

# **Guidelines for the Accreditation of Short Courses**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past decade the number of short courses offered by private companies, government ministries and other public sector agencies, and consultants in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the wider Caribbean region, has grown significantly. Many of these courses are offered to employees in order to improve and update skills, knowledge and competence as there is evidence that investment in education and training has a direct effect on the bottom-line as it contributes to personal success, value creation and the attainment of organisational goals. Some short courses are company-specific and are designed and delivered to meet the need for skilled persons in highly specialised areas, or to train employees to apply new technologies or operate new machinery. Other courses are general and the knowledge and skills can be applied across sectors of the economy.

While the majority of short courses reside outside of the formal education system, their contribution to on-going human resource development cannot be denied and in several countries mechanisms have been developed whereby recognition can be given to learning that takes place on the job or through experience.

As the Caribbean moves closer to the full establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the challenge is to develop a regional mechanism that facilitates the recognition of credentials; portability of qualifications; and greater articulation (both horizontal and vertical) and transfer of credits between programmes of learning across the region. It must be noted however that the final decision to accept credits for transfer from one programme to another is made at the discretion of the institution receiving the credits.

The national accrediting bodies already fully established in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago are giving attention not only to the accreditation of tertiary level institutions and programmes but also to developing the infrastructure that will allow for the recognition of learning outside of the formal education and training system. The National Qualifications Frameworks currently under construction, and the Regional Qualifications Framework that is under review, will provide the infrastructure within which short courses that conform to national and regional standards respectively, can be recognised for the award of credits.

Guidelines for the accreditation of short courses were developed and introduced into the tertiary education sector in Jamaica by the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ - the national accrediting body) in November 2005. In 2007 the UCJ accredited the first short courses in Jamaica. By agreement among the UCJ, the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) and the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) and, in the spirit of regional co-operation, these guidelines have been adapted to the needs of the individual territories. The guidelines should be used by institutions and providers in the design and development of short courses aimed at the on-going development of the human resource. Credits earned from accredited short courses will be eligible for transfer

into programmes of further study with clear progression routes. Accredited short courses will be included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Trinidad and Tobago which is currently being developed.

### **SHORT COURSES DEFINED**

To be eligible for accreditation a short course must fulfill the following requirements:

- The course should qualify to be assigned not less than one (1) credit, but less than 30 credits (the minimum for the award of a certificate).
- A credit or credit hour is the term commonly used as a measurement of contact time at the tertiary level. One credit should be awarded for a minimum of fifteen hours of teaching or lecture time. With regard to laboratory work, three hours is usually considered equal to one lecture hour.
- There must be commonality with regard to content that gives courses coherence if different courses are to be grouped in order to qualify for the assignment of credits.

### **GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION**

#### **A. GOVERNANCE & MISSION**

1. The institution/provider has a clearly defined and published Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose.
2. The course has a statement of purpose that is relevant to the goals, aims and objectives of the institution/provider.
3. There is a structure of governance and administration that provides for the formulation of general policies and the exercise of authority over the implementation of courses.
4. There are clearly defined responsibilities for staff at all levels.
5. The institution/provider is able to provide, at all times, evidence of its commitment to quality.

#### **B. PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

6. There is a clearly defined and coherent mechanism for developing courses and for monitoring educational standards.
7. There is periodic review of courses.

8. There is a competent person of professional or senior technical status who has responsibility for development of courses and for the monitoring of educational matters.
9. There is a detailed course outline providing details of the course title, duration, objectives, learning outcomes, teaching strategies, assessment methods and other pertinent course details.

**C. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

9. The institution/provider has clearly stated admission requirements for the course that are compatible with its statement of purpose, the stated purpose of the course, and appropriate to post secondary or tertiary level. These are published and should be strictly adhered to.
10. The minimum requirement for admission into a course offered at the post secondary or tertiary level must be at a level that is equivalent to the completion of secondary education and may include credit for competencies acquired through relevant life experience (experiential learning).
11. Procedures for the selection of students with alternative qualifications are clearly stated.
12. There is a policy governing the admission of mature persons who do not qualify for admission under 10 or 11 on the basis of evidence of their capacity to follow the course of study successfully.

**D. STAFFING**

13. The academic, administrative and technical staff is adequate for the effective delivery of the course.
14. Instructors/facilitators/lecturers for the courses have produced evidence of their capacity and competence to teach the courses. Normally, at the tertiary level, the academic qualifications for instructors/trainers should be at least one degree higher than the level being taught.
15. The instructors/facilitators/lecturers are engaged in professional activities that provide evidence that they keep abreast of developments in their fields.
16. Performance appraisals for instructors/facilitators/lecturers are conducted at regular intervals, the results of which are to be used for improvement.
17. A record is kept of the qualifications and experience of consultants (guest lecturers) providing training on an ad hoc basis.

18. The performance of consultants (guest lecturers) providing training on an ad hoc basis is evaluated.
19. The institution/provider has an appropriate mechanism for maintaining and enhancing the quality of instruction.

**E. LEARNER ASSESSMENT**

20. There is a structured and rigorous assessment process which determines the attainment of certification.
21. There is a system of documenting, storing and retrieving records of learner performance.
22. The assessment system is transparent and allows for reports on learner performance in a timely manner.
23. Assessment is appropriate to the post secondary and tertiary level with emphasis on demonstrable competencies.

**F. LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES**

24. The institution/provider provides appropriate support services which may include access to counselling and career guidance.
25. Monitoring and guidance of learner performance is an on-going part of the learning process.

**G. PHYSICAL ACCOMMODATION**

26. Physical resources are adequate to serve the needs of the course and contribute to an environment for effective learning.
27. Facilities meet relevant health and safety standards for education and training facilities.

**H. LEARNING RESOURCES**

- 28. The institution/provider provides access to adequate learning resources and services to support the course offered.
- 29. Information available in print format is supplemented through access to appropriate electronic technologies e.g. internet access to electronic databases.

**I. LABORATORY FACILITIES (Where appropriate)**

- 30. Adequate provision is made for laboratories designed to facilitate the application of the theories and principles relevant to the course.
- 31. There is adequate support staff to maintain laboratory facilities.
- 32. Laboratory equipment, materials and tools are kept current.

**J. FINANCES**

- 33. The financial resources to support the course offered and to sustain training and development on an on-going basis are accessible and available.

*The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago invites comments and/or recommendations on these guidelines in an effort to involve stakeholders in the development of standards for the accreditation of short courses.*

*Please submit your contributions via email to: [customercare@actt.org.tt](mailto:customercare@actt.org.tt)*