



GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION TO THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (ACTT)

These Guidelines are organised into six sections:

- 1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE** ➤ identifies the rationale for the guidelines and provides references to the key legislation that governs ACTT and its processes
- 2 DEFINITIONS** ➤ explains any new or not commonly used terms introduced in these guidelines and in the criteria
- 3 GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ACTT'S RECOGNITION PROCESS** ➤ explains the goals and expectations of the recognition process. This section provides clarification of the criteria and the expected outcomes for an institution or awarding body applying the criteria to its operations
- 4 GENERAL INFORMATION** ➤ provides information on:
 - what constitutes an application for recognition
 - how to submit and re-submit an application for recognition
 - the resources and support services available to assist institutions
 - how to communicate with ACTT prior to and during the processing of the application for recognition
- 5 REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION** ➤ identifies the requirements for an application to be accepted by ACTT
➤ provides a suggested format and style for submitting applications to ACTT
- 6 UNDERSTANDING THE CRITERIA** ➤ provides guidance on the documentation requirements and identifies the benefits to be expected by institutions and awarding bodies applying the criteria for recognition.



1.0 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist post secondary and tertiary institutions, as well as awarding bodies and awarding institutions, to prepare applications for recognition by ACTT. ACTT acknowledges its responsibility to assist institutions and create an enabling environment for the recognition of transnational post secondary and tertiary institutions, awarding bodies and awarding institutions and the qualifications they award in Trinidad and Tobago.

These guidelines are prepared following ACTT's criteria and process for recognition and will assist transnational institutions and awarding bodies and awarding institutions to comply with requirements under Act No 16 of 2004. The aim of recognition is to certify that minimum requirements are met for the delivery of foreign post secondary and tertiary educational and training qualifications being delivered in collaboration with local institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.0 Definitions

<u>Awarding Body</u>	an organisation or consortium which develops content and standards for educational programmes that lead to the award of qualifications in its name. Awarding bodies are not directly involved in the delivery of the programme.
<u>Awarding Institution</u>	a post secondary or tertiary institution that awards degrees and other qualifications in its own name.
<u>Criterion</u>	the reference point against which operations are evaluated.
<u>Criterion Statement</u>	an overall description of requirements of the criterion.
<u>Collaborative Provision Report</u>	a narrative that shows how the evidence provided satisfies the criteria for recognition of a transnational qualification.
<u>Equivalence</u>	the determination of the comparable academic value of a foreign qualification in Trinidad and Tobago.
<u>Evidence</u>	information that supports the existence of quality practices expressed in the institution's or awarding body's narrative or collaborative provision report.

meaningful data that are helpful in forming a conclusion or judgment as to whether the particular standard has been met.

*NOTE: The term **meaningful data** is included in the definition to*



*suggest that only **relevant** information should be submitted*

<u>Executive Head</u>	a properly certified person who has executive authority over an institution or provision of educational services or the person who officially directs and controls the institution/provision at the executive level.
<u>Foreign institution</u>	has its origin and main campus/establishment in an overseas territory (outside of Trinidad and Tobago).
<u>Narrative</u>	an evaluative account that shows how the evidence provided satisfies the requirements of the respective standard.
<u>Partner Institution</u>	a post secondary or tertiary institution that collaborates with an awarding institution in offering programmes that lead to either an award in the name of the Awarding institution or joint awards in the names of both the Partner and the Awarding institutions.
<u>Recognition</u>	the approval by an authorised agency of the quality and acceptability of a legitimate educational institution and the qualifications it awards.
<u>Registration</u>	the process whereby an institution/provider has its quality management system (QMS) evaluated to determine whether its QMS meets the minimum requirements of established criteria and standards.
<u>Standard</u>	the specific requirements that must be met by the institution/provider. The standards are used to determine whether the overall requirements of a particular criterion have been met.
<u>Supporting documents</u>	include copies of policies, procedures, processes and records that show evidence of the information given in the narrative.
<u>Transnational institution</u>	has its origin and main campus/establishment in an overseas territory and is operating a site in Trinidad and Tobago.



3.0 Goals and Expectations of ACTT's Recognition Process

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) is the authority established by an Act of Parliament, Act No. 16 of 2004, for the recognition of the quality and acceptability of legitimate post secondary and tertiary institutions and awarding bodies, whether overseas, transnational or local, and the qualifications they award. Any transnational institution or awarding body desirous of operating in Trinidad and Tobago must first be legally established and recognised and/or accredited in the country of origin in accordance with the quality assurance system of the respective country. In countries that require approval of extension sites in overseas territories, the transnational/foreign institution must also provide evidence that it has secured the necessary approval to establish an extension site in Trinidad and Tobago.

Transnational/foreign institutions or awarding bodies seeking to award qualifications in Trinidad and Tobago may do so through partnership arrangements with local institutions that are registered by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

ACTT also expects that, by applying the criteria for recognition of foreign qualifications awarded in collaboration with institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, the institution or awarding body would demonstrate:

1. Equivalence of qualifications

Transnational qualifications offered in Trinidad and Tobago should be equivalent and comparable to qualifications that carry the same or similar titles in the country of the awarding institution. Equivalence is intended to ensure that the holders of transnational awards have acquired comparable skills and competencies as those expected in the country of the awarding institution. Local graduates should also be assured of similar opportunities for further study and employment as graduates of the equivalent qualification(s).

2. Relevance

The local context shall be considered in the design and delivery of the programme leading to the qualification to ensure that graduates are suitably able to apply their newly acquired knowledge and competencies within Trinidad and Tobago. Labour market needs and employer feedback should be considered to ensure that the qualification is relevant to the economic, cultural, societal and technological context in Trinidad and Tobago.



3. Integrity

Reliable and tested systems to avoid the various forms of credential fraud need to be implemented to maintain the highest integrity of the qualification. All parties involved in assessment, record keeping and issuing the award must be aware and committed to safeguarding against any form of fraud or discrepancy.

4. Protection of the rights of enrolled students

Enrolled students should have the same rights of access to information regarding changes in fees, changes in policy, examination results and other information available to students at the awarding institution. In the case of a termination of the agreement between the foreign and the local institutions, students should be protected by an 'exit policy', or such arrangements which reasonably allow students to complete the programme leading to the award of the qualification.



4.0 General Information

4.1 What is a letter of intent?

Before a transnational institution, awarding body or awarding institution applies for recognition, a letter of intent must be submitted to the Executive Director of ACTT. The letter of intent:

1. identifies the name of the institution or awarding body
2. states the status that the institution intends to apply for
3. must be signed by the executive head

4.2 What is an Application for Recognition of a Transnational Qualification?

Applications for Recognition of a Transnational Qualification consist of:

1. SECTION A of the application form completed by the local partner institution
2. Collaborative Provision Report compiled by the local partner institution
3. SECTION B of the application form completed by the transnational institution
4. Supporting documentation
5. Processing fee

NOTE: An Application for Recognition of a Transnational Qualification is only deemed to be complete when all elements under Section 4.2 have been met. Applications that fail to meet the requirements of this section will not be processed. Institutions/awarding bodies will be requested by ACTT to collect and resubmit any application that does not meet these requirements.

NOTE: The application form must be signed by the Executive Head of the respective transnational and local partner institutions.



4.3 What is an Application for Recognition of an Awarding Body?

Application for Recognition of an Awarding Body consists of:

1. Application form completed by the awarding body
2. Narrative which explains how the operations of the awarding body meet ACTT's criteria
3. Supporting documentation
4. Processing fee

NOTE: An Application for Recognition of an Awarding Body is only deemed to be complete when all elements under Section 4.3 have been met. Applications that fail to meet the requirements of this section will not be processed. Institutions/awarding bodies will be requested by ACTT to collect and resubmit any application that does not meet these requirements.

NOTE: The application form must be signed by the Executive Head of the Awarding Body.

4.4 What is an Application for Recognition of an Awarding Institution?

Application for Recognition of an Awarding Institution consists of:

1. Application form completed by the awarding institution
2. Narrative which explains how the operations of the awarding institution meet ACTT's criteria
3. Supporting documentation
4. Processing fee

NOTE: An Application for Recognition of an Awarding Institution is only deemed to be complete when all elements under Section 4.4 have been met. Applications that fail to meet the requirements of this section will not be processed. Awarding institutions will be requested by ACTT to collect and resubmit any application that does not meet these requirements.

NOTE: The application form must be signed by the Executive Head of the Awarding Institution.



4.5 How do I submit an application?

Applications for recognition should be submitted:

1. to the Executive Director and addressed to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, Level 3 Building B, ALGICO Plaza #91-93 St Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad, West Indies
2. in **duplicate**
3. in print (hard copy/paper) via mail or hand-delivery
4. in soft copy on a CD or via e-mail

4.6 What resources and support does ACTT provide to help institutions and awarding bodies prepare for recognition?

The following resources are available to assist transnational institutions, awarding bodies and awarding institutions to prepare their applications:

1. Criteria for Recognition
 - The publication of the criteria for recognition is the key resource for institutions, awarding bodies.

Institutions and awarding bodies are advised to review these documents thoroughly before preparing a submission.

2. ACTT's guidance documents:
 - An Institution's Guide to Recognition of Transnational/Foreign and Overseas Qualifications and Postsecondary and Tertiary Institutions in Trinidad and Tobago

ACTT publishes documents that can guide institutions and awarding bodies in meeting the standards required for recognition by the Council. The pool of documents will be increased over time.

3. ACTT's website www.actt.org.tt
 - Publications and application forms will soon be available online. Institutions and awarding bodies are encouraged to utilise the electronic medium to contact the Council and access information on its processes and services.

4. ACTT's Staff – Qualifications and Recognition Department



4.7 How long does an application take to be processed?

The cycle time for processing an application is dependent on the quality, appropriateness and adequacy of the submission and the evidence to support the claim for recognition. However, the projected timeline for processing is as follows:

Gap Analysis

- a) *Application for Recognition of a Transnational Qualification* approximately six (6) weeks.
- b) *Application for Recognition of an Awarding Body* approximately six (6) weeks.
- c) *Application for Recognition of an Awarding Institution* approximately six (6) weeks

Evaluation

- d) If the gap analysis review reveals that sufficient evidence has been presented, a team of external evaluators will be appointed to review the application. The projected timeline for the external review is approximately six (6) weeks.
- e) An on-site evaluation may be conducted. Where this is required, the projected timeline of the external review is approximately eight (8) weeks.



5.0 Requirements for Submission of an Application for Recognition

5.1 Content requirements

1. The application must:
 - a. be aligned with ACTT's criteria for recognition
 - b. include a narrative which gives an account of the quality practices in relation to the standard. The narrative will also explain how the evidence submitted proves that a practice exists to adequately address the standards
 - c. be correctly cross-referenced with evidence submitted for other standards, appendices, websites, etc.
2. Address issues directly related to the criteria but do not go beyond the scope of standards.
3. Draw linkages between evidence that may provide insight into more than one criterion.

NOTE: Transnational institutions and awarding bodies should ensure that the narrative and evidence supplied address each standard of the criteria for recognition.

NOTE: Evidence is any data that clearly prove that the requirements of the particular standard for recognition have been met.

NOTE: Evidence may be a database, an agreement with a particular organisation, a special service offered, documents such as a policy, plan, procedure, etc, or records such as a survey instrument, minutes, feedback forms.

5.2 Presentation and style requirements

1. Use letters or numbers (a, b, c or 1, 2, 3) to identify each statement; bullets or roman numerals may be used for sub-statements.
2. Avoid over elaboration and exaggeration of quality practices.
3. The narrative should describe and make clear the specific objectives and clearly show how the institution implements or plans to implement its policy, procedures or process into its day to day operations. The narrative should provide an evaluative account.
4. Balance the content and detail.



5. Do not contradict or present inconsistent evidence to support criteria.
6. Avoid jargon and acronyms except when previously defined.
7. The submission should be securely fastened by using folders, ring binders or spiral binding.

5.3 Evidence requirements

1. Include only information and evidence that deal directly with the recognition issues related to the specific criterion and standards. Evidence must be relevant and will support an effective evaluation of the fulfillment of the standards.

NOTE: In some cases the relevant information may be summarised or it may be necessary to only submit copies of the relevant pages that provide the evidence to satisfy a particular standard.

NOTE: Transnational institutions and awarding bodies may also provide electronic evidence or can e-reference their narrative to the institution's website or a secure portal that has been created for the purpose of demonstrating that the requirements for recognition are in place.

5.4 Format requirements

1. Organise submissions according to the criteria and standards for recognition.
2. The narrative should clearly identify how each criterion and standard is met.
3. The following is a suggested format. Institutions **may modify** format or layout based on preferences and style. However, the submission should provide all relevant information to justify the claim for recognition.
 - a. Table of Contents
 - b. Introduction and Background of Institution
 - I. Provide a brief history of the institution
 - II. Provide information on provisions in Trinidad and Tobago and/or other countries regionally or globally
 - c. Institutional Commitment to the external quality evaluation process



- I. Make a statement on the institution's or awarding body's commitment to the external quality evaluation process.
- II. Express commitment to being professional and collegial throughout the process.
- III. Express commitment to address problems or gaps identified and to operate within the law.

d. Fulfillment of criteria and standards

I. Criterion One

- Explain how the institution meets each standard within the scope of the criterion.
- Provide a description that will help the evaluator to understand the institution's or awarding body's practice and to determine compliance with the standards.
- Give a description of printed materials, policies, legal documents that will enable ACTT to determine compliance.

II. Criterion Two

- same as requirements under criterion one

III. Criterion Three

- same as requirements under criterion one

IV. Criterion Four

- same as requirements under criterion one

e. Compilation of Evidence/Appendix

I. Compilation of evidence for criteria as referenced in the narrative

- II. Copies of policies, plans, procedures, tables and forms etc presented to provide evidence of existence of quality practice.

NOTE: If the requirements defined in this section for the submission of applications for recognition have not been met, the application will not be processed by the Council.



5.5 Re-submitting an application

A transnational institution or awarding body is required to re-submit evidence to satisfy the standards for recognition if it has failed to satisfy the requirements at the first submission. An institution or awarding body is required to re-submit evidence in all areas that are identified as requiring follow up in the gap analysis report produced by ACTT. Institutions and awarding bodies are urged not to hastily re-submit an application without careful consideration of the gap analysis report.

Re-submissions are to be addressed to the Executive Director.



6.0 Understanding the Criteria

ACTT firmly believes that application of the recognition criteria will benefit institutions and awarding bodies by providing:

1. a structured and systemic framework for the planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement of quality
2. basic guidance on quality assurance in higher education for institutions and awarding bodies
3. independent third party assurance that basic standards are met and are in place for sound educational management and provision.

6.1 Documentation Requirements for Applications for Recognition of Transnational Qualifications

The following items must be documented for an institution to successfully demonstrate that the qualification meets the criteria for recognition. The institution must have a documented:

1. collaborative provision report
2. written and legally binding contract or memorandum of understanding signed by the head of both parties (separate agreements or contracts should be in place for individual programmes) (required for criterion 1)
3. exit policy that protects students' interests in the case of dissolution of the collaborative arrangement (required for standard 1.2)
4. centre approval procedures and criteria (required for standard 3.2)
5. procedure for monitoring approved centres (required for standard 3.2)
6. details on the entry requirements of equivalent qualification(s) in the country of the awarding institution (required for standard 4.1)
7. listing of qualification(s) in the country of the awarding institution that are considered equivalent to the award under review (required for standard 4.2)

Additionally, the foreign institution must submit a copy of the most recent quality assurance report on the qualification offered through the local partner institution.

NOTE: If these policies or equivalent documents are not submitted the transnational institution will not be able to demonstrate fulfillment of the criteria.



6.2 Documentation Requirements for Applications for Recognition of an Awarding Body

The following items must be documented for an awarding body to successfully demonstrate that it meets the criteria for recognition:

1. conflict of interest policy (required for standard 1.4)
2. centre approval procedures and criteria (required for standard 1.5)
3. procedure for acquisition, maintenance and replacement of physical resources (required for standard 2.3)
4. appeals procedure (required for standard 2.4)
5. equal opportunity policy (required in standard 2.5)
6. procedure for addressing malpractice (required for standard 2.6)
7. procedure for monitoring approved centres (required for standard 2.7)
8. procedure for developing and approving new qualifications (required for standards 3.1)
9. procedure for withdrawal of accredited qualifications (required for standard 3.2)
10. system for determining future skills needs (required for standards 3.3)

Additionally, the awarding body must submit a copy of the most recent quality assurance reports of center approval visits to local partner institutions.

NOTE: If these policies or equivalent documents are not submitted the awarding body will not be able to demonstrate fulfillment of the criteria.



6.3 Documentation Requirements for Applications for Recognition of an Awarding Institution

The following items must be documented for an awarding institution to successfully demonstrate that it meets the criteria for recognition:

1. centre approval procedures and criteria (required for standard 2.1)
2. written and legally binding contract or memorandum of understanding signed by the head of both parties (separate agreements or contracts should be in place for individual programmes) (required for standard 2.1)
3. exit policy that protects students' interests in the case of dissolution of the collaborative arrangement (required for standard 2.1)
4. procedure for monitoring approved centres (required for standard 2.2)
5. internal quality assurance system to monitor compliance with ACTT's criteria (required for standard 2.2)
6. approval procedures and standards for faculty teaching programmes offered internationally (required for standard 2.4)
7. policy for continuous development of faculty (required for standard 2.4)
8. policies for the conferment of awards (required for standard 2.5)
9. policy and procedures for maintaining security in the handling of students' examination papers and during examinations (required for standard 2.5)
10. policy and procedure for ensuring the authenticity of students' work (required for standard 2.5)
11. entry requirements for the local and awarding institutions (required for standard 3.1)
12. approved prior learning recognition or other access policy (required for standard 3.1)
13. appeals procedure (required for standard 3.2)
14. equal opportunity policy (required in standard 3.2)
15. system for determining current and future skill needs (required for standard 3.5)

Additionally, the awarding institution must submit a copy of the most recent quality assurance reports of centre approval visits to local partner institutions.



NOTE: If these policies or equivalent documents are not submitted the awarding institution will not be able to demonstrate fulfillment of the criteria.