



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: www.actt.org.tt

WHERE WE ARE LOCATED

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Executive Director's message

Internationally, regionally and locally, enrolment in higher education has significantly increased from the beginning of the millennium to the year 2012. The demands for higher education has resulted in market tensions in which institutions now compete for a larger slice of the student enrolment pie. The competition is influenced by globalisation and its antecedent technological advancements as students engage in cross-border mobility facilitated by the massification of the international higher education sector. Higher educational institutions are now finding and utilising innovative mechanisms to market themselves to students. They regularly renew their branding and marketing strategies in tandem with the institution's values, personality and academic performance as it intersects with customer expectations.

Quality assurance is therefore fundamental as a corresponding response to the global expansion and increase in higher education enrolment. Students, in their quest for selecting a higher education programme, take many factors into consideration with accreditation status and quality assurance being primary focuses. Quality assurance therefore becomes a mechanism by which institutions can further enhance their brand image and attract a larger share of the student population market. However, it is important to act cautiously when increasing enrolment as the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE), (2004) warns, "...it is imperative to guard against rapid enrolment growth unless it is matched with additional resources. Increasing enrolment without new investment will be detrimental to the long term stability and sustainability of the higher education system, as well as to the quality of offerings". All countries that invest heavily in their higher education sector must ensure that higher education institutions are held accountable and the country's return on investment is ensured. This further solidifies the imperative role that quality assurance plays and underscores its integral role in the options that are available to higher education institutions.

Response policies should therefore focus on monitoring processes, and quality procedures that would ensure that institutions are held accountable for their management strategies and decisions. The anticipated result for the sector would include excellent quality education and world class students who are equipped to fulfil the vision of social, industrial and economic advancement for the country. It should be noted that even with the institution doing its part, the warning of the NPHE is twofold as the society has an additional role to play regarding increased enrolment. Without ensuring that the increased growth in enrolment is in the areas/sectors of society that demonstrate a need, the result will be gluts in other sectors and could possibly retard the growth and development of the country. These needs are usually highlighted in national human resource plans and/or countries research priorities.

It is therefore incumbent on policy makers to plan strategies to overcome these types of challenges in as much as they plan to



Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director

increase participation rates. The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT), is one such policy maker and stakeholder in the process. ACTT uses mechanisms such as its Quality Assurance Month to treat with some of the issues affecting the higher education sector while it implements policies and regulations to monitor and assist its members. Quality Assurance Month in November 2012 will focus on the theme 'Committed to Quality in Higher Education: Overcoming Challenges in a Globalised Environment'. During this month, several activities will take including an International Academic Credential and CV Fraud workshop, an External Evaluator Training workshop, two panel discussions on 'Promoting a Knowledge Economy: A Quality Imperative' and 'Funding Higher Education - A Development Imperative'. Further, ACTT will host two workshops designed to assist higher education institutions in strengthening their governance, administrative and financial management functions. These pursuits by ACTT will promote the services of the Council and increase public awareness of the importance of a quality higher education sector.

MOVING THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR FORWARD

Launch of the Online Institutional Profile Database



On Wednesday July 25, 2012 the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (TEST) in conjunction with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) launched the Online Institutional Profile (IP) Database at TEST's Port-of-Spain office. This online database is a secure portal through which institutions can input and update information required by both the TEST and ACTT on an annual basis.

Addressing the formal launch, Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training indicated that the Online IP Database is a manifestation of a centralised data repository which was identified as a need in the Tertiary Education Policy which gained Parliamentary approval in January 2011. Minister Karim explained that it will facilitate significant manpower savings for both the Ministry and the Council and will create a reliable data pool upon which data driven strategic planning for the higher education and training system can be predicated.

Online IP Database Integral to Advancement

Minister Karim suggested that as a future developmental phase the database will be expanded into a wider Education Management Information System which can be equated to the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System used in the United States. The Minister urged all present to utilize the

database so that the information can help move Trinidad and Tobago up international indices such as the Global Innovation Index and the Global Competitiveness Index.

Mr Jaggernauth Soom, Permanent Secretary, TEST indicated that the Tertiary Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TETVET) Sector has undergone expansive demographic changes, which to a large extent, has not been captured and recorded for further analysis. The establishment of this Online Institutional Profile Database is a concrete step in rationalizing data collection efforts, reducing duplication and bolstering efficiency in the dissemination of information.

ACTT's Chairman, Dr Michael Dowlath stated that this signature event is testimony to the commitment of all the agencies involved in this initiative to ensure a more efficient system for the collection, disbursement and management of information about higher education institutions. He also reiterated that the "Institutional Profile Database will ensure more accurate information, curtail the response time to requests for information and provide an opportunity for time series research into institutional and/or sector development".

All stakeholders were urged to make use of this database, noting that its success depended on their input of accurate data.

ACTT Celebrates Nationhood 50 Years of Independence

Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (TEST), attended the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago's (ACTT) 5th Annual Celebration of Nationhood event held at the National Academy for the Performing Arts on Friday August 17, 2012. Minister Karim made reference to the people who brought Trinidad and Tobago to this point in our nation's journey reminiscing about Mastana Bahar, Daisy Voisin and the Tobago Hill Signal Choir to name a few of Trinidad and Tobago's well known culture figures.

In commemorating Trinidad and Tobago's celebrating 50 years of Independence, the Council presented Ideal Citizen Awards to two staff members whose work has had a meaningful and lasting impact on the organisation and lives of fellow employees. The recipients were Brenda Chin and Akeena Gonzales, who were nominated by their peers.

ACTT also honoured Kenrick Seepersad and Professor Hollis Chalkdust Liverpool for their outstanding contributions to the education system in Trinidad and Tobago. Professor Liverpool, feature speaker, in his address, demonstrated how the Calypso art form may be used to engage and educate students in various subject matters. He challenged educators to use calypso music as a teaching tool in schools and encouraged ACTT to facilitate in making this a reality.



Family Day 2012

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) thanks everyone who contributed to the success of ACTT's Family Day 2012.

ACTT acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (TEST); ACTT's Board of Directors; ACTT's Management Team; Staff; their families; friends and well wishers, who together at the San Salvador Estate, Gran Couva made the Family Day 2012 a successful day.

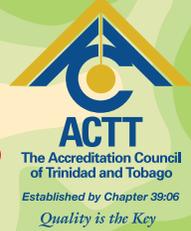
Special thanks are extended to the following:

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Special thanks are extended to our suppliers- Advertising Impact, Party E-z Tent Rental, Fat Boy Original Doubles and Pies, Bonanza Farms, the Red Cross, our host San Salvador Estate, Michael Humphrey, Suzanne, Richard and of course our Emcee Kerron Brown

Serving Tobago with pride



Scarborough Community Outreach

Over the last three months, ACTT's staff in Tobago, located at the Tobago Technology Centre, Milford Road Canaan, embarked on a community outreach initiative which was designed to increase awareness about its services. Since the launch of its Tobago Student Caravan on June 1, 2012, the ACTT team has visited Roxborough, Canaan, Buccoo and most recently Scarborough and interacted with over 600 visitors to these displays. In the near future, ACTT will visit other communities including Les Coteaux, Whim and Lambeau as well as collaborate with the Tobago House of Assembly's Financial Assistance Unit to provide students seeking scholarships, with the relevant information to apply for ACTT's Statement on Recognition.



Canaan Community Outreach





The Accreditation Council
of Trinidad and Tobago

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Quality is the Key

Accreditation Interview with USC



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (MTEST) and Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT, present the Certificate of Institutional Accreditation to Dr Clinton Valley, President USC. Looking on from left to right, Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT, Dr Kern Tobias, Chairman USC, and Jaggernauth Soom, Permanent Secretary, MTEST.

1. What does it mean for the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) to be granted accredited status at this time?

Response:

The University of the Southern Caribbean has always been committed to providing the highest quality education to its students, and accordingly, USC maintained programme accreditation with international accreditation bodies. This determination to provide quality is clearly evident in the university's mission statement, vision and even its motto "Beyond Excellence". For this reason, USC has enthusiastically embraced all attempts by the Government of T&T to improve the standard and quality of tertiary education in this country, and therefore was the first Tertiary Level Institution to become registered with the ACTT in 2006 and one of the first to apply for Institutional Accreditation with the ACTT. After the long and arduous but intensely enriching journey towards accreditation, the granting of such by the ACTT means that USC was able to meet or exceed all the standards and criteria set by ACTT. As such, since ACTT is an internationally recognised accrediting organisation, USC, as an institution, has international status as an accredited institution. USC feels proud and thankful to have achieved this milestone. The university is thankful for the assistance and guidance provided by the ACTT throughout this journey and proud that the commitment of its faculty, the dedicated support by its administration and staff and the remarkable achievements of its students have been recognised.

2. How has USC's experience with participating in the accreditation self-study benefitted/changed the institution?

Response:

The self-study is a key element in the process and USC has profited tremendously from the participation and engagement required to produce the self-study document. It served to heighten awareness of the real purpose for existing as a University which strives to offer the highest quality of education. All Schools and departments within the University were thus led to renewed commitment to continuous quality improvement to ensure our accountability to national, regional, and international accrediting bodies and other educational institutions.

Additionally, though no stranger to the concept and process of accreditation self-study, for USC the level of guidance, structure and the evaluative focus of the ACTT model was of great benefit to the university. Our quest to demonstrate compliance to the highest standards of quality led the university to strengthen its operations in several areas by documenting and formalising systems that formerly may have existed in a less structured manner. The focus on quality improvement has also contributed to the growth of a culture and climate of quality in each and every department.

3. What advice would you give to other institutions embarking on the accreditation journey?

Response:

Teamwork is essential. In order to gain the maximum benefit from the process of institutional accreditation, the institution must embrace the team approach. Start with a group of committed and talented individuals representing a diverse range of views and backgrounds and be sure to include the students in all data gathering. Also, the institution needs to regard the self-study process and report as an attempt to provide a candid and insightful view of who the institution really is and the extent to which it is fulfilling its mission, and vision. Be proud of your institution and its accomplishments but be candid as well, letting stakeholders have a chance to express how they feel about the institution's progress and future prospects. Remember, accreditation will be the stamp of approval for your existence as a tertiary provider. It will be your guarantee that your institution is meeting set standards and that you are considered fit for purpose as a tertiary level education provider.

4. How would achieving accredited status benefit students and other stakeholders?

Response:

Students would have a greater sense of security and comfort knowing that their certificates and degrees would be recognised by the State as well as by other Tertiary Level Institutions both regionally and internationally. The process of securing both scholarships for post graduate studies and jobs by graduates would be less fraught with uncertainty and ambiguity. Further, all publics would be assured that review of the University's faculty, recruiting practices, admissions procedures, course content, etc., is conducted by the accreditors, and that the university is being held accountable for continually working to improve the quality and results of the education it provides.

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

Response:

Between institutions, matters of credit transfer and employment will be affected positively. Regionally, capacity building would be positively impacted. Our nation and by extension the Caribbean Region can only benefit whenever another tertiary level institution gains accredited status for it means that more students are receiving quality education that meets the minimum standards in teaching, learning, effective governance, establishment of quality systems, and student support among other elements. The bottom line is that the students of the region will be receiving a better educational package, having superior preparation for citizenry, and taxpayers will be getting higher returns for their investment in tertiary education.



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Accreditation Interview with ALJGSB



Senator the Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (MTEST) and Dr Michael Dowlath, Chairman, ACTT presents the Certificate of Institutional Accreditation to Professor Miguel Carrillo, Executive Director, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business.

1. What does it mean for the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (ALJGSB) to be granted accredited status at this time?

The Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (Lok Jack GSB) was granted institutional accreditation status by the Board of Directors of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) on March 15, 2012. The school is accredited for the maximum period of seven (7) years from March 15, 2012 to March 14, 2019 and is the first school of business in Trinidad and Tobago to be granted institutional accreditation and the fourth institution overall in Trinidad and Tobago. This is a significant achievement for the Lok Jack GSB in the context of the proliferation of private graduate business schools and programmes being offered in Trinidad and Tobago. The institutional accreditation signals to the market that the Lok Jack GSB is a stand out institution and has met and exceeded the standards as stated by ACTT. These standards test the strength and appropriateness of all the processes and procedures of the school and determine, in a rigorous manner, the school's ability to deliver on the mission of the institution. In a market that is characterised by high competition, stringent mandates from government for accountability and the needs of the business community for relevant programmes, the Lok Jack GSB is ahead of the pack.

2. How has ALJGSB's experience with participating in the accreditation self-study benefitted/changed the institution?

The accreditation exercise had a tremendous positive long term impact on the organisation. Through the accreditation preparations, all stakeholders became aware of all aspects of the school and the critical role that each member plays in the operation of the institution; each member saw themselves as vital cogs in the Lok Jack GSB machinery. Through a collaborative approach to the accreditation which included not only managers and directors, but all staff, a greater sense of comradeship, collegiality and appreciation for the Lok Jack GSB was fostered and maintained throughout the accreditation preparations and now, beyond the exercise. The conferring of the accreditation award has created a greater sense of pride amongst the staff in the organisation and an assurance that the organisation is moving in the right direction strategically. This benefit has been manifested through greater productivity and self-motivation amongst the staff at the institution.

Through the accreditation exercise, the Lok Jack GSB was required to ask difficult questions of itself by taking a critical look at all its processes and procedures in light of its vision, mission and stated purpose. Through this reflective process, the Lok Jack GSB was able to strengthen its processes and procedures and ensure that they are relevant and mission driving. The result of this exercise is a changed organisation that is more efficient and effective with a clearer understanding of its resources, capacity and future direction.

3. How would achieving accredited status benefit students and other stakeholders?

The conferring of institutional accreditation status on the Lok Jack GSB by ACTT has brought comfort to students and other stakeholders who insist on high quality teaching and learning experiences. Firstly, students are assured of relevant programmes and educational experiences given that the school has rigorous processes for programme development, review and approval. Programmes are developed based on input from academically and professionally qualified faculty and industry experts. The award of the accreditation signals to students that the processes are strong and thus students can be assured that the programmes are relevant to the needs of the market. The Lok Jack GSB has adopted a student-centric philosophy and has embedded elements of authentic teaching and learning within its programmes. This puts students in close contact with organisations where they are able to identify and solve real problems. The business community is assured that the graduates of the Lok Jack GSB have passed through a relevant and rigorous programme and are well prepared to fit into organisations and contribute to the advancement of their organisations, sectors and industries. These innovations have met with approval from the ACTT evaluators who also indicated that the business community held the graduates of the Lok Jack GSB in high esteem.

4. What advice would you give to other institutions embarking on the accreditation journey?

Having now become a benchmark school, it is hoped that other business schools would aspire to achieve the highest endorsement of their quality by ACTT and become part of the consortium of schools that are industry leaders. Quality in higher education research establishes that tertiary education institutions must focus on quality in all components of the institution to impact its stakeholders, given the globalisation of education and the need for localisation of knowledge at the same time.

Any institution that decides to pursue accreditation must first take an honest and critical look at itself and its operations, ensuring it highlights strengths while simultaneously recognising areas for development. The process must be collaborative and inclusive whereby each stakeholder feels a part of the entire process. Each standard must be addressed fully and supported by both narrative and evidence. Aspirant schools should seek advice from accredited schools as a way of building relationships and networking to ensure a strong collaborative platform for the development of quality in higher education, locally and globally. Through networking and sharing, the accreditation process will enhance the standards of tertiary education across the region and promote the emergence of the Caribbean as a leader in tertiary education.