



Dr. Yvonne Marshall,
Executive Director, UCJ

From the desk of the Executive Director

“UCJ: Increasing the availability of quality tertiary level training”

As the national quality-assurance agency for tertiary education, the UCJ's mandate is to increase the availability of quality tertiary education and training in Jamaica. Through the establishment and maintenance of an external quality assurance system, the Council is responsive to national and global changes while ensuring the development of an integrated, coherent tertiary education system and the country's human resources.

The Council is the external quality assurance (EQA) body for tertiary education in Jamaica and like its counterparts in most jurisdictions around the world; the UCJ employs accreditation as the method of external quality assurance. Institutions in Jamaica are expected to submit themselves and their programmes to the UCJ for evaluation against the established standards and criteria.

The UCJ has been in existence for the past 28 years, carrying out its EQA functions. While there is yet much to be done, particularly in light of the dynamic nature of the tertiary educational environment, globally, much has been accomplished. Institutions have spoken about the positive gains from accreditation. In addition, there has been increased access to quality tertiary education in Jamaica. To date, the UCJ has registered 43 tertiary institutions, and accredited one university and 258 academic programmes of study.

Quality assurance relates to a continuous process of evaluating, assessing, monitoring, developing, maintaining and improving the quality of a tertiary education system. It focuses on both accountability and improvement, providing information and

judgement through the application of an agreed and consistent process and well-established criteria.

In the discipline of quality assurance (QA), we speak of two forms: internal and external. Internal quality assurance (IQA) speaks to the institution's responsibility for the quality of its educational provisions.

INSTITUTIONS' RESPONSIBILITY

Quality is first and foremost the responsibility of the institution. Each tertiary education institution has the responsibility to develop its own internal mechanism for the purpose of ensuring, monitoring and improving the quality of its education provision. Real and enduring quality can only come from the actions of the tertiary education institutions themselves. The basis of these actions must be honest, objective self-evaluation.

EQA speaks to the actions of a quality-assurance body, external to the institution that assesses institutional and programmatic operations in order to determine whether standards that have been agreed are being appropriately applied, attained, maintained and enhanced. The institution is expected to submit itself to the authorised EQA body in its jurisdiction for such validation.

Internationally, accreditation is the most widely used form of external quality assurance. It is a peer professional review process that is considered to be an effective means of examining the academic operations of colleges and universities, inclusive of curricula, academic standards and faculty. An important function of the EQA/accreditation body is the

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UCJ to launch “Standards for Degree in Guidance and Counselling”



The UCJ will launch its Standards for the Bachelors Degree in Guidance and Counselling during its 10th Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education Week from March 9-13, 2015.

The standards have been developed against the background that guidance and counselling plays an integral role in the educational process for students as they progress through the system.

Guidance and counselling is seen as a very important programme in schools across Jamaica. It is the process that provides students with the assistance necessary to facilitate personal, social, educational and career development.

Dr Yvonne Marshall, Executive Director, UCJ, said: “We were concerned that even though there has been a steady increase in the number and types of institutions offering guidance and counselling training programmes, there were no formal standards for the development, content, delivery and review of these programmes being offered by tertiary institutions.”

Dr Marshall added: “Schools across the island need the skills of well-equipped”
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establishment of standards and criteria to guide institutions in setting up their institutional operations and developing their programmes of study. These are the standards and criteria against which the institutions and programmes are evaluated in the accreditation process.

As a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, the UCJ operates according to clearly articulated policies and procedures that are aligned with internationally accepted and recognised standards for quality assurance.

The UCJ's operations and decisions are respected, recognised and accepted internationally. The organisation is recognised as reliable and valued, and able to provide credible information on the quality of tertiary education offerings to all stakeholders.

The process and practices of accreditation employed by the UCJ are equivalent to those employed by its counterparts across the world. The underlying principles are the same. In most jurisdictions, the process is voluntary. The UCJ has focused primarily on programme accreditation. However, standards are in place for the accreditation of institutions.

BASED ON EVIDENCE

A programme cannot be evaluated for accreditation until it has completed a full cycle and produced the first set of graduates. Accreditation is based on evidence, not on plans or intentions. The programme must, therefore, be evaluated in its entirety, from the development of the curriculum, through the delivery process to the production of a set of graduates. The process involves the interviewing of all stakeholders, including employers of graduates. The institution is responsible for submitting the programme for accreditation when the first set of graduates is ready; and the accreditation will include those graduates.

Here at the UCJ, we are committed to increasing the availability of tertiary level training in Jamaica through a robust quality assurance system that ensures excellence, transparency, integrity and adherence to standards.

Self-Study and Programme Readiness Assessment Policy Workshop

Representatives from 39 registered public and private institutions attended the UCJ's Self-Study and Programme Readiness Assessment Policy workshop on September 30, 2014, at the Mona Visitors' Lodge, University of the West Indies.

Mrs Audrey Anderson, Acting Chair; Professor Ronald Young; Dr Carol Gentles (UCJ Council members), and 10 UCJ staff also attended the workshop.

Mrs Anderson welcomed the delegates and emphasized the Council's commitment to doing all that is required to ensure that students are provided with a quality tertiary education product.

"What we are involved in today will serve to enhance our institutions and aid us on that pathway towards excellence," she said.

The aims of the Self-Study workshop were to give institutions a deeper understanding of the concept of Self-Study and its importance to both internal and external quality assurance processes. The workshop provided participants with the tools to apply the guidelines and principles of the Self-Study process to self-assessment and evaluation of their institutions when completing their final report for submission to the UCJ.

Participants were informed about the purpose and value of the Programme Readiness Policy and were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the way in which it will be implemented.



Participants at the Self-Study and Programme Readiness Assessment Policy Workshop

CANQATE CONFERENCE 2014

Over 100 delegates from across the Caribbean gathered to share ideas and experiences at the 11th Annual CANQATE Conference under the theme "Quality Assurance as a Regional Priority – Partnering to Improve Educational Outcomes in the Caribbean" held in Belize City, Belize from 12-14 November, 2014.

The conference was hosted jointly by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the Association of Tertiary Level Institutions in Belize (ATLIB). Dr Yvonne Marshall, Executive Director, UCJ and Dr Angela Penny,

Director, Boards of Studies, represented the Council.

The theme of the conference was informed by the findings of the UNESCO funded Scoping Study on Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education and CANQATE's priority to harmonize standards and processes, and promote quality improvements in the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Greetings were received from Dr Carol Bobby,

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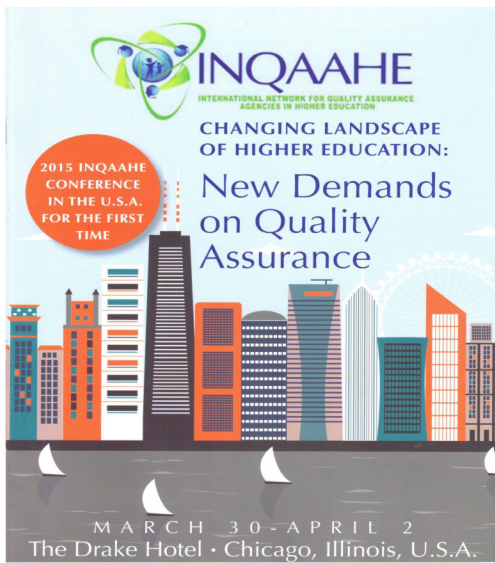
President of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, and the CARICOM Secretariat. The Hon. Patrick Faber, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, Belize, delivered the keynote address.

95 Delegates attended workshops under the themes “Developing and Assessing Learning Outcomes” and “Harmonising External Quality Assurance Standards and Processes across the Region.”

16 research papers were presented at the conference, which featured five plenary sessions and a panel discussion. Dr Marshall presented a report on the quality assurance activities of the UCJ during the period 2013-14 at the panel discussion.



Heads of External Quality Assurance Agencies and Board Members of CANQATE with the Minister of Education, Youth & Sports of Belize, Hon. Patrick Faber



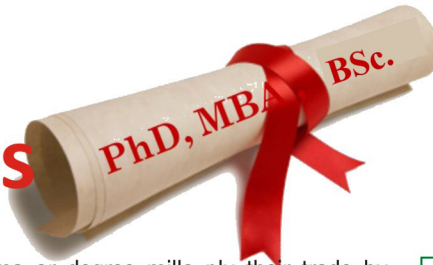

CANQATE.
Caribbean Area Network for
Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education

UPCOMING WEBINARS

24TH MARCH 2015
28TH APRIL 2015
26TH MAY 2015

www.canqate.org

BEWARE – Diploma Mills



CREDENTIALS FOR SALE!

The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) is warning prospective students to take special precautions when applying to study for diplomas or degrees from institutions that are not recognised or that make claims of accreditation from questionable accrediting organizations.

Dr Yvonne Marshall, Executive Director, UCJ, warned: “There are some certificates, diplomas and degrees that the UCJ would consider to be of questionable quality, that are produced by a ‘diploma or degree mill’ which certainly do not meet the standards required for such qualifications.”

Diploma or degree mills ply their trade by enticing persons to pay relatively low fees for what would be costly programmes of study without students attending classes or submitting any course work.

Dr Marshall stressed the importance of contacting the UCJ if in doubt: “If there are concerns about the legitimacy of an institution and the qualifications they offer it is better to check with the UCJ in the first instance in order to avoid the pitfall of paying for a bogus qualification.”

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guidance counsellors to fulfil their obligations to students, staff, and families in the school community.”

The standards seek to ensure uniformity in the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver better services. They will enrich the content and practice of the current guidance and counselling programmes and ensure that students benefit from their contact with practitioners.

QA Week 2014 in Pictures



Members of the audience at the UCJ's Awards Ceremony.



Representatives of public and private tertiary institutions receive Certificates of Recognition and Accreditation at the UCJ's Awards Ceremony.



Prof. Asha Kanwar, President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, delivering the 5th Dennis Irvine Lecture.



Members of the audience at the 5th Dennis Irvine Lecture.



Presenters at the UCJ's Students' Forum held at the Catholic College of Mandeville.



Members of the audience at the UCJ's Students' Forum held at the Catholic College of Mandeville.



THE
UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
OF JAMAICA

"Assuring Quality in Tertiary Education"

**10TH ANNUAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TERTIARY
EDUCATION WEEK**

MARCH 8-13, 2015

**THEME: The Changing Landscape of Tertiary Education: Challenges for
Quality Assurance**