

**Address delivered by Ms. Yvonne Walkes, Chairman,
Barbados Accreditation Council at the Opening of the Workshop on “Evaluator/Peer Review
Training” held at the Grand Barbados Beach Resort, Bay Street, St. Michael on Wednesday, 26th
May at 8.30a.m.**

Members of the Board of Directors of the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC), members of the Accreditation and Programme Approval Committee of the BAC, Dr. Ruby Alleyne and Mr. Jason Stafford, facilitators for this workshop, BAC Staff Members, Participants, the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen: Good Morning.

It gives me great pleasure to address yet another developmental workshop hosted by the Barbados Accreditation Council. It was just in March that a workshop was held with the primary objective of assisting tertiary educational providers with establishing quality indicators within their institutions in order to meet programme and institutional accreditation.

This workshop marks another milestone for the Council as it pursues its mandate of assuring the quality of tertiary educational provision in Barbados. With the implementation of the accreditation programme last year, the next step taken by the Council was to request the services of competent individuals to provide objective evaluation and make recommendations on the quality of post-secondary/tertiary education and training institutions and programmes of study in Barbados. The general requirements included the following:

- a. Attending the required preparation programme(s) hosted by the Council;
- b. Completing, signing and returning the **“Declaration of Interest”** and the **“Confidentiality Agreement”**;
- c. Being credible, diligent and committed to the improvement of quality;
- d. Adhering to the Council’s Evaluator policies and procedures;
- e. Working as a member of a team, acting collectively, acting with authority and expressing views politely but independently; and
- f. Being an effective listener and communicator.

There was a very good response individuals, locally and overseas, who wanted to offer their skills and knowledge to quality assuring tertiary education and training in Barbados. The Council has since selected twenty (20) persons who will assess tertiary educational provision against the Council’s programme approval criteria and institutional and programme accreditation standards. It is anticipated that the pool of evaluators will be increased as the need arises.

Worldwide, external evaluation, external or peer review as the process is also referred to, is seen as a critical component of robust quality assurance frameworks. The use of external expertise in the quality assurance process not only signals to tertiary educational providers that the quality assurance agency is taking an independent route for the assessment of the institution or programme of study but also that there is professional judgement through national, regional and international subject matter experts or professionals.

Barbados must be no exception if tertiary educational provision is to be highly regarded internationally. The recognition of a quality tertiary education in Barbados will signal the availability of high quality human capital to the global labour market which can only redound to the benefit of citizens of Barbados and the country as a whole.

Given the Council's focus on quality assurance and enhancement of the tertiary sector, YOU, the external reviewers will be expected to evaluate the institution and/programme of study based on the self evaluation report (which is an assessment of an institution or programme of study against the criteria established by the Council) and; the site visit which is conducted to confirm the evidence submitted in the report.

The credibility of the Barbados Accreditation Council locally and internationally, will rely heavily on the skills and knowledge which the external evaluators/peer reviewers must possess as they will interact with various stakeholders of the institution, hold discussions, request various documents and make judgements based on the visit. As such, amongst other competencies, evaluators must be knowledgeable of quality assurance and accreditation systems and practices in tertiary education and training sector globally; have relevant experience in tertiary education and training; possess excellent interpersonal relations abilities as they must be able to communicate effectively; be open-minded in making decisions; must be able to work in small teams, work in tight time schedules and write effective reports for sound decision-making by the quality assurance agency.

The expectations of the Council must therefore be made clear to YOU, the evaluators. A few weeks ago, the Council met with the selected evaluators as the first step in the orientation process to discuss the role and responsibilities of the Council, their roles and responsibilities as evaluators and the developmental and support which will be provided by the Council to ensure that evaluators are able to undertake their tasks effectively.

Today, this training workshop is a further step for YOU, the evaluators. It is anticipated that amongst other outcomes that YOU will be able to:

- a. apply the Council's standards/criteria to different institutional types;
- b. equipped with the skills and techniques required of team chairs and members during all stages of the evaluation process including techniques for effective documentary review;

- c. devise strategies for effective and insightful interviews;
- d. know the importance of confidentiality, objectivity and keen observation;
- e. exercise reason and judgment to arrive at conclusions;
- f. manage and participate in team meetings;
- g. conduct efficient and successful site visits; and
- h. write effective evaluation reports.

Apart from the presentations which will cover the core skills mentioned earlier, I have been informed that the workshop will provide practical exposure through a mock site visit where participants will have the opportunity to not only make preparations for the site visit but also to undertake the visit and write report.

It certainly looks like an exciting and interactive workshop over the next three days. Both Dr. Ruby Alleyne and Mr. Jason Stafford, the facilitators bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the training from a quality assurance agency and institutional perspective. They also worked closely with the Council through their former affiliation with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) and therefore have a great understanding of the Council's strategic directions and activities. On behalf of the Council, I wish to thank Dr. Alleyne and Mr. Stafford for readily offering their skills and knowledge to enhance the tertiary educational sector in Barbados.

Before I close, I also wish to thank the members of the Accreditation and Programme Approval Committee for consenting to attend the workshop, as your time permits. Amongst other responsibilities, the members of the APAC will be expected to review the report including the recommendations of the evaluators and exposure to this training will allow the members to have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the external evaluators.

Thanks also to the evaluators for taking the time to attend this important workshop, notwithstanding your other commitments.

Finally, the Council will review the feedback from the training workshop to ascertain whether the needs have been met and to determine the next steps.

We look forward to a mutually rewarding, cordial and productive relationship with our external evaluators.

THANK YOU!