

Accreditation & Recognition...

What's the difference?

Finally, CAPE and GCE A Level examinations are over. Sean and his best friend, Ashley walk out the gates of their secondary school. As they await the arrival of Sean's sister, Sasha, they talk about the next step in their educational pursuits.

An hour later, the trio arrive at the Gulf City Mall to have lunch and continue their conversation. Sean explains that he wants to attend a foreign university like his dad and Ashley smiles, as she thinks about her passions, theatre and dance. Both express slight confusion as to their next step in ensuring that their future plans for study will assure them employment in the competitive job market that exists in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sasha states that last year, upon winning an Additional National Scholarship for excellence in her CAPE examinations, she needed to fulfil certain prerequisites before accessing funding. She needed to provide proof that the intended programme of study was accredited. Sasha explained that the scholarship application procedure stated that she needed to include in her application package, a letter that proves her intended degree programme and institution were recognised in Trinidad and Tobago. Recognition? Accreditation? What does this mean and how do these terms relate to both Sean and Ashley and their respective plans to acquire undergraduate degrees? Sasha told them that she experienced the same sense of confusion last year but a representative from the Scholarship's Division of Ministry of Public Administration assured her that she simply needed to visit the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) to have all her questions answered.

Sasha explained that she checked ACTT's website, (www.actt.org.tt), where she downloaded and completed a request for "Statement on Recognition" application, which she needed for her scholarship application. Upon further reading of the home page, she learnt that ACTT was established by Chapter 39:06 as the principal body in Trinidad and Tobago responsible for the quality assurance of post secondary and tertiary level institutions, programmes and awards. The next day, she and her mother visited the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. The Customer Service representative at ACTT further explained the difference between Accreditation and Recognition.

They learnt that accreditation is both a status and a process. It is a status granted to an educational institution or programme that has been evaluated and found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. Accreditation is also the process used to evaluate and assist in institutional or programme improvement.

On the other hand, Recognition is the evaluation and approval of the quality and acceptability of a legitimate educational institution and the qualifications it awards. In order for an institution to have its programmes recognised, it must be quality assured by a legitimate quality assurance authority in the country of origin.

ACTT's Customer Service Representative also explained that the "Statement on Recognition" would include information on the Accreditation status of the institution, as well as the programme. If the institution or programme are not accredited (quality assured) in the country of origin, ACTT will not recognise it as a legitimate qualification.

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 the specialised Accreditation necessary for membership in a professional body 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.

Sasha also explains to Sean and Ashley that "Statements on Recognition" could be issued for qualifications that have already been awarded. She was both pleased and relieved to learn this as upon completion of her Bachelor's degree, Sasha wished to quickly enroll into a Masters programme. Having a recognised Bachelor's degree would satisfy the entry requirements into a Master's programme. She explained that this statement is also a prerequisite to acquiring employment in areas like teaching or to join professional associations locally.

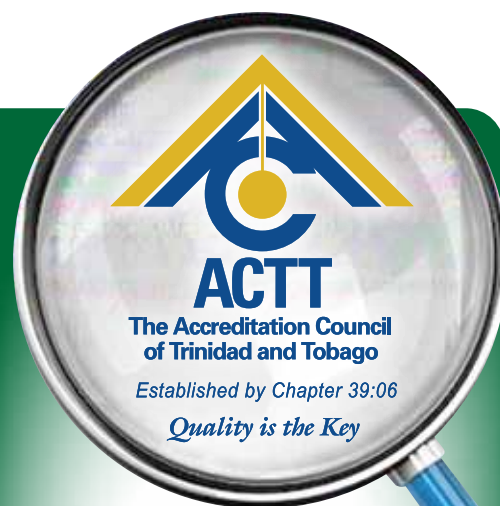
After that discussion during lunch, both Sean and Ashley are well aware of their next step before applying to local or foreign institutions. Both would seek ACTT's advice and request a "Statement on Recognition".

QUICK FACTS

Accreditation is voluntary for all post secondary or tertiary level institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago that offer their **own** (local) programmes. Accreditation assures academic quality, improves accountability and supports continual improvement. Presently there are 9 candidates for Institutional Accreditation and this list can be found at www.actt.org.tt.

Accreditation is a status granted to an institution that has been evaluated and found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. Accreditation is also the process used to evaluate and assist in institutional programme improvement. This involves the application of 5 criteria used to measure quality.

Recognition is the evaluation and approval of the quality of **foreign** awards. ACTT requires all foreign institutions which award qualifications in Trinidad and Tobago to be accredited by a legitimate quality assurance agency in the country of origin.



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