



The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago

Established by Chapter 39:06

Quality is the Key

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 Programmes and Institutions
-  Recognition of Foreign Programmes and Awards
-  Institutional Development
-  Programme Approval

A list of our functions may be found in our Act on the website

www.actt.org.tt

WHERE WE ARE LOCATED

TRINIDAD

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(formerly ALGICO Plaza),
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TOBAGO

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Michael Bradshaw



Following its establishment over 10 years ago, The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) continues its work as one of the leading quality assurance bodies in the region. ACTT's achievements over the ten (10) years include the registration of 100 institutions, twelve (12) of which are now accredited; forty-five (45) institutions continue to hold registered status. Those institutions that no longer hold registered status are those that did not continue to meet ACTT's stringent quality assurance standards for registration.

ACTT has also made great strides in formalising links with several local and international bodies that all share the same interest in the advancement of higher education and training.

ACTT continues to introduce strategies to encourage institutions to continually improve and is so doing to improve the quality of the higher education sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The Quality Institute launched by ACTT earlier this year is one such strategy through which the Council's training activities for institutions will be executed. The hosting of Conferences such as the International Conferences on Higher Education and Training is another strategy used to foster a culture of quality in the higher education system.

The Quality in Tertiary Education (QuiTE) Awards is another fine example. These awards are designed to highlight and celebrate the exemplary work in which institutions are engaged. Past winners include:

- UWI School of Business and Applied Studies Limited (trading as ROYTEC) in the Excellence for an Established Quality Management System category;
- Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI) and University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) in the Excellence in Student

Support Services in Tertiary Education category;

- Kenson, School of Production Technology, Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business and the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) in the Excellence in Teaching and Learning category.

This year ACTT will host its 8th Annual Quality Assurance Month in October and, as part of the month's activities, will host the QuiTE Awards Ceremony at which awards will be presented in the following categories:

- Excellence for an Established Quality Management System
- Student Support Services in Tertiary Education
- Excellence in Teaching and Learning

I take this opportunity to extend best wishes to those institutions that have submitted proposals to be considered during this year's competition and to say congratulations again to those past winners. Their models are truly positive examples of what good practises in quality management and control could be.

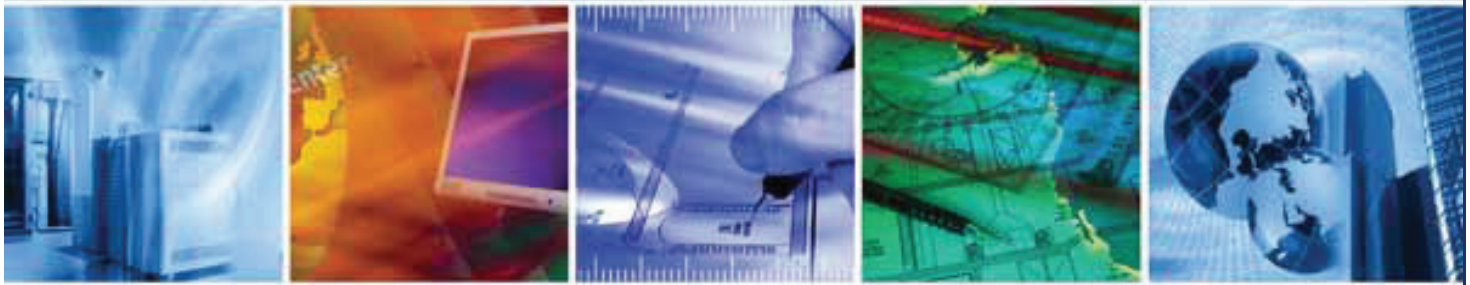


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Open Educational Resources (OERs)... The future of learning

Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT and Cassandra Mano, Research Officer, ACTT



Historically thus far, the cost of resources for higher education study has become prohibitive for many students. With globalisation and the advancement of technology, educational resources and course materials have become more readily available as materials can now be accessed via the internet and other modalities decreasing barriers to entry. The concept of Open Educational Resources (OERs), describes any educational resources that are openly available for use to educators and students. According to UNESCO, OERs are any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them. OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

One major benefit of OERs to students is that they support open learning and open education which can redound to major cost savings as alternatives to the purchase of

textbooks. For teachers and educators, OERs give free and legal access to courses which can be adapted to local languages and cultures and use them as a basis for innovation (UNESCO, 2015).

Where can OERs be found?

Every week new resources are added to the repository of information available for use globally. The scope and availability of OERs keep increasing (UNESCO, 2015). In order to find suitable OERs, the following search strategies can be employed:

1. Use a specialised OER search engine - a popular one being the Global Learning Objects Brokered Exchange (GLOBE) Alliance: www.globe-info.org.
2. Locate a suitable OER repository - a famous example is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Open Courseware Repository (MIT OCW).
3. Use OER directory sites - a popular one being OER Commons: www.oercommons.org.

ACTT congratulates UTT

ACTT congratulates UTT on its achievement in gaining Specialised ICT Accreditation for six of its engineering programmes from the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), UK. The Council recognises that this achievement is part of UTT's thrust toward continued improvement of its institution and its programmes. Such a milestone augurs well for the continued growth and development of the human resource potential in Trinidad and Tobago.

Accreditation is widely understood to be both a status, that can be achieved, and a process, which desirous institutions undergo to achieve the status. The IET partial accreditation signifies that UTT's programmes have met the requirements for a quality assured tertiary education programme and graduates are on their way to achieving the Chartered Engineer (CEng) or Incorporated Engineer (IEng) registration. The Incorporated Engineer (IEng) classification is equivalent to technician level in Trinidad's system or community college level. While the Chartered Engineer (CEng) classification is equivalent to having



the educational requirement for registration as an engineer or getting the status Professional Engineer (PE) or Registered Engineer (RE).

The Council joins with the rest of the Country in once again congratulating the UTT and its staff on achieving this milestone.

Changing Trends in Registration at ACTT: From then to now

Author: Ziann K Baird, Assessment Officer, ACTT

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago was established by an Act of Parliament in 2004 (Chapter 39:06) as the regulatory body with the mandate to assure the quality of higher education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Two of ACTT's many responsibilities are to register and accredit post secondary and tertiary education institutions. Registration, which is akin to pre-accreditation signals that an institution has met the minimum criteria and standards established by ACTT, for the delivery of quality higher education and training. Registration was the onset of a new era of elevating or, in most instances, introducing the concepts of Quality Assurance and Quality Management Systems (QMS) in the delivery of post secondary and tertiary education.

Based on data extrapolated by the Council from reports submitted by institutions, it was revealed that at the time of applying for registration many of the institutions lacked a QMS which had to be developed before achieving registered status. The proclamation of the Act to establish ACTT in 2004 and, by extension, the development of criteria and standards with which institutions must comply to be registered, served as a

catalyst for implementing quality assurance mechanisms in many institutions. The Council has adopted a developmental model which, through its quality enhancement initiatives, assists institutions by providing the necessary information, support and feedback on implementing a QMS.

Against this background, ACTT embarked on a major campaign to develop higher education institutions through such fora as institutional developmental workshops and stakeholder meetings with the objective of assisting these institutions to satisfy ACTT's standards and criteria and ultimately demonstrate an internationally acceptable level of quality.

The Quality Institute (TQI), launched on February 25, 2015, is yet another initiative by ACTT that harnesses and nurtures a culture of quality in higher education by providing specific institutional quality assurance training programmes under one umbrella. Such training foster the creation of a culture of quality based on institutions adopting a robust QMS internally rather than solely complying with external quality standards. However, one depends on the other.

The registration process was unquestionably the quality-driven change agent for all institutions operating in the higher education sector subsequent to 2004 – which, for the most part, was unregulated prior to that time. Ultimately, this contributed to the achievement of ACTT's mandate to raise the quality of post secondary and tertiary education delivered in Trinidad and Tobago, thus protecting the interests of students, employers and other key stakeholders. It certainly was a great accomplishment when, in 2007, the Council registered its very first institution, The University of the Southern Caribbean. By the end of December, 2008, twenty three (23) higher education institutions were registered and by July 2009 the Council had registered seventy one (71) institutions.

Registration can be considered a journey and this process has indeed evolved significantly since 2007. The Council has now blended a developmental model with a compliance model. The standards and criteria for Registration, while fundamentally the same, have continually morphed to resemble those of international quality assurance agencies, while at the same time facilitated institutional and national developmental needs.





The Accreditation Council
of Trinidad and Tobago

Established by Chapter 39:06

Quality is the Key

Celebrating a **DECADE OF EXCELLENCE** *in Quality Higher Education and*



Training



The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) celebrated its 10th anniversary as the quality assurance body established by an Act of Parliament, Chapter 39:06 to regulate and quality assure post secondary and tertiary level institutions, programmes and awards. To commemorate this momentous occasion, ACTT hosted a 10th Anniversary Awards Ceremony and Dinner on Thursday July 23, 2015 at the Hyatt Regency, Trinidad.

At that event, several institutions were recognised for their contribution to higher education in the following categories:

- Servant Leadership in Post Secondary Education – *SERVOL*
- Pioneering Academics and Research in Trinidad and Tobago – *UWI*
- Pioneering Community Education in Trinidad and Tobago – *COSTAATT*
- Pioneering National Entrepreneurship in Higher Education and Training – *UTT*
- Pioneering Private Education in Trinidad and Tobago – *SAM Caribbean Limited*

ACTT also presented awards to individuals who have made significant contributions to the development of the higher education and training sectors in Trinidad and Tobago:

- Professor John Spence (posthumously)
- Carol Keller (posthumously)
- Kenrick Seepersad
- Arthur Lok Jack
- Sister Rosario Hackshaw

Recognition was given to ten (10) employees who served the Council for ten years, including the Executive Director, Michael Bradshaw and the longest serving employee, Kimberly McCarthy, Senior Operations Assistant, Procurement.

The Council also expressed its appreciation of Angela Sinaswee-Gervais, former Permanent Secretary (Ag.), and Margaret Richardson, former Deputy Permanent Secretary, in the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training (ACTT's line Ministry) as well as other Permanent Secretaries who served during ACTT's tenure for their support over the past ten (10) years.

ACTT took the opportunity to present the certificate of Institutional Accreditation to the West Indies School of Theology (WIST). This institution brings the total number of institutions accredited by ACTT to twelve (12).

ACTT congratulates all awardees and looks forward to another Decade of Excellence.

Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director ACTT, Interviews Dr Errol Joseph, Vice President, Academic Affairs, West Indies School of Theology (WIST)

Q *What will it mean for the West Indies School of Theology to be granted accredited status at this time?*

A It means that WIST has attained a level of excellence that can be affirmed by an independent body and is a tribute to the work that many have invested in the development of the school over its long history.

Q *How has WIST's experience with participating in the accreditation self-study benefitted/changed the institution?*

A The participation in the self-study has benefitted the institution immensely.

- It facilitated a thorough evaluation of the institution in relation to its vision, mission and objectives.
- It helped us to identify areas that needed improvement and to make the necessary changes to ensure that improvement.
- It resulted in the improvement of policies, systems and procedures that would ensure the delivery of quality service to all stakeholders over the long-term.
- It helped the school to appreciate its unique areas of strength.
- It helped to unify all the schools stakeholders in the pursuit of a common objective.

Q *What advice would you give to other institutions embarking on the accreditation journey?*

- A**
- Remember that the process is as important as the objective. Take maximum advantage of the process to improve the quality of what you do. Your objective should not be simply to comply with the standards for the sake of an evaluation, but to develop your institution in a way that will enable you to always be compliant whether or not you have an external evaluation.
 - Carefully evaluate your resources and find the best strategy that will allow you to accomplish all the tasks involved in the accreditation process. Sometimes this involves seeking expert external assistance during the exercise.
 - Work closely with your ACTT

liaison/representative. That individual can help you to be well prepared and to anticipate and avoid potential obstacles.

- Make every effort to engage all your stakeholders in the process as far as possible.

Q *How would achieving accredited status benefit students and other stakeholders?*

A • Accredited status provides our students with an assurance of the quality of their education and a confirmation that they are receiving value for money. The State and parents are also assured that they are receiving value for their financial investment in education.

• It also increases the acceptability of our students' qualifications in the marketplace and the portability of their degree to other jurisdictions. Furthermore, it should make it easier for those who wish to pursue further studies.

• The church community is also assured that the graduates of WIST are well prepared for the responsibilities that they will be called to carry within that community.

Q *What impact might the accreditation of institutions have on the local and regional education sector?*

A Accreditation assures the quality of an institution's systems and therefore extends that stamp of quality to the local and regional education sector. It also provides a basis for the articulation of educational programmes across the local and regional education sector.

Q *How do you see your status as an accredited institution impacting on the quality of graduates and their ability to acquire jobs?*

A In one sense, accreditation recognizes the quality that was always present in the institution. Hence, it bears witness to the existence of that quality, particularly for external stakeholders such as employers. Employers should therefore have greater confidence in the quality of the WIST graduate which should in turn result in the increased employability of graduates.

Increasing Awareness of Fraudulent Qualifications

Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director, ACTT and Cassandra Mano, Research Officer, ACTT



Higher education institutions, students and employers operate and compete in a national, regional and international context where a host of qualifications exists. With more graduates entering the work place every year with varying qualifications, higher education accreditation has captured the attention of students, employers and the general public. With an increasing awareness on local and foreign qualifications, it is important that students, institutions as well as employers take the necessary precautions to identify fraudulent qualifications. A 'diploma mill' or 'degree mill' is an institution that awards academic qualifications without recognition from legitimate quality assurance agency. Though online education is a legitimate mode of delivery of tertiary education, there are many 'providers' that are illegitimate and offer qualifications for 'sale'.

In order to determine whether an identified post secondary or tertiary level institution is quality assured and/or accredited as well as if the programme would be recognised in Trinidad and Tobago, ACTT offers a service to the public called a Statement on Recognition.

It is important that prior to enrolment, students ensure that they verify the accreditation and/or recognition status of the institution and programme. Employers should also take the time to check the legitimacy of the educational credentials of applicants for employment in order to protect themselves and their stakeholders.


Below are some ways in which you can spot a Diploma or Degree Mill.



A diploma or degree mill:

- offers a cheap degree with little or no tuition nor 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

ACTT also offers training to students, institutions and employers on how they can be prepared to identify and deal with fraudulent qualifications.

OCTOBER 27 & 28, 2015
8:30am – 4:00pm
HYATT REGENCY TRINIDAD
1 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain








Registration deadline: October 12, 2015
Registration fee: \$2,500
Group rate (4+ persons): \$2,200 (ea.)

Late Registration Fee: \$2,800
effective October 13, 2015

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT)
Employers' Consultative Association
and Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (USA)

FORENSICS OF CREDENTIAL AND CV FRAUD



Majka Drewitz is an Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. Senior Evaluator and a Research and Knowledge Management Evaluator. She specialises in various systems of education including Eastern and Western Europe, the former Soviet Union, China, Canada, India, Latin America, Caribbean, Syria, and the francophone systems. Majka is also versed in document forensics.

A two-day workshop on techniques for detecting counterfeit certificates, fraudulent credentials, diploma mills and curriculum vitae misrepresentation for employers, human resource professionals, academic administrators and fraud detection professionals.

Facilitator: Majka Drewitz

FOR FURTHER INFO, PLEASE CONTACT: Richette Howell
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