

Focus on QUALITY

The Journey to Reaccreditation

When The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) was accredited in December 2010 by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) for a period of seven years, it seemed like an eternity. Now, here we are seven years later and we are preparing for another comprehensive site visit by ACTT in a few weeks.

UTT began planning for reaccreditation in 2014. **Accreditation is a cyclical process of self-evaluation and external review and 'reaccreditation' or 'reaffirmation of accreditation' is required for an institution to maintain its accredited status. At the heart of UTT's preparation for reaccreditation was the self-study process. Through data-driven self-assessment, the University examined changes in its internal and external environments and analysed the impact on its ability to achieve its mission. The primary purpose was to demonstrate that the University continues to meet or exceed the standards for institutional accreditation.**

At UTT, for over a year, a wide cross-section of faculty and staff sat on committees that led the self-study process. Indirectly, many more (staff and students) were engaged in other aspects of the process such as surveys and discussions which provided valuable information. At times, it was a daunting task as committee members were stretched to the limit by the demands of their jobs and the extra effort required to contribute meaningfully to the self-study process. However, Self-Study 2017 provided an opportunity for self-reflection, critical analysis and growth. Through self-awareness, members of the UTT community were able to examine deficiencies and to arrive at solutions for some of our challenges and suggestions for improvement. During the process, the University also completed the Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022.

In this issue >>

The Journey to Reaccreditation	P.1
Accreditation and its Impact on Tertiary Education	P.2
UTT - Then and Now	P.4
UTT Celebrates 'Quality Month'	P.6
The Importance of Accreditation	P.7
Calendar of Events	P.7
Programme Accreditation at UTT	P.8



The Self-Study Report 2017 will form the basis of the external review for reaccreditation. It analyses our current realities, examines our needs and identifies the priorities which will take us into the next cycle of accreditation. Resolutely, we surge forward with our vision for the future of UTT grounded in the aspirations of the people we serve and our commitment to the development of our nation. 

*"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."
~Lao Tzu*

Accreditation and its Impact on Tertiary Education

Views from our colleagues in other institutions regarding institutional accreditation



As the National University, UTT has a responsibility to contribute to the development of Trinidad and Tobago's tertiary education sector. In May 2017, the Office of Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness (QA&IE) at UTT had the pleasure of interviewing key staff involved in the reaccreditation process at The University of The West Indies (UWI), The University of the Southern Caribbean (USC), and The West Indies School of Theology (WIST). Through a series of thought-provoking and probing questions, the representatives of these institutions highlighted their experiences and imparted valuable lessons learned on their institutional accreditation journey.

We asked our colleagues:

- Q 1 Since being accredited, has your institution made any notable changes as a result of the accreditation process?
- Q 2 Do you believe that institutional accreditation is effective in providing students with the assurance of quality in tertiary education?
- Q 3 You are currently preparing for reaccreditation, what measures are you putting in place to ensure that you are successful?
- Q 4 What is the value of accreditation to the tertiary education sector as a whole, and is it worth the cost that an institution incurs in obtaining accreditation?

This is what they had to say.



Dr. Sandra Gift
Senior Programme Officer
Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)
The University of the
West Indies (UWI)



Response to Q1 [Notable changes]: Yes, changes, aimed at quality enhancement, were made based on the recommendations of the ACTT evaluators. These changes included the establishment of an Institutional Effectiveness Unit and the launch of a programme to address service quality. Additionally, the Campus strengthened its Office for Planning and Institutional Research. The UWI St. Augustine Campus also sought to increase its funding base via its pursuit of private sector sponsorship and collaboration with international partners for initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and research. Focus was also placed on strengthening infrastructure, systems and approaches for blended learning. In addition to addressing the ACTT evaluators' recommendations, the Campus also implemented over 80% of the recommendations of its 2010 Self-Study Report, resulting in quality enhancement of processes and procedures relating to all of ACTT's institutional accreditation criteria and standards.

Response to Q2 [Quality Assurance]: Oh yes. The students are graduating with tertiary level qualifications from accredited institutions increasing potential employers' perceptions that the quality of their post secondary education is assured. Where graduates must generate their own employment as entrepreneurs, their potential clients would also have such assurance. For graduates in fields requiring a licence to practice, the accredited status of the institution serves as an assurance of quality that supports students in their pursuit of such licences, along with the other criteria to be met by national and regional professional bodies. We definitely need to maintain the standards that are expected of reputable higher education institutions if our tertiary level institutions are to be both recognised and respected regionally, nationally and internationally. In a culture where sometimes mediocrity and laissez-faire are allowed to thrive, institutional accreditation serves as a safeguard that protects the interests of our students and society at large.

Response to Q3 [Preparation for reaccreditation]: In order to prepare for reaccreditation

(Continued on page 3)

Accreditation and its Impact on Tertiary Education

(Continued from page 2)

Response of Dr. Sandra Gift
Senior Programme Officer, QAU
The University of the West Indies
(UWI) cont'd

The UWI St. Augustine Campus has held meetings with various sectors of the campus community to ensure that colleagues understand the purpose of the self-study exercise and to secure their engagement in the process. An Institutional Accreditation Secretariat, various committees and working groups have been established to manage the self-study process which includes considering and analysing relevant data and developing the Self-Study

Report which demonstrates The UWI St. Augustine Campus' continued compliance with ACTT's institutional accreditation criteria and standards. Of course, this involves discussion of our understanding of the ACTT's various institutional accreditation criteria, standards, and acceptable forms of evidence. Such discussion leads to considerable but important debate so the self-study process itself has value. We have also been strategically ensuring that our students are sensitised to the importance of reaccreditation. We have conducted several focus groups involving representatives of students to get their perspectives on the Campus' compliance with ACTT's institutional accreditation criteria.

Response to Q4 [Value of accreditation]: The UWI has traditionally operationalised programme accreditation for programmes in the fields of medicine and engineering. The Council of Legal Education has functioned as an accreditation mechanism for Law. The UWI has also implemented a system of internal quality assurance involving quality evaluations and reviews of every single academic programme, using a five to seven year cycle. Programme reviews are conducted by teams comprising national, regional and international academic and professional peers. This has facilitated within The UWI as a whole the development of a more mature Quality Management System. The UWI's embrace of institutional accreditation by national accrediting bodies has led our university to be more reflective in its practice of other standards that may not have been given the same degree of attention as those used in our internal system of programme evaluation and review. I believe that institutional accreditation is exacting a level of accountability that is driven from the exterior, and requires greater reflection and action by institutions to ensure that they are satisfying external stakeholder requirements relating to quality. Unfortunately, some view institutional accreditation as a process that engages institutions in mindless administrative work. I am of the view that when an institution seeks to go beyond simply demonstrating compliance and instead truly embraces the institutional accreditation process in a meaningful way, using it as an opportunity to see how it can and must continue to improve, become more effective and better serve all stakeholders, but especially students, then the region will benefit, the costs relating to finances and time notwithstanding. 🌐



Mrs. Gersha Pierre
Director of Quality Assurance
The University of the
Southern Caribbean (USC)



Response to Q1 [Notable changes]: Several changes have been made to USC since gaining accreditation in 2012. The process of attaining accreditation as well as the actual accreditation status has led to the establishment of new and improved systems for improved efficiency and effectiveness in key areas such as student assessment and internal programme approval. Improvements were also made to the student academic advising and the data/records management systems.

Response to Q2 [Quality Assurance]: Yes, institutional accreditation is effective, but I have to qualify that it is only effective if the institution seeks to incorporate the lessons learned and the gains made during accreditation into a new and improved organisational culture. Accreditation can only work for an institution and its students if the gains made during the process are maintained and become incorporated into the very fabric of how the institution operates.

Response to Q3 [Preparation for reaccreditation]: USC is currently preparing for reaccreditation in 2019. In addition to informing the ACTT of our intention to seek reaccreditation, USC has participated in the very useful "Guiding the Self-Study Workshop" facilitated by the ACTT, which has helped to prepare our team at USC for reaccreditation. Following the activation of our accreditation Steering Committee and sub-committees, USC developed its Self-Study Plan and this semester the process of collecting and analysing data to evaluate the institution's performance within the various accreditation criteria and standards continues.

UTT - Then & Now



Despite the many changes and challenges UTT has undergone since its establishment in 2004, our University community has remained committed to the work of assuring and improving the quality of all we do. After establishment, UTT began its work to ensure that it was ready to meet the expectations of the new national tertiary education quality assurance system established by ACTT. Here is a look at then and now:

THEN

UTT's initial registration took effect on 10 June 2009, for a period of one year. After being granted registration for one year, the University strengthened its Quality Management System (QMS) and was re-registered by ACTT for a three year period. Immediately, UTT sought institutional accreditation. Accreditation goes beyond the mandatory Criteria for Registration and demonstrates that the University is achieving quality outcomes aligned to its mission and vision. **UTT was awarded Candidacy for Institutional Accreditation on 16 July 2009, and on 17 December 2010, became the first university in the English-speaking Caribbean to have been awarded institutional accreditation by a national body.**

NOW

For over a year, UTT has been actively engaged in preparations for reaccreditation by ACTT. On 20 April 2016, the self-study process was officially launched and a wide cross-section of faculty, staff and students participated in a comprehensive process. The Self-Study Report 2017 was submitted to ACTT and the external review process will culminate in a site visit by a team of highly respected educational leaders during the period 26 - 30 September, 2017. 🌐

“ You've got to think about big things while you're doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction.

Alvin Toffler

What is the difference between Institutional and Programme Accreditation?

Institutional Accreditation involves the comprehensive evaluation of an entire institution against criteria and standards established by an accrediting body. Institutions are granted accreditation for a specified period of time before they are required to seek reaccreditation.

Programme Accreditation (also referred to as 'specialised accreditation') involves the comprehensive review of a particular programme or discipline against standards for the profession or field of practice. Generally, programme accreditation is conducted by professional bodies and graduation from an accredited programme is a requirement for a licence to practise in some fields.

Accreditation and its Impact on Tertiary Education

(Continued from Page 3)

Response of Mrs. Gersha Pierre
Director of Quality Assurance
The University of the Southern
Caribbean (USC)

process to become accredited as well as the annual fees and funds expended for continuous improvement to address any issues identified once the accreditation status is achieved. Continuous training and skill development of regional and local peer evaluators, can lead to less reliance on foreign evaluators and significant cost savings for institutions facing accreditation. However the close knit communities within which many local Tertiary Level Institutions operate and the need to follow international best practice may result in institutions' continued reliance on the use of international peer evaluators even in these times of economic decline and calls for financial frugality. The bottom line is that accreditation is costly but the benefits go well beyond the immediate sums spent and reap benefits for the institution well into the future. 🌐



Dr. Pat Phillip Glasgow
President
The West Indies School of
Theology (WIST)



Response to Q4 [Value of accreditation]: The value of accreditation, for the tertiary sector as a whole, is in leveling the playing field and raising the bar for small, medium, and large institutions to strive for a certain standard of operation that will benefit the students. When their institution becomes accredited, students are given the assurance that their school measures favourably against both regional and international Tertiary Level Institutions. Accreditation is indeed a costly activity which includes the expenses incurred during the

Response to Q1 [Notable changes]: WIST has made notable changes since it was granted accreditation. The institution, having become more conscious of quality assurance, has improved its Quality Management System. This speaks, in part to the scheduling and conducting of assessments, and as a result, adjustments were made where necessary. Faculty and staff have been streamlined to teach and function in their areas of qualification. There is also a greater effort among the staff to be customer-friendly in response to stakeholders. Additionally, WIST has recognised that in order to meet and maintain quality standards, we must improve our revenue streams. Hence, we introduced a new department, called Marketing and Revenue Generation. One other notable addition has been the launch of our academic journal, Caribbean Journal of Theological Education and Research (CJTER).

Response to Q2 [Quality Assurance]: Institutional accreditation should be effective in providing students with the assurance that the quality of the tertiary level education they are pursuing, meets the benchmark set by similar institutions. Therefore, the accrediting body must hold itself responsible for maintaining high standards of operations and scrutiny. While I believe that receiving quality education is dependent on two factors: the student and the institution, the onus is on the institution to set the standard.

Response to Q3 [Preparation for reaccreditation]: Currently, WIST is in the process of preparing for a mid-term review, scheduled for February 2018. We are doing improvement works on the infrastructure, grounds, and general ambience of the physical facilities. In addition, we are formulating teams, as before, which will examine the level of adherence to established policy and procedures. As mentioned earlier, we have implemented a Marketing and Revenue Generation Department to assist with increased funding. We are also working closely with our strategic plan to ensure that we are fulfilling our mission. WIST has also initiated regular staff development training sessions, and this includes training in action research.

Response to Q4 [Value of accreditation]: Accreditation is worth the cost since it provides the institution with a reason to self-examine and self-critique its systems, policies, procedures, and operations. This process affords a different platform from which to operate and its impact forges growth and development within our institution. The interviews and discussions with the external peer evaluators who assess the institution are also enlightening. Participating in the accreditation process and the recognition gained as a result, also boost stakeholder confidence. This further enhances the profile and appeal of the institution, as it stands alongside other tertiary level institutions; now becoming a preferred option for both existing and prospective students. 🌐

In November 2016, QA&IE planned and coordinated UTT's inaugural celebrations of Quality Month to coincide with an annual global event that is recognised by The American Society for Quality (ASQ) during the month of November. Quality Month raises awareness of issues related to quality assurance, continuous improvement, and performance excellence, highlighting the activities of quality professionals worldwide. In commemoration of this global event, UTT's Quality Month took place at a time when there were similar activities conducted around the world and aimed to demonstrate UTT's commitment to quality.

The objectives of Quality Month activities were to:

- Highlight the importance of quality within the tertiary education sector.
- Provide faculty, staff and students with a better understanding of key quality management concepts and tools.
- Encourage faculty and staff to find ways to improve their work processes.
- Engage students in the process of continuous quality improvement across the University.
- Recognise faculty and staff for creative ideas which improve quality at the University.
- Inspire faculty, staff and students to achieve excellence in their professional and personal endeavours.

The following major activities were undertaken:

- Branding the celebrations with a logo, tokens and online promotions.
- Coordinating a process improvement competition '100 Quick Wins' for faculty and staff to identify process improvement ideas which could be implemented across the University.
- Facilitating a student video contest to showcase the importance of quality.
- Hosting a panel discussion with representatives from tertiary institutions, industry, and the national accreditation agency to discuss the issues related to external quality assurance and public funding for tertiary education.
- Conducting a series of 'Campus Tours' to engage faculty, staff and students on issues related to quality in the tertiary education sector and at UTT. 📍



Engaging with stakeholders on various Campus Tours



Panel Discussion at the Pt Lisas Campus



Winners of the '100 Quick Wins' competition



Winners of the Student Video Contest



The purpose of World Quality Month is to promote the use of quality tools in businesses and communities. Quality tools, such as flowcharts and checklists, reduce mistakes and help produce superior products. Quality principles could reduce headline-making errors, like food safety, toy recalls, and financial disruptions. World Quality Month calls on people who use quality tools to share their knowledge by submitting their stories to illustrate the value of quality principles.

Excerpt from <http://asq.org/world-quality-month/vision.aspx>

Interviews with Graduates from Class 2014

The Importance of Accreditation



Our featured graduates were asked the following questions:

- Q 1 In your opinion, why is accreditation important?
- Q 2 Having attained certification which is accredited with an international professional accrediting body, do you think this has increased the value of your qualification?
- Q 3 Do you think your qualification has helped you in the job market? If yes, please state how.



Ms. Susan Celestine graduated from The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) in 2014 after successfully attaining a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Information Technology.

“Accreditation is important to me because the quality of education that I received as a student will be recognised and comparable to international standards. I believe that attaining my certification with an international accrediting body has increased the value of my qualification since in the work place, this is what the employer looks for, to evaluate the standard and quality of the education. I also believe that my qualification has helped me a great deal in my job as the courses that I pursued in the degree were holistic, with offerings from every facet of the IT field. This has allowed me to be a more informed IT professional.”



Mr. Khufrah Lessey graduated from The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) in 2014 after successfully attaining a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Petroleum Engineering.

“I am currently employed in my field of study. Accreditation is important to the employer as it gives an assurance that the potential employee is qualified for the job. Both the employer and the graduate would like to feel a sense of assurance that the programme prepares graduates to meet both international and local standards within the area of study. I believe that having attained an accredited degree from UTT has definitely helped me to be successful in the job interview for my current job.”

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REACCREDITATION

Site Visit by ACTT and
team of External Evaluators
26 - 30 September 2017
The University of Trinidad
and Tobago

Quality Month 2017
1 - 30 November 2017
O'Meara Campus,
The University of Trinidad
and Tobago

Theme:
“Quality Matters:
Focusing on quality in education,
safety, wellness and
the environment”

The Caribbean Area Network for
Quality Assurance in Tertiary
Education 14th Annual Conference
8 - 10 November 2017
Paramaribo, Republic of Suriname

Theme:
“Promoting Regional Cooperation in
Tertiary Education Quality Assurance:
Strength in Sustainable Development
and Harmony in Action”

Programme Accreditation at UTT



Programme accreditation also referred to as 'specialised accreditation' involves the comprehensive review of a particular programme or discipline against standards for a particular profession or field of practice. This accreditation is often conducted by professional bodies and graduation from an accredited programme is a requirement for a licence to practice in some fields. Consequently, The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) is proud to not only have earned institutional accreditation but also specialised accreditation for the programmes listed below:



Accredited by the Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE), United Kingdom

- ⇒ Master of Engineering in Process Engineering
- ⇒ Bachelor of Applied Science in Process Engineering
- ⇒ National Engineering Technician Diploma in Chemical Engineering



Accredited by the Energy Institute (EI), United Kingdom

- ⇒ Master of Science in Reservoir Engineering
- ⇒ Master of Science in Petroleum Engineering
- ⇒ Master of Engineering in Petroleum Engineering (accredited for Chartered Engineer status)
- ⇒ Bachelor of Applied Science in Petroleum Engineering
- ⇒ National Engineering Technician Diploma in Petroleum Engineering



Accredited by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), United Kingdom

- ⇒ Master of Science in Information and Communication Technology
- ⇒ Bachelor of Applied Science in Computer Engineering – General
- ⇒ Bachelor of Applied Science in Computer Engineering – Software Engineering
- ⇒ Bachelor of Applied Science in Computer Engineering – Network and Telecommunication Engineering
- ⇒ Diploma in Software Engineering
- ⇒ Diploma in Computer, Networking and Telecommunication Engineering



Accredited by the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST), United Kingdom

- ⇒ Master of Science in Operational Maritime Management
- ⇒ Bachelor of Science in Nautical Science
- ⇒ Diploma in Maritime Operations – Engineering Option
- ⇒ Diploma in Maritime Operations – Navigation Option

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

Focus on Quality is published for the staff and stakeholders of The University of Trinidad and Tobago and is a publication of the Office of Quality Assurance & Institutional Effectiveness (QA&IE).

QA&IE is charged with primary responsibility for the design, development and implementation of a university-wide system for quality assurance and accreditation and an integrated approach to institutional research that is linked to strategic planning and evidence-based decision-making.

We welcome your contributions and comments. Please send them to The Editor at utt.quality@utt.edu.tt
Tel: 1 (868) 642-8888 Ext 33135.



CREDITS	The Journey to Reaccreditation
	Accreditation and its Impact on Tertiary Education
	UTT—Then and Now
	UTT Celebrates 'Quality Month'
	The Importance of Accreditation
	Editorial Review
	Design

Ruby S. Alleyne Ph.D.
Nicole Charles-Francis, Giselle Assing, Michaela Broomes
Jason Stafford
Tamara Mohamed, Nicole Perry
Nicole Charles-Francis, Giselle Assing, Michaela Broomes
Cherise Thompson, Giselle Assing, Keah Roberts-Toby, Nicole Perry
Kwesi Charles

NEWSLETTER ONLINE @ www.u.tt/qaie

