# INQAAHE CONFERENCE 2011

*Sub-Theme Number 3*

**Effective QA Processes for Diversity, Development and Sustainability**

*Title*

**Quality Assurance in a Regional University:**

**Follow-Up, Feedback and Development**

**The Case of The University of the West Indies**

*Authors*

**Sandra Gift,** *BA (Hons); Dip. Development Studies; MPhil, Ed; PhD, Ed.*

**Jacqueline Moniquette,** *BA, MA*

**Email:** **sandra.gift@sta.uwi.edu;**
**jacqueline.moniquette@cavehill.uwi.edu**

# Introduction

**The University of the West Indies**

- Regional

- Challenge of resources,vulnerability

- Campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Open Campus

- Quality Assurance Unit: decentralized cross-campus entity

- Supports the development and sustainability of quality assurance processes

- Facilitator of common standards while safeguarding diversity and regionality

# Facilitating Development and Regionality

**The Review Process as Change Agent**

- All academic programmes/disciplines have been reviewed at least once.

- Curriculum reform a specific outcome of reviews

- Outcomes of curriculum reform include:

  - Reinstitution of cross faculty meetings

  - Harmonisation of programmes to reflect regional and global imperatives

  - Maintenance of regional standard across campuses

# Facilitating Development and Regionality (cont'd)

Staff and Student Engagement:

- Academic staff the main drivers of curriculum renewal

- Students surveyed and interviewed as part of the review process

- Students benefit from curriculum renewal

- Knowledge about the review process among students not widespread

- More needs to be done to further embed a quality culture throughout the institution

# The UWI System of Programme Review

- Review Team: senior academic from another UWI campus

- Layering knowledge and understanding of quality assurance processes and procedures

- Tangible evidence of the nature of the institutional impact of programme review

- Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC)

  - Indicative of on-going measures to ensure effectiveness and sustainability of UWI quality assurance process

  - Responsive to specific campus priorities

**Post-Review Follow-up Reflects**

- Change in institutional behaviour and organisation

- Increasing formalisation of UWI quality assurance processes

- Concern to promote increased collaboration

- Effectiveness of quality assurance processes

- **Outcomes**: improvement in the teaching and learning environment; evidence of the effectiveness of programme review

- Across all campuses the issue of **resources** is being addressed

# Feedback From Internal Stakeholders About Programme Review

**Findings of a 2007 survey**

- Response rates not always as high as desired

- Might be indicative of some degree of passivity or resistance

# Usefulness of Programme Reviews

- Large majority of respondents thought   the purpose of programme review was being fulfilled.

  - "A meaningful exercise without which faculty would not undertake a full evaluation of their programmes."

  - "…extremely necessary and extremely beneficial…"

  - "The exercise is a good one, even if it is to provide a "mirror" for critically viewing the department's work".

  - "Exercise well worth the effort"

  - "…very important…"

# Benefits and Positive Outcomes of Programme Review

- "Road Map" for strategy implementation

- Encouragement of personal review of pedagogical approaches

- Improvement of service delivery and exchange of ideas with academics from diverse environments

- Recognition of the importance of fieldwork/new technology

- Curriculum review/critical examination of curriculum

- Staff motivated to keep good records and adhere to best practices

- Justification for needed resources

- Increased staffing

- Opportunity for introspection, recognition of constraints and achievements, and objective assessment

# Least Helpful Outcomes

- Lack of infrastructural and administrative support for the implementation of recommendations

- No funding provided to implement recommendations

- Difficulty accessing data to better understand trends

- Lack of follow-up of recommendations of review teams

# Recommendations for Improving Programme Reviews

- Better access to statistics

- Greater student participation

- Better communication with the QAU

-  Research Assistant to assist with data collection

- Increased time for feedback at  Exit Meeting

- More thorough briefing of assessors about The UWI system to prevent erroneous statements

- Improved post-review follow-up

# Recommendations for Improving Programme Reviews (cont'd)

- Inclusion of the Bursary in the review process

- Require reviewers to read more about  rules and faculty regulations

- Perception of the impact of the quality assurance review process would be enhanced by attention to greater dissemination of information about tangible outcomes of  programme review.

# The Self-Study Exercise of the QAU in 2010

*Mission, Objectives, Governance and Management*

- The Unit is well integrated into the fabric of UWI and the scope and impact of its work expanding
- The self study provides an opportunity to:
  - Recraft  mission and objectives
  - Develop an operational plan to reflect current context and realities
  - Explore greater use of technology as a tool for more effective governance and management

# The Self-Study Exercise of the QAU in 2010 (cont'd)

***Delivery and Management of Activities***

- Ensure greater objectivity and transparency of the review process by:

  - More careful scrutiny of team leaders

  - Establishing a database of reviewers from which to select team members

- Increase student involvement by:

  - Requiring students to prepare their own reports

  - Conducting independently facilitated focus groups

  - Providing students with feedback on review findings

**Delivery and Management of Activities** *(cont'd)*

- Encourage wider ownership of the self-assessment process

- Reconceptualise the QA system to encompass all administrative and managerial operations

- Introduce elements of peer review and benchmarking in quality evaluations

- Engage in more systematic research of its effectiveness by:

  - Soliciting feedback on completion of the review exercise

  - Devising strategies to elicit higher levels of staff response to surveys

  - Ensuring concerted and timely action on survey findings

  - Communicating with stakeholders on action taken

**Delivery and Management of Activities** *(cont'd)*

- Establish international collaborative links as opportunities for:

  - Benchmarking

  - Sharing good practice

  - Staff exchanges

  - Capacity building

- Increase awareness of role and function of QAU

# Conclusion

- Despite financial challenges, an adequately resourced teaching and learning environment remains a priority for UWI.

- The system of academic quality assurance is integral to this process.

- The review process is seen by staff to be valuable.

- The post review phase needs strengthening.

- The QAU's self study identifies:

  - Its importance in helping to preserve the regionality of UWI and therefore its diversity

  - Clear guideposts for its development and the sustainability of the QA process