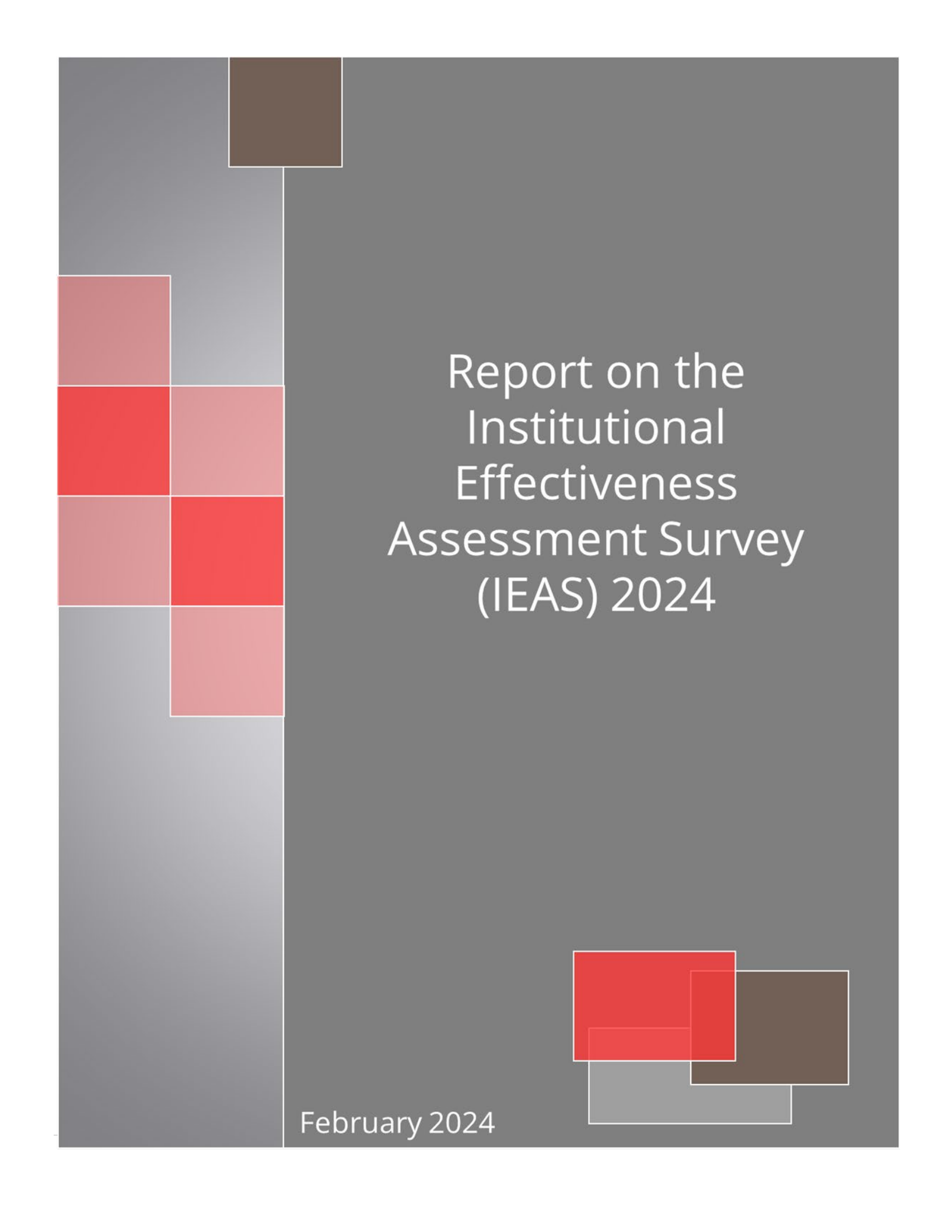




Report on the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Survey (IEAS) 2024

February 2024

Executive Summary

Background

The Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Survey was conducted from January 9th to February 15th, 2024, sampling opinions from 3,973 staff and students at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). The survey garnered 489 respondents, including 116 non-academic staff, 114 academic staff, and 259 students. The survey was designed to evaluate the university's alignment with the criteria and standards for institutional accreditation established by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). The findings are generally categorised according to each criterion. The results pertaining to Criterion 4: Preparedness for Change, and Criterion 5: Commitment to Continuous Improvement, are combined in the report. This amalgamation is due to their considerable overlap, as both criteria scrutinise the university's practices in environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, planning, and the allocation of resources towards quality enhancement.

Key Findings

Mission and Purpose

Quantitatively, a sizable majority (82%) of respondents agree that UTT's mission mirrors the needs of society and 67% affirm that its programmes and services actively reinforce and bolster the fulfilment of its mission. Qualitatively, while UTT's mission alignment is appreciated, some concerns were raised regarding internal awareness of the mission among staff and students and the relevance of some academic programmes to the institutional mission.

Governance and Administration

The quantitative findings show 61% of respondents stating that UTT employees effectively execute organisational operations and 56% recognising clarity in its formal governance structure and decision-making hierarchy. However, qualitative inputs highlight a desire among faculty members and students for more substantive inclusion in institutional decisions and increased transparency from leadership regarding resource allocation strategies and practices.

Teaching and Learning

Quantitatively, 72% expressed confidence in the calibre and efficacy of UTT's teaching-related policies and practices to appropriately guide positive student outcomes. Qualitatively, respondents indicated high regard for the capabilities of UTT's faculty but also noted inconsistencies in teaching quality across academic units and deficiencies in career preparation services for some programmes.

Preparedness for Change and Commitment to Continuous Improvement

While a modest majority (58%) of respondents quantitatively acknowledged UTT's commitment to maintaining robust quality enhancement systems, qualitatively it was felt that the pace of change and implementation of substantive improvements at UTT have been incremental at best. Additionally, concerns were raised about limited investment in staff development initiatives and the outdated state of facilities, technologies, and infrastructure. Further, institutional planning processes were perceived as being conducted in isolation rather than through collaborative frameworks that proactively incorporate stakeholder input. Partiality in resource allocation practices was also cited as an area needing attention by a share of respondents.

Recommendations

Targeted recommendations focusing on communications, transparency, stakeholder engagement, staff advancement, facilities upgrades, and merit-based distribution are provided. In summary, while UTT performs admirably on Mission and Teaching centred metrics, discernible opportunities exist to improve Governance, Planning, Communications, Resource Allocation, Infrastructure, and Stakeholder Engagement as determined by the survey feedback.

Introduction

Background

The Office of Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness developed and administered the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Survey (IEAS) to gather feedback from faculty, staff, and students on the university's performance across various areas essential for institutional reaccreditation. These areas align with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) criteria: Mission and Purpose, Governance and Administration, Teaching and Learning, Preparedness for Change, and Commitment to Continuous Improvement. The survey's outcomes aim to help the university evaluate its progress since its last self-study and identify areas for improvement, guiding priorities and actions.

Approach

From 09 January to 15 February 2024, the IEAS was conducted electronically among a sample of 3,973 individuals, comprising 825 staff members and 3,148 students. Weekly email reminders were dispatched to enhance participation rates. The survey prompted respondents to rate their agreement with positive statements about the university's operations and to offer comments or suggestions based on their ratings and concerns.

This report presents the quantitative results for the various items measured in the survey. It also discusses the themes emerging from a qualitative analysis of respondents' feedback. The findings are generally categorised according to each accreditation criterion. The results pertaining to Criterion 4: Preparedness for Change, and Criterion 5: Commitment to Continuous Improvement, are combined in the report. This amalgamation is due to their considerable overlap, as both criteria scrutinise the university's practices in environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, planning, and the allocation of resources towards quality enhancement.

Survey Respondents

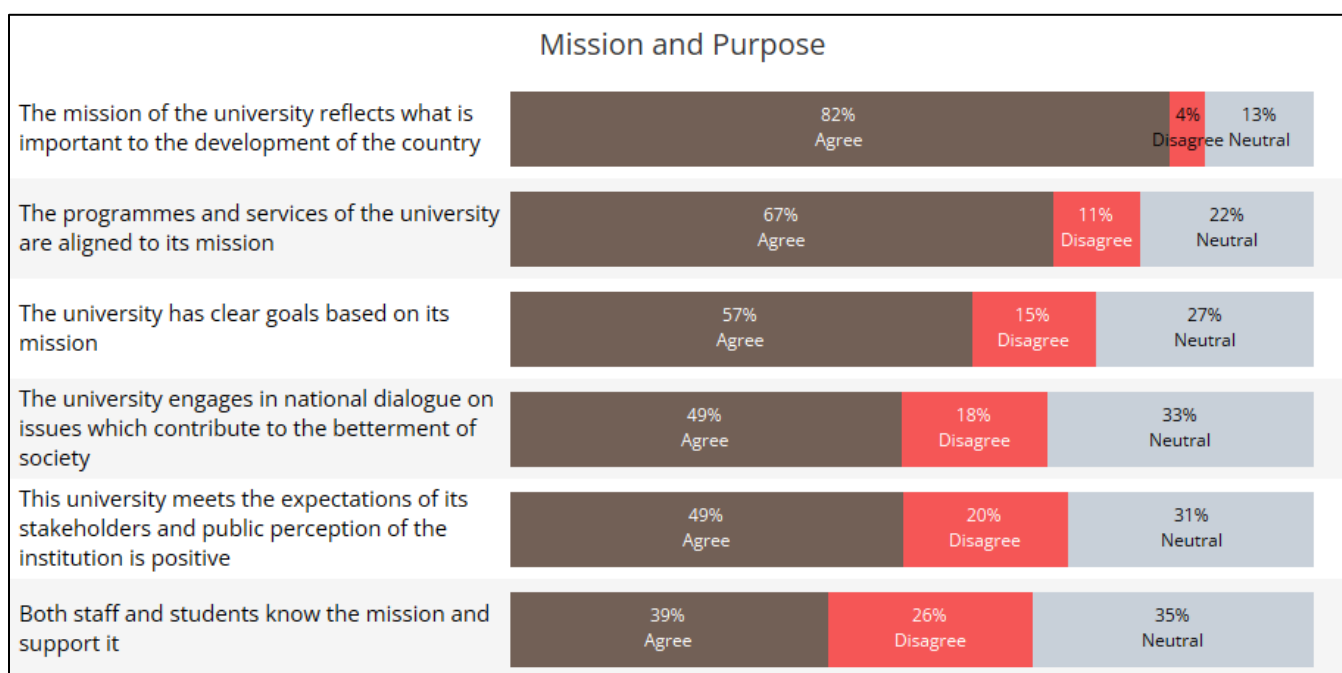
The survey concluded with 489 respondents completing it: 116 non-academic staff, 114 academic staff, and 259 students achieving a 12% response rate. The breakdown of respondents included 24% non-academic staff, 34% academic staff, and 53% students. Regarding tenure at UTT, 35% had been there for 10 or more years, 32% for 1 or 2 years, 25% for 3 to 5 years, and 8% for 6 to 9 years. All campuses were represented in the responses however the largest share of respondents came from Pt Lisas (30%), San Fernando (16%), Tamana (17%), and ECIAF (11%). Despite a generally low response rate, the diversity among academic and non-academic staff and students, along with the representation across campuses and varied tenure lengths, suggests the responses provide a reliable cross-section of the UTT community's views.

Findings

Mission and Purpose

This category encompassed six items that assessed the perspectives of faculty, staff, and students regarding the extent to which the university's mission aligns with its societal role and the effectiveness of the university community in collaboratively fulfilling this role. The summary of findings in this domain presents several key insights:

- A significant majority of respondents (82%) concurred that the university's mission mirrors societal needs, demonstrating a strong correlation with societal expectations.
- More than two-thirds of the respondents (67%) affirmed that the university's programmes and services bolster its mission, underscoring the successful execution of the mission through its offerings.
- A majority of respondents (57%) acknowledged that the university has distinct goals derived from its mission, showcasing clarity and strategic direction.
- Nearly half of the respondents (49%) agreed that the university participates in national discourse regarding its mission, indicating a moderate level of engagement in wider societal conversations.
- Approximately half of the respondents (49%) concurred that the university meets its stakeholders' expectations, illustrating a balanced perspective on the university's efficacy in achieving its mission and purpose.
- Less than half of the respondents (39%) agreed that both staff and students are cognizant of the mission and strategic plan, highlighting an area for enhancement in internal communications and involvement.



Comments from staff and students regarding items in this area also provided qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences. A summary of these comments revealed several key themes:

- Awareness of the Mission: Some respondents indicated a lack of awareness or understanding of the university's mission. This suggested that there may be a need for improved communication and engagement strategies to ensure the university community is well-informed about its mission and strategic goals.
- Appreciation for the Mission: Some comments expressed a general appreciation for the mission of UTT, indicating that when known and understood, the mission is seen as valuable and significant to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. However, these positive perceptions also came with the caveat that more could be done to live up to the mission's ideals fully.
- Relevance and Implementation of Programmes: Comments reflected mixed views on the alignment of programmes with the university's mission. While many respondents saw the relevance of programmes to the mission and appreciated the opportunities provided, others pointed out areas where programme offerings could be enhanced or better aligned with the university's stated purposes.
- Suggestions for Improvement: Several comments offered constructive criticism or suggestions for improvement. These range from calls for better alignment of specific programmes with the mission, to enhancing the visibility and communication of the mission within the university community, and addressing administrative or academic issues that may hinder the full realisation of the mission.

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative findings suggest that the UTT is largely seen as aligning its mission with societal needs and effectively implementing this mission through most of its programmes and services, as evidenced by the high agreement percentages and positive comments in several areas. This positive perception aligns well with the accreditation criterion of "Mission and Purpose," indicating a successful portrayal and execution of its societal role.

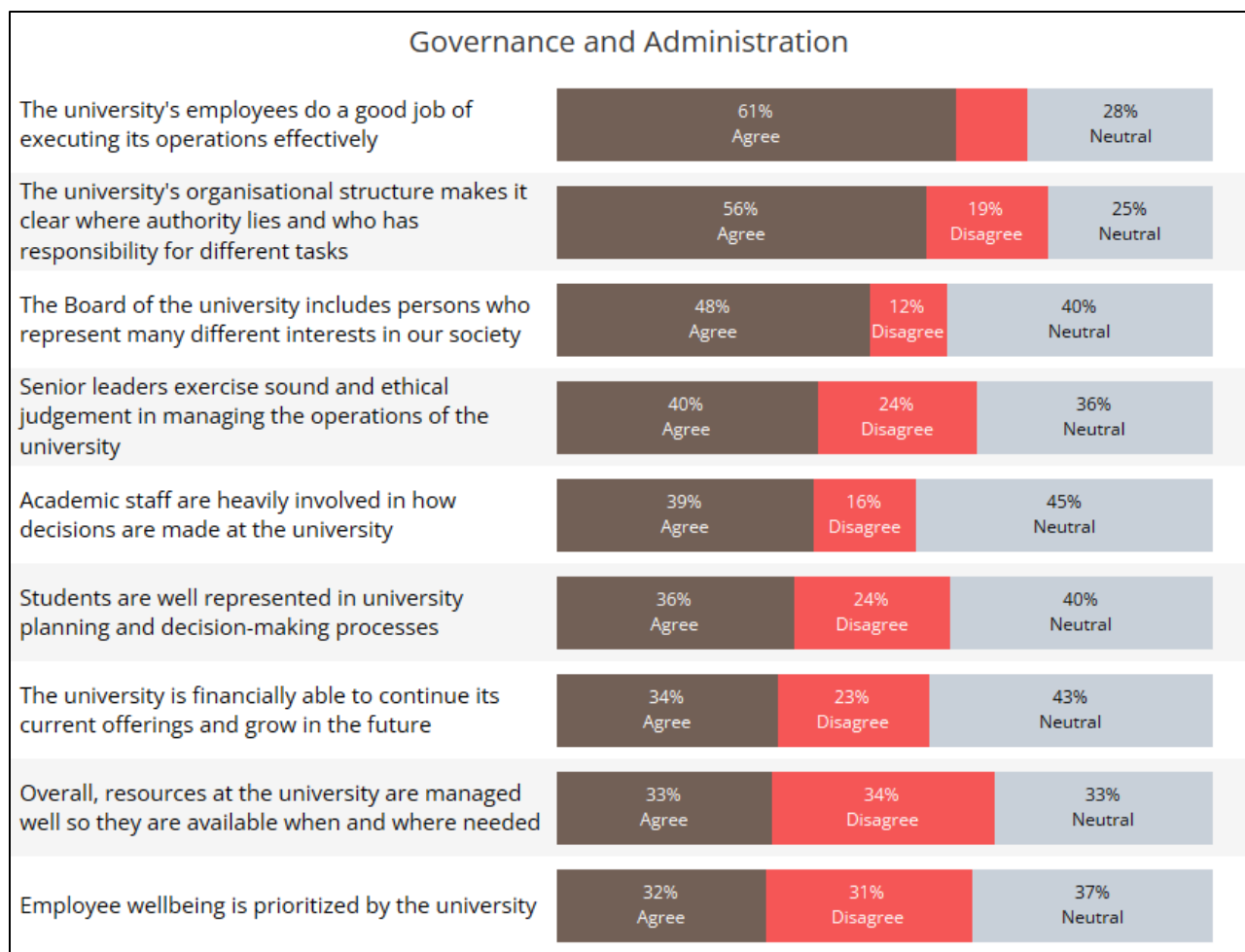
However, the relatively lower agreement and negative sentiments regarding awareness of the mission and strategic plan among staff and students, as well as engagement in national dialogue, point to areas where the university could enhance its efforts. Improving internal communication about its mission and strategic goals, as well as increasing its participation in national discussions, could further strengthen its alignment with the accreditation criterion.

The balanced views expressed by respondents on the university meeting stakeholder expectations and having clear goals based on its mission suggest that there is room for further engagement and clarification to ensure that all stakeholders' expectations are being met. Addressing these areas could not only improve perceptions but also enhance the university's overall effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and purpose.

Governance and Administration

This category encompassed eight items assessing faculty, staff, and students' perceptions of the university's governance system, specifically its stewardship of resources, its ability to provide all stakeholders with opportunities to contribute, and its transparency, fairness, and accountability. The results summarised below offer insights into these areas:

- There is notable confidence in the competence and commitment of UTT's faculty and staff, with a significant majority of respondents (61%) affirming that the university's employees effectively execute its operations.
- The organisational structure of UTT is recognised for its clarity in authority and decision-making, as acknowledged by 56% of respondents.
- Views on the Board's diversity in expertise and experience are mixed, with nearly half of the respondents (48%) agreeing that the university's Board encompasses a wide range of expertise and experience.
- A considerable number of respondents (45%) expressed neutrality regarding the level of academic staff involvement in decision-making at the university, highlighting uncertainty or perceived areas for improvement.
- About 40% of respondents agreed that senior leaders demonstrate sound and ethical judgment in their roles, indicating a lack of confidence in the ethical decision-making of the leadership..
- More than a third of respondents (37%) were neutral concerning the prioritisation of employee wellbeing, suggesting ambivalence on this issue.
- A third of respondents (34%) disagreed with the assertion that resources at the university are managed efficiently and effectively, signalling concerns over resource management.
- A significant portion of respondents (40%) remained neutral on the adequacy of student representation in university planning and decision-making processes, reflecting uncertainty or mixed feelings about student involvement.
- Similarly, most respondents (43%) were neutral regarding the university's financial capability to support its mission and vision, indicating mixed or uncertain views on the university's financial health.



Comments from staff and students regarding items in this area also provided qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences. A summary of these comments revealed several key themes:

- **Inadequate Involvement in Decision-Making:** There is a sentiment by some that staff contributions to decision-making are minimal or not taken seriously. Suggestions and ideas from the staff appear to get lost or are disregarded in broader discussions, suggesting a need for more inclusive and responsive communication channels.
- **Need for Improved Communication Systems:** Specific issues were raised concerning the Registry and Student Admissions sections, where applicants and enrolled students face severe time lags and lack prompt feedback or confirmations. This not only affects the efficiency of administrative processes but also potentially impacts student intake and satisfaction.
- **Funding and Budget Constraints:** A recurring concern among stakeholders is the apparent lack of funding, with instances where educators reportedly use personal tools for teaching. This highlights the need for improved financial support and budgeting to ensure that essential teaching resources are provided.

- Transparency and Information Access: There is a perceived lack of information and transparency regarding university finances, budget allocations, hiring practices and decision-making processes at the top level. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for stakeholders to understand personnel decisions, resource allocations, and the overall financial health of the institution.
- Student Organisations and Voices: The decline in student organisations and an ineffective student voice were noted by staff and students, suggesting that resource constraints and other issues may be impacting student engagement and representation.
- Facilities and Maintenance: Specific issues related to the maintenance and availability of essential resources, such as the need for elevator repairs to accommodate students with disabilities, indicate that facility maintenance is a concern. There is also mention of the need for transportation resources for field visits, highlighting inefficiencies in resource utilisation.
- Procurement and Resource Supply: Concerns about the procurement process being long-winded and a lack of communication regarding approvals indicate systemic issues in resource management. Additionally, academic staff report not having the necessary resources, such as updated computers, to perform their duties effectively.
- Financial Planning and Growth Projection: Stakeholders express uncertainty about the university's financial strength and its ability to sustain operations and grow in the future. There is a call for a more transparent and understandable direction for the university to ensure equitable resource distribution.
- Employee Wellbeing and Compensation: Comments also touch on concerns about employee wellbeing, including issues related to compensation and working conditions, suggesting that resource management extends beyond physical resources to encompass human resources as well.

The findings highlight areas of strength in Governance and Administration, such as employee execution and organisational clarity, alongside areas for potential improvement, particularly in information sharing and transparency, resource management and the involvement of staff and students in decision-making processes. This may suggest that UTT is not fully meeting all the requirements of the Criterion - Governance and Administration.

Stakeholders expressed a need for more transparent sharing of information, particularly regarding finances and decision-making processes. Comments also highlighted a perceived lack of involvement from various stakeholders, including students and staff, in decision-making processes. This is juxtaposed against ratings that suggest a level of satisfaction with organisational structure and clarity in decision-making responsibilities. The contrast points to a possible gap between the formal structures of governance and the practical, experiential involvement of stakeholders.

Stakeholder comments also raised concerns about employee wellbeing and compensation, including issues related to resource allocation for staff needs and recognition of their contributions. These concerns suggest that more attention may be needed to ensure that governance and administration practices effectively support staff welfare and acknowledge their role in the university's success. Both ratings and comments on resource management indicated concerns with specific issues related to funding, resource allocation, and the maintenance of facilities. Stakeholders call for more efficient management of resources and greater transparency in how resources are allocated and used.

Teaching and Learning

This category comprised 13 items evaluating faculty, staff, and students' perceptions on how effectively the university promotes excellence in teaching, scholarship, and the realisation of learning outcomes in line with its educational objectives. The analysis of quantitative data in this domain offers the following insights:

- A substantial majority of respondents (72%) express high confidence in UTT's teaching and learning practices, indicating that students are well-guided towards achieving their educational goals.
- A majority (69%) concurs that student assessment at UTT is comprehensive, ensuring a thorough evaluation of students' abilities and progress.
- Two-thirds of respondents (66%) acknowledge that UTT continuously refines its programmes based on feedback, reflecting the institution's dedication to leveraging feedback for educational enhancement.
- The findings are affirmative regarding the calibre and expertise of UTT's faculty, with a significant majority (66%) recognizing the university for having world-class academics who are leaders in their fields.
- A majority (64%) agrees that there is effective communication and understanding concerning UTT's programme learning outcomes, indicating clarity on the expected knowledge and skills of graduates.
- Most respondents (61%) believe evaluations lead to improvements in teaching quality at UTT, suggesting a positive impact of teaching assessments.
- Three in five respondents (60%) agree that students receive adequate support to achieve their learning outcomes, demonstrating UTT's commitment to student success.
- The university's research contributions are well-regarded, with 59% affirming the high quality and impact of UTT's research.
- A majority (58%) agree that excellence in teaching is acknowledged and rewarded, indicating a culture that values and promotes superior teaching.
- Confidence in the employability of UTT's graduates is evident, with 57% agreeing that graduates find employment in their fields, suggesting alignment of programmes with job market demands.
- Most respondents (54%) agree that research output is evaluated and recognised at UTT, pointing to existing acknowledgement mechanisms, albeit with potential areas for improvement.
- While a majority (53%) agree that adequate facilities and technology support learning and research, the relatively lower agreement level highlights opportunities for further enhancements.
- Less than half of the respondents (48%) feel that faculty service is encouraged and supported, marking it as the area with the lowest agreement and signalling potential improvement needs in how faculty contributions are valued.



Comments from staff and students on various items provided qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences. A synthesis of these comments highlighted several critical themes:

- **Job Prospects and Career Preparation:** Despite overall confidence in the employability of UTT's graduates, there were significant concerns about some graduates facing difficulties securing employment. It was perceived that certain programmes were more effective in preparing students for careers than others.

Recommendations were made for the university to better align its programmes with the evolving demands of the job market and enhance support for students transitioning from academia to the workforce.

- Quality and Dedication of Teaching Staff: Feedback varied widely, with some lecturers lauded for their excellence and dedication, while others were criticized for ineffectiveness. There were concerns that the university prioritises rewarding strong researchers over recognising good teaching practices in faculty evaluations.
- Course Content and Delivery: Comments highlighted issues with the practical relevance of some course content. Concerns were also raised about inconsistency and the variable quality of course delivery across different lecturers and programmes. Suggestions for improvement included revising course scheduling, delivery modes, and resource allocation.
- Research and Commercialization: The need to enhance the quality and scope of research activities was emphasised. It was noted that aligning research more closely with industry and national needs, with a greater focus on commercialization outcomes, would be beneficial.
- Student Support and Responsiveness: There were concerns that student feedback and evaluations were not always adequately addressed or acted upon. It was suggested that the university's administration should bolster communication channels and responsiveness to the student body's concerns.
- Resources and Facilities: Comments pointed to instances where facilities were outdated or where there was a lack of sufficient learning resources and equipment, adversely affecting the quality of teaching and learning experiences at UTT.

Based on the quantitative results and comments, it appears that the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) is generally meeting the requirements of the Teaching and Learning Criterion, though there are some areas needing improvement.

The quantitative results show mostly positive perceptions regarding UTT's teaching and learning practices. A significant majority of respondents expressed confidence in the effectiveness of these practices for guiding students towards achieving learning outcomes. There is also confidence in the quality of UTT's faculty, the use of evaluations to enhance teaching, the provision of necessary student support, the recognition of teaching excellence, and the employability of graduates. This aligns with key aspects of the Criterion.

However, the qualitative comments highlight some problematic areas. Concerns were raised about inconsistencies in teaching quality across programmes, outdated resources in some areas, issues with course relevance and practical components, insufficient career preparation for some programmes, and unresponsiveness to student feedback. This suggests that while UTT is doing well overall in meeting the Teaching and Learning Criterion, enhancements may be needed in curriculum design, facilities/technology, career services, and channels for addressing student issues. The results also pointed to potential areas for improvement in research quality, commercialisation, and alignment with industry/national needs.

Preparedness for Change & Commitment to Continuous Improvement

This category assessed the perspectives of faculty, staff, and students on the university's capability to analyse its internal and external environments and to involve stakeholders in planning and resource distribution. These efforts aim to establish robust systems that promote continuous enhancement and future-oriented focus. The findings reveal:

- A majority of respondents (58%) acknowledge UTT's commitment to quality enhancement, agreeing that the university maintains a robust system for continually improving the quality of its programmes and services.
- UTT's ambition for high performance and goal setting is recognised by 55% of respondents, who agree that it sets high standards and develops plans to achieve them.
- The university's performance monitoring efforts receive moderate recognition, with 47% of respondents agreeing that UTT effectively gathers and analyses performance data.
- Less than half of the respondents (44%) believe UTT actively monitors external trends to remain future-ready, indicating that the university has some mechanisms for scanning the external environment.
- Training and development opportunities for staff are modestly acknowledged, with only 42% of respondents agreeing that UTT invests in its people by offering opportunities for professional growth.
- The use of performance data for enhancing organisational effectiveness appears underutilised, with only 41% of respondents agreeing that such data inform planning and improvement activities.
- Only 39% of respondents feel that the university consistently works to modernise facilities and services, pointing to potential areas for improvement in infrastructure and technological advancement.
- Integration of planning processes and stakeholder engagement seems to be an area needing enhancement, as only 38% of respondents agree that UTT's planning is cohesive and incorporates input from stakeholders.

Preparednes for Change - Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Information about how the university is performing is used to inform planning and improvement efforts	41% Agree	13% Disagree	46% Neutral
The university has a good system to ensure that the quality of its programmes and services is always improving	58% Agree	14% Disagree	28% Neutral
The university has an integrated planning process in which key stakeholders are involved	38% Agree	14% Disagree	49% Neutral
The university invests in the improvement of its people providing opportunities for training and advancement	42% Agree	27% Disagree	31% Neutral
The university monitors changes in the external environment to ensure it's ready for the future	44% Agree	18% Disagree	38% Neutral
The university sets high standards for itself and develops plans to achieve them	55% Agree	14% Disagree	31% Neutral
This university has an effective system to collect and analyse information about how its performing	47% Agree	15% Disagree	38% Neutral
This university is always working to upgrade its facilities and services to ensure they are cutting edge	39% Agree	31% Disagree	30% Neutral

Comments from staff and students regarding items in this area also provided qualitative insights into their perceptions and experiences. The analysis of these comments revealed several key themes:

- **Lack of Awareness and Communication:** A significant number of staff and students reported being uninformed or insufficiently informed about the university's planning processes, environmental scanning, and performance evaluation. This indicates a gap between the activities of higher-level administration and the broader university community's awareness.
- **Slow Pace of Change and Improvement:** There were multiple observations that changes and responses to feedback are slow to materialize at the university, with issues often raised but not adequately addressed.
- **Limited Investment in People:** The feedback underscored a perceived deficiency in staff training and development opportunities, as well as a lack of prospects for upward mobility and promotions.

- Subpar Facilities and Technology: Many comments pointed to outdated classrooms lacking modern technology and equipment, buildings in need of repair, and insufficient study spaces. There is a consensus that maintenance and upgrades of facilities are not meeting needs adequately.
- Silos and Lack of Coordination: Comments reflected a sentiment of insufficient integration and alignment across various operational areas of UTT. This has led to isolated silos within the organizational structure, impeding integrated planning, effective implementation, and coordinated efforts for improvement.
- Biases in Resource Allocation: There were indications of perceived biases in how resources and opportunities are distributed, with some suggesting that preferential treatment and uneven access are based on personal relationships rather than merit.

The quantitative and qualitative results in this area indicate that UTT demonstrates a moderate level of preparedness for change and commitment to continuous improvement. Just over half of respondents agreed that UTT maintains quality enhancement systems, sets high standards, gathers performance data, and monitors external trends. However, significant gaps exist in awareness, communication, responsiveness, infrastructure, and planning integration.

While quality efforts and ambition are recognised by many, the pace of change and implementation of improvements is considered slow. There is a lack of investment in staff development and outdated facilities requiring technology upgrades. Planning processes appear siloed rather than collaborative, and resource allocation is perceived as biased rather than equitable and merit-based. To meet Accreditation Criteria and enhance future readiness, UTT needs to prioritise transparency, stakeholder engagement, human capital strategies, infrastructure upgrades, integrated systems, and merit-based distribution. Addressing these areas will enable UTT to better scan its environment, adapt to change, and continuously improve quality through data-driven planning and implementation.

Conclusion

The Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Survey offers valuable insights into the University of Trinidad and Tobago's strengths and areas needing improvement concerning ACTT's accreditation criteria. Quantitatively, the university performs well on Criteria related to Mission and Purpose, and Teaching and Learning, as evidenced by the predominantly agreeable ratings across associated survey items. However, Governance and Administration, Preparedness for Change, and Commitment to Continuous Improvement present opportunities for enhancement based on lower agreement levels and critical qualitative feedback on ethical leadership, decision-making transparency, resource management, infrastructure, and planning processes.

While UTT is viewed favourably for aligning programmes with societal needs and having qualified faculty guiding student outcomes, deficiencies exist in staff development, modernization efforts, stakeholder engagement, and data utilization for planning. Targeted actions around these specific areas will bolster UTT's capability for change adaptation, quality improvement, and stakeholder collaboration as it pursues reaccreditation.

Recommendations

- Launch an internal communications campaign to increase awareness of UTT's mission, strategic plan, and accreditation goals across staff and students.
- Implement an annual stakeholder consultation process to gather campus community input on decision-making, planning and resource allocation.
- Conduct periodic reviews of programme relevance and graduate career outcomes, revising curricula based on employer feedback.
- Invest in staff training, provide clarity on prospects for advancement, and acknowledge service contributions in evaluation criteria.
- Upgrade outdated infrastructure and facilities through a phased modernization programme guided by environmental scanning data.
- Break down operational silos through cross-departmental teams focused on quality enhancement initiatives tied to accreditation priorities.
- Increase transparency around resource distribution to assure fairness, along with merit-based incentives to motivate continuous improvement.