Accreditation is thus generally understood by the public as a mark of quality and is often a deciding factor in choosing an institution of study.

While it is important to attend a quality assured institution, it is equally important to be aware that the jurisdiction of an accreditation agency is usually confined to the country where it has been established. In most countries, accrediting agencies have been established with the mandate to quality assure higher education institutions in that country. Such systems are meant to protect the public from unscrupulous or low quality providers and safeguard state funding of higher education. Legitimate higher education institutions should be accredited by the recognised accreditation agency of the country where the institution is located. A disturbing trend today is the growing number of higher education institutions that bypass national accreditation agencies, claiming instead to have 'international' accreditation from an 'international' accrediting agency. Careful scrutiny of claims of 'international' accreditation reveals that such 'international' accrediting agencies operate without government authority or recognition. In most cases, such accrediting agencies are closely affiliated with the same institutions they have accredited. These accrediting agencies are known as 'accreditation mills'; the accredited status they confer holds no value.

Prospective higher education students can be easily confused when presented with mis-information by accreditation mills. Claims of 'international' accreditation can be convincingly marketed to lure the prospective students. However, it is important to ensure that the institution you plan to attend is accredited by the nationally recognised accrediting agency. ACTT strongly advises that anyone who is contemplating further study, at home or abroad, especially via distance learning, to consult with ACTT before making a decision. ACTT will provide you with accurate and timely information that will make your decision in choosing a higher education institution to attend much easier.

THE USE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) AND PROFESSIONAL COURSES IN FURTHERING NATIONAL, WORKPLACE AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS

SHERMA JOSEPH

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has furthered eight key areas of national development formally known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Trinidad and Tobago has adapted these goals as seven national development priorities. Of the seven priorities, the second seeks to focus, in part, on improving the national educational system. This is as a direct result of the global initiative of education for all with a focus on removing barriers.

The range of programmes offered by higher education institutions has been expanding over the last twenty years. The thrust to improve and increase the offerings in the sector has also been bolstered by the findings of studies such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 and 2011 that point to parental educational background at tertiary level as having a strong positive relationship with student achievement. The provision of higher education, as it relates to parents and caregivers as non-traditional and mature students, has been a challenge regarding recipients' work and family commitments. Within this environment, open and distance learning (ODL) opportunities and professional courses have served to satisfy national education imperatives and individuals' career goals.

Open and distance learning refers to a range of modalities which allows students to access learning without being present at a physical campus. It allows students to be engaged in a flexible arrangement that is not dependent upon time and place. The philosophy of open learning emphasizes learner choice of medium and place of study, as well as it offers multiple and flexible exit and entry points. Distance education is any educational process in which the learners and facilitators are not present in the same physical space. This modality allows students and academics to use the developments in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to learn and teach through electronic material and e-conferences. The virtual world becomes the classroom. When the two are combined as open and distance learning (ODL), there is an expansion in the numbers and types of recipients of higher education opportunities.

Lifelong learning is a significant process in ensuring that the goals of a nation are attained. In addition to ODL, the use of professional courses in the development of staff is a significant feature of human capital development. Professional courses are designed to assist individuals already employed in a field to deepen and renew their knowledge and skills. The workplace and the learner benefit because the content and experiences offered reflect the most modern approaches applied to specific work-place functions.

The benefits of ODL and short and professional courses are manifold. In addition to the gains already mentioned, they allow large numbers of adult learners to further their personal and professional goals in pathways which are self-directed and flexible. The human resources available for administrating and facilitating the programmes are better utilised as they are not constrained by time and space. On a national level, it allows for a large number of citizens to become trained in specialised areas.

Undeniably, the use of ODL and professional courses results in significant benefits to individuals and their workplaces. More so, the nation's long term priorities can be achieved by a better-educated and competent workforce.



ACTI³S Quality Assurance Month of Activities

2012

■ he Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) celebrated Quality Assurance Month in November 2012 which focused on the theme 'Committed to Quality in Higher Education: Overcoming Challenges in a Globalised Environment.' During this month ACTT held various activities, including an International Academic Credential and CV Fraud workshop, an External Evaluator Training workshop, and two panel discussions on 'Promoting a Knowledge Economy: A Quality Imperative' and 'Funding Higher Education - A Development Imperative'. Further, ACTT hosted two workshops designed to assist higher education institutions in strengthening their governance, administrative and financial management functions. These events were intended to educate and sensitise the public and to promote issues relating to quality in higher education.

For the second year, ACTT invited 4th, 5th and 6th form secondary school students, full-time undergraduate students of all registered and accredited tertiary level institutions in Trinidad and Tobago to participate in its National Essay Writing Competition. This competition promoted the importance of pursuing programmes at a quality assured higher education and training institution to ensure students earn recognised qualifications. Winners were presented with their prizes, which were in part sponsored by various coporations, at ACTT's Quality in Tertiary Education Awards Ceremony.



5: Panellists at ACTT's Panel Discussion – theme 'Funding Higher Education – A Development Imperative'

(I-r) David Thomas, Robin Maraj, Rev Dr Errol Joseph, Dr Roger Hosein, Sonji Pierre-Chase, Professor Miguel Carrillo, Margaret Richardson (Moderator)

6: Panellists at ACTT's Panel Discussion – theme 'Promoting a Knowledge Economy – A Quality Imperative'.

Back row: ACTT's Board of Directors and Executive Leadership Team Front Row (I-r): Dr Gillian Paul (Moderator), Dr Sandra Gift, Dr Kamla Mungal, Latoya Griffith, Kelvin Sergeant, Blair Ferguson



1: Monika Krzebietke, UK NARIC Training Co-ordinator, reviews a certificate with Dr Ronald Brunton, Director of Recognition and Qualifications, ACTT, and Emily Pascal, Director of Finance and Administration, ACTT, at the International Academic Credential and CV Fraud Workshop

2: External Evaluator Training, Cohort 8, at the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business

3: Elizabeth Evans, Credential Evaluation Expert, UK NARIC explains to participants how to detect fraudulent certificates at International Credential and CV Fraud workshop at the Capital Plaza

4: Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, addresses participants at ACTT's International Credential and CV Fraud workshop at the Capital Plaza, Port of Spain



ACTT'S Excellence in Higher Education Awards 2012

ACTT's Quality Assurance Month 2012 culminated in the Quality in Tertiary Education Awards (QuITE) Ceremony, which was held on Friday November 30, 2012 at the Hilton Trinidad, and Conference Centre. Acting President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Timothy Hamel-Smith, delivered the feature address, and emphasised ACTT's role in the development of the higher education sector. He stated "ACTT ... has a pivotal role to play in ensuring that our institutions of higher learning fulfill the ultimate goal of such education... the development of an informed, responsible citizenry and the preparation for a personally satisfying and socially useful career".

Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT, in his welcome remarks stated that "ACTT's QuITE Awards ceremony was becoming the premier award event in the local higher education sector as it recognises institutional excellence in and commitment to the implementation of a Quality Management System, provision of Student Support Services and Preparedness for Change".

The QuITE Awards do not only recognise excellence in quality assurance but they also provide tertiary institutions with an incentive to strive for further improvement in all aspects of their operations, thus developing and enhancing the higher education sector of Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition, ACTT launched its 1st International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. This Conference will take place at the National Academy for the Performing Arts, Port of Spain from **April 30 to May 3, 2012**. The theme is '*Quality in Higher Education, From Next Practice to Best Practice'*.





I: Acting President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Timothy Hamel-Smith, delivers the feature address at ACTT's Excellence in Higher Education Awards Ceremony at the Trinidad Hilton and Conference Centre, Port of Spain.

2: The late Jaggernauth Soom, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (MTEST), gives remarks on behalf of Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister, MTEST.

3: Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman ACTT, along with Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, presents Mr Joseph Remy, Chairman of Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies and Dr Ian Sakura-Lemessy, President of Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, with their certificate of Institutional Accreditation.

4: Acting President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Timothy Hamel-Smith, presents Professor Compton Bourne with the Lifetime Achievement for Excellence in Quality Assurance in Higher Education Award.

5: Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman ACTT, along with Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, presents Dr Ruby S Alleyne of The University of Trinidad and Tobago and Ravi Ragoonath of CTS College of Business and Computer Science Limited with awards for Excellence for an Established Quality Management System (Missing in photo University of the Southern Caribbean).

6: Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman ACTT, along with Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director of ACTT, presents Rosemary Costa of the Institute of Cosmetology and Aesthetics Ltd with the award for Excellence in Preparedness for Change.

7: ACTT's 2nd National Essay Writing Competition Winners (Tertiary Level Institutions) with Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman of ACTT, and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director of ACTT: First Prize Winner - Val De Clou – School of Business and Computer Science, 2nd Runner Up – Kevin Onsinyo – The University of the Southern Caribbean and Honorable Mention - Kajal Madho – The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus (missing Ist Runner Up – Chrissie-Ann Solomon - The University of the Southern Caribbean).

8: ACTT's 2nd National Essay Writing Competition Winners (Form 6) with Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman ACTT, and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT: First Prize Winner - Gionieva Fraser - St Joseph's Convent, Port of Spain, 1st Runner Up – Alex K. Gobin – Naparima College, 2nd Runner Up - Anyse A. Calder - St Joseph's Convent, Port of Spain and Honorable Mention - Ariel Walrond - San Fernando Central Secondary School.

9: Awardees for Excellence in Student Support Services in tertiary education; Institute of Law and Academic Studies and CTS College of Business and Computer Science Limited System with Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT and with Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT. (Missing in photo University of the Southern Caribbean).

ACT Celebrates its Staff

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Established by Chapter 39:06



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (middle) with Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT (left) and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT (right) with staff members Daryl Steele, Alice Dain, Marsha McKay and Rodney Julien, recipients of ACTT's 5 year service award (missing from photo Zellon Bethel).



Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT present Zellon Bethel with the Executive Director's Award 2012.



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (3rd from left) Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT (left) and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT (right) with the recipients of ACTT's Special Commendation Awards:(I-r) Alice Dain, Shoma Rampersad-Clark and Marsha McKay. (missing from photo) Selwyn Joseph and Nikeisha Brathwaite.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) honoured its employees at its Annual Staff Appreciation Luncheon and Award Ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad, Port of Spain, on Friday December 7, 2012. Employees received awards in recognition of their dedication and commitment to ACTT's mission and vision. The award categories were:

- Employees' Choice Awards Administrative, Technical and Management;
- The Executive Director's Award; and
- The Board of Directors' Executive Leadership
 Award

New to the awards this year was the Employees' Choice Award - Graduate Trainee, which was presented to Afi Llewellyn. Further, Special Commendation Awards were presented to five members of staff who worked beyond the call of duty during the year.

Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim in his remarks extended season's greetings to staff and their families. Senator Karim congratulated the Council stating, "You continue to surpass expectations and do the government and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago proud." Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman of the Board of Directors, ACTT, brought greetings on behalf of the board members and highlighted ACTT's achievements in 2012 which included: the recognition of three hundred and seventy nine transnational programmes, the commissioning of the South Outreach Office to facilitate stakeholders in the South, South West, South East South Central areas and of Trinidad, re-commissioning of the Tobago Office, the launch of ACTT's Tobago Student Caravan, the launch of the Digital Map of Registered and Accredited Higher Education Institutions, Conferment of Institutional Accreditation status on Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, University of the Southern Caribbean and Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies and the hosting of various activities during Quality Assurance Month.



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim , Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (middle), Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman ACTT, and Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, with winners of ACTT's Employee Choice Awards 2012, (I-r) Candice Dindyal (Administrative), Karel Stephen (Management) and Denise Lewis (Technical).



Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT presents Afi Llewellyn with the Employee Choice Award – Graduate Trainee, 2012 while Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, looks on.



ACTT's staff and guests were entertained by the melodious sounds of parang performed by Los Alumnos de San Juan.



ACTT Celebrates the contributions of its Stakeholders



(L-R) Marlon Moore – Newsday, Frank Rivas – All Round Trading Company Limited and Cynthia Browne-Moore – Guardian Media Limited.



Dr Ronald Brunton, Director - Qualifications and Recognition, ACTT, shares a light moment with ACTT External Evaluators, Margaret Richardson and Claudia Drakes.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) hosted an appreciation event on December 12, 2012 at the Pan American Life Building, Penthouse, Port of Spain, to recognise the contributions of its valued stakeholders who have been instrumental in the Council's success. Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, stated, "We have met and in some cases surpassed our objectives. These were achieved not only through the efforts of our staff but also because of the integral role you played in enabling ACTT to disseminate the message of quality assurance in higher education to the general public."

Hatim Gardner, Board Member, ACTT, who represented ACTT's Chairman, Dr Michael Dowlath, thanked all stakeholders for their support. Guests were treated to the sweet renditions of Viva Nueva and all agreed that it was a most enjoyable evening.



Mervyn Extravour, Board member, ACTT, in conversation with Dr Kamla Mungal, Director Academic Development and Accreditation/ Leadership Institute, (standing), Nirmala Harrylal, Director, Internationalisation and Institutional Relations, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business and Surrendra Maharaj.



Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director ACTT, chats with Trinidad Systems Limited (TSL) representatives Cindy Joseph and Edison Thomas, Manager Commodity Sales.



(L-R) Amadi Jack – Premier Graphics, and Richard Soo-Chin – Caribbean Print Technologies.



/ Pascal, Director – Finance and Administration, ACTT, and ed Holder, Sagicor Life.

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