ACHIEVEMENTS OF CXC IN THE PAST TEN YEARS THROUGH REGIONAL COOPERATION IN EDUCATION

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) was established 35 years ago by Agreement among English-speaking Caribbean Territories. The first examinations were administered in 1979. Since then the Council has expanded its operations and modified its core products in order to respond to the changing needs of the region. The Council is able to develop and implement programmes to meet current and anticipated needs mainly because of the extensive consultative mechanisms established for functional cooperation over the years among the 16 CXC Participating Territories. Frequent interactions with policy-makers, educators, employers, parents and students provide opportunities for ensuring that the curricula and examinations reflect societal goals. This has become even more critical in the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). With the CSME, the Council’s role is crucial in providing credentials and setting standards that can be used as a basis for the freer movement of people across the region.

This paper provides information about CXC and summarizes the major achievements of CXC over the past ten years in its various programmes, all of which have been developed and implemented through established mechanisms for functional cooperation.

Dr. Lucy Steward
Registrar

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide the region with:

* Syllabuses of the highest quality; valid and reliable examinations and certificates of international repute for students of all ages, abilities and interests;

* Services to educational institutions in the development of syllabuses, examinations and examination administration, in the most cost-effective way.
ABOUT CXC

The Caribbean Examinations Council was established in 1972 and the Inaugural Meeting of the Council took place in Barbados in 1973. The Council was established

“to conduct such examinations as it may think appropriate and award certificates and diplomas on the results of examinations so conducted.”

In addition to this mandate, the role of CXC in the region was elaborated by former CXC Chairman, Professor the Honourable Kenneth Hall, ON,OJ on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of CXC.

The Chairman noted that CXC

“*provides the human resource for Caribbean development;*
*trains the leaders in the region; and*
*provides the intellectual and ideological apparatus and mechanism for our identity as Caribbean people.”

The Participating Territories of the Council are listed below.

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The composition of the Council is as follows:

- The Vice Chancellor and three representatives appointed by the Vice Chancellor from the University of the West Indies;
- The Vice Chancellor and one representative appointed by the Vice Chancellor from the University of Guyana;
- Two government representatives appointed by each of the Participating Governments of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago and one representative appointed by each of the other Participating Governments;
- One representative of the teaching profession appointed by each National Committee from among its members.
This need for congruence with national activities is essential as territories seek to expand access to secondary and tertiary education and to develop and enhance capacity for curriculum development, measurement and evaluation and examination administration. With these developments, the role of CXC is also changing, since, in addition to providing syllabuses, examinations and related products, its functions in providing technical assistance and quality assurance are increasing. The award of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), detailed later, is an example of the Council’s work in quality assurance.

In addition to the meetings of Council, SEC and the various Committees, other opportunities for functional cooperation are provided through meetings of subject panels, review committees, focus groups and examining committees.

The procedures for the development and review of syllabuses illustrate a well-established consultative mechanism for functional cooperation. A subject panel is established for the development of each syllabus. The panel usually comprises practising teachers from secondary schools and resource persons from tertiary institutions and industry. The membership is drawn from Participating Territories across the region. The subject panel develops a draft syllabus which is then sent to subject specialists, teachers and teacher educators for comment. The panel reviews the comments, makes necessary modifications and submits a final draft to SUBSEC for approval.

After the first examinations, the syllabus may be reviewed based on the feedback from the examining committee. Teachers are also encouraged to provide feedback on the syllabuses and on the examinations after each administration. If the feedback indicates the need for a relatively
minor change, this is made through an amendment to the syllabus. If there are requests for substantial changes a review committee is convened to consider these requests. This committee is usually wider than the subject panel and also comprises resource persons, subject specialists and teachers. The report from the review committee is then used by the subject panel to make the necessary revisions.

The structures that are in place for continuing dialogue with resource persons and practising teachers enable CXC to provide well-constructed syllabuses with relevant content that is appropriate for the target groups. For each subject, there is also an Examining Committee comprising a Chief and Assistant Chief Examiner. The Committee, with technical assistance from staff in the CXC Measurement and Evaluation Division, prepares the examinations. Experienced question writers are contracted to write questions with defined specifications, and the Examining Committee uses these questions, combined with their inputs, to produce question papers, answer keys and detailed mark schemes.

A moderator who is a subject specialist and not involved in question-writing or paper-setting activities, comments independently on the examination papers and mark schemes prepared by the Committee.

Another opportunity for functional cooperation is through the marking of scripts after the January and the May/June administration of examinations. The script-marking exercise takes place in four territories – Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Approximately 3 500 teachers participate in script-marking. Through this exercise, teachers learn about the policies and programmes of CXC, the construction of questions and mark schemes and the strengths and weaknesses in performance of candidates in the various subjects. The exercise, therefore, also serves as training for teachers in a critical area of educational assessment, namely, techniques and procedures for scoring a variety of question types with reliability and objectivity. At the grading exercise, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprising senior educators and measurement and evaluation personnel, carry out quality assurance checks. They ask questions of the examining committees to ensure that standards set through criterion-referenced procedures were consistent and that validity and integrity were maintained in all aspects of the examination process.

The involvement of approximately 245 people in subject panels and 145 in examination committees as well as the many teachers and resource persons who participate in CXC activities, has contributed significantly to functional cooperation in education across the region. This cooperation has realized harmonization of school curricula; networking of teachers to share ideas and resources; and, the development of teaching and learning resources. Through these activities CXC has contributed significantly to capacity building for curriculum development and measurement and evaluation in Participating Territories, while CXC has benefited immensely from the expertise and experience of this regional network of stakeholders.

In addition, CXC conducts orientation and item-writing workshops for teachers. Through the orientation exercises teachers are informed about the rationale, structure, content and assessment requirements for a given syllabus. They also gain experience on how to structure a syllabus, prepare specific objectives and assess students. In the item-writing workshops, teachers are
trained to prepare test items. The training of the teachers in these workshops contributes to regional capacity building for syllabus development and measurement and evaluation in Participating Territories.

From the very beginning, CXC has been bringing resource persons, subject specialists and teachers together for syllabus and examination activities. As CXC has grown, the network has expanded considerably and functional cooperation has been strengthened through the increase in the number of persons involved at various levels in the development of policies and programmes of the Council. The delivery, expansion and modifications of the Council’s programmes were effected mainly through the extensive consultative processes for regional cooperation in education. Some of the achievements realized over the past ten years are summarized below.

**CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE**

**New subjects**

The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) was first offered in five subjects in 1979. Currently CXC offers 33 subjects: 26 at General Proficiency only; three at Basic Proficiency and General Proficiency; three at Technical Proficiency only and one at Technical and General Proficiencies.

Over the past ten years several changes have taken place in this programme. The changes resulted from consultations with policy-makers and educators, and provide for further human resource development. New subjects were introduced – Physical Education and Sport, Music, Theatre Arts, Human and Social Biology and Economics. The introduction of Music, Physical Education and Sport, and Theatre Arts provides opportunity for more students to participate in these areas and to obtain certification that will enable them to continue their education in these diversified areas. Human and Social Biology and Economics at this level also provide students with a foundation for further study, with Human and Social Biology, in particular, attracting significant numbers seeking further training in the health sciences. Core products were also modified in response to changing needs. For example, the Office Procedures syllabus was modified and renamed Office Administration to reflect changes in the practices that people with this certificate would be expected to carry out in a modernized office. School-based assessment in all subjects is kept under continuous review and changes have been made to streamline activities in several subjects.

The Council also introduced the award of a Certificate in Business Studies. The Certificate provides greater focus on achievements of persons in a cluster of subjects appropriate as a foundation for further studies and for entry in the labour market. The organization of a set of relevant subjects under a Certificate of Business Studies, allows employers to be better informed about the appropriate skills, competencies and attitudes which are most useful in an office or business environment.
CSEC Basic Proficiency

In responding to changing educational needs in the region, the Council also agreed to discontinue the Basic Proficiency examinations for CSEC. The Basic Proficiency examinations were offered together with the General Proficiency in the majority of subjects. The intention was for students to take a mix of subjects at both Proficiencies for a more broad-based education at the secondary level. However, the Basic offering had little currency and was largely ignored in the education system by teachers and students.

The Basic Proficiency was not considered appropriate for further study or for employment. The value placed on the Basic had little to do with content but was affected more by the competition with the General Proficiency which was regarded as the higher level qualification.

CXC past Chairmen, Sir Roy Augier and the late Dr Dennis Irvine (1998), commented on the conceptualization of the Basic Proficiency Scheme and noted that:

“Attractive as the solution seemed when designed, and there remain cogent arguments in its favour, the Basic Proficiency was never a complete success. By failing to provide an avenue to employment which has less to do with the quality of the examination then with the prevailing economic conditions, the Basic Proficiency failed to meet the test of parity of esteem.” (p. 153)

Most of the subjects at Basic Proficiency have already been discontinued. Social Studies and English will be offered for the last time in 2008. Mathematics will be discontinued after 2009.

Top Awards in CSEC

The Council has been making awards to top students in the CSEC since 1988.

In 1999, after the awards ceremony held in Jamaica, the then Pro-Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus, Professor Kenneth Hall, ON, OJ,
initiated discussions for the award of a scholarship by the University to the top CSEC students. This initiative makes it possible for some of the brightest and best students to pursue their studies at UWI.

The first scholarship awards were made in 2001. The top students can take up the scholarship at any campus of the UWI. The scholarship is for full tuition if the student takes up the award based on CSEC results. If the student satisfies the normal matriculation requirements, the scholarship is for full tuition, maintenance and other associated costs. The student can take up to three years to obtain advanced qualifications for normal matriculation.

This arrangement between CXC and the UWI for the UWI scholarship awards demonstrates the continued cooperation between these two regional organizations. The Council also benefits from the UWI through participation of faculty who serve as members of subject panels, examining committees and moderators, and provides valuable experience for faculty members to enhance their skills in syllabus development and educational assessment.

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Perhaps, the most significant achievement over the past ten years has been the implementation of the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). After a relatively slow start in 1998 when five Units were examined, in 2007 the Council examined 44 Units in 25 subjects: 21 489 candidates registered for the examination and 81 852 Unit entries were received.

CAPE was developed in response to a mandate from the CARICOM Ministers responsible for education. The policy makers requested a regional examination that would be at least equivalent in standard to ‘A’ level but differing from ‘A’ level in its philosophical assumptions and, consequently, in its structure.
CAPE was designed on the assumption that a coherent programme of study must not only address a specific knowledge base, but must also include the development of related skills and attitudes if it is to prepare individuals adequately for life in regional and international communities, for work, and for higher education. CAPE reflects regional consensus that a post-CSEC programme must contribute to the development of autonomous human beings, capable of rational and ethical decision making, and demonstrating respect for themselves and others, as individuals and as members of a wider community.

The CAPE syllabuses are structured as Units. Most of the subjects are two-Unit courses. A student can choose to do single Units from a wider variety of subjects for a multi-disciplinary programme or can opt for depth by doing a smaller number of two-Unit subjects.

CAPE facilitates the cultivation, in each student, of a range of attitudes and skills essential for selectively accessing and analyzing knowledge in an age of rapidly expanding information. CAPE is intended to empower each student to use acquired knowledge to arrive at effective responses to the challenges of individual and social development.

The slow start of CAPE was due to several factors. At the same time that educators were developing CAPE, the Community Colleges were developing (and some had already developed) Associate Degree programmes. Also, for some tertiary institutions, students were able to matriculate and obtain exemptions if they had an Associate Degree from the colleges in specific areas. Students now had more options for post-secondary programmes. The Associate Degree award, familiar to North American institutions, gained popularity in the region with the increased access to these institutions which have been intensifying marketing and promotion of their programmes in the territories.

For some students, neither CAPE nor the Associate Degree was necessary since many tertiary institutions accept students with CSEC qualifications for specific programmes of study.

Given the diverse and competitive environment in which CAPE was introduced, the Council invested significant resources in promoting and explaining the rationale, structure and benefits of CAPE. Meetings were held with policy-makers, principals, teachers, parents, students and employers.

Initial resistance to the introduction of CAPE also came mainly from people who were comfortable with the ‘A’ level examinations which were well established. These examinations were high stakes and national scholarships were offered based on the performance of students in these examinations. Many teachers needed to feel comfortable with the change to CAPE with its Unit structure that allowed for flexibility and an internal assessment – two significant changes from ‘A’ level.
With respect to the award of national scholarships, great care was taken by the Council to explain the syllabuses and to assure educators that high standards would be maintained and that assistance would be provided to facilitate the selection of scholars using criteria established at national level and through valid and transparent processes.

Since a major change for the teachers and students was the introduction of Internal Assessment, the Council monitored closely its implementation. In the many orientation workshops for teachers, comments were received on Internal Assessment. These comments were used in a special meeting with CAPE teachers which was held to review Internal Assessment. As a result, several modifications were made to remove over-testing while maintaining the integrity of the assessment. For example, initially, science students were required to do practical activities as well as a project. After review the project was removed. Also, in some subjects in which the skills tested in one Unit were also tested in the second Unit, the student was required to do the Internal Assessment only in the first Unit taken. These changes reflect the responsiveness of the Council and the effectiveness of mechanisms established to provide inputs to regional programmes.

Another major concern of educators in the implementation of CAPE had to do with the acceptance of the CXC certification especially by institutions in the United Kingdom (UK). A more general concern was the articulation of the CAPE syllabuses with programmes at tertiary institutions. In developing CAPE, the Council deliberately included in the subject panels, faculty from regional tertiary institutions to contribute to syllabus development in order to ensure that the content of the syllabuses would allow for a smooth transition from CAPE to other post-secondary programmes. With assistance from the UWI faculty involved in the development of CAPE, subjects for CAPE and first-year courses with similar content were identified and in some cases students are awarded exemptions in the areas of overlap. A similar provision is made by the University of Guyana.

Because many of the tertiary institutions were used to the ‘A’ level certification, the Council ensured that the core content required for an ‘A’ level subject was included in a two-Unit course. This allowed for the equivalence of CAPE Units with ‘A’ level.

The syllabuses were also evaluated by the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) in 1999. NARIC commended CAPE as a higher education entry qualification to UK higher education institutions and agreed to ensure that CAPE was well understood so that students with CAPE qualifications would maximize their personal benefits from UK higher education institutions.

This was a significant though not unexpected evaluation, since the robust syllabus development and paper-setting procedures were well understood by such international bodies. It was an important endorsement, however, in this early stage of the implementation of CAPE since teachers, parents and students wanted assurance that students would be eligible for admission to UK institutions.
Confidence in the portability of the certification has increased over the years as more students with CAPE certification have gained entry to international institutions and obtained credits for some of the subjects taken.

In the case of Canada and the United States, institutions in these countries are provided with information about CAPE through college fairs and through responses to requests from the colleges and universities as students present CAPE qualifications for matriculation and exemptions with credit. Even though CAPE received regional and international recognition, the Council had to work assiduously to persuade education officials, teachers and parents of the value of CAPE and the gains that can be realized by changing to a regional examination.

To facilitate the implementation of CAPE, CXC staff and resource persons conducted workshops across the region. By bringing the teachers together, CXC staff learnt about concerns related to specific elements of syllabuses; teachers shared views among themselves on how to address the concerns and identified any modifications that might be necessary. The opportunity to provide input to the development and strengthening of CXC’s programmes results in ownership by educators, and CXC ensures that this happens through well-structured mechanisms recognizing that buy-in by teachers and other educators is absolutely necessary for effective implementation of programmes.

In order to further assist students in gaining maximum benefits from tertiary institutions, the Council consulted with policy makers and educators on the feasibility of the award of an Associate Degree based on a cluster of CAPE subjects.

THE CXC ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMME

The Council, at its meeting in Antigua and Barbuda in December 2004, agreed to award Associate Degrees based on clusters of subjects taken for CAPE.

In taking this decision, the Council noted the overlap between CAPE and courses offered at tertiary institutions. Consultations were held with policy makers and educators to identify clusters of subjects that would provide coherent programmes of study for the award of an Associate Degree. The Associate Degree is awarded in nine areas –

- Business Studies
- General Studies
- Modern Languages
- Computer Science
- Humanities
- Natural Sciences
- Environmental Science
- Mathematics
- Technical Studies

**Overall Objectives of the CXC Associate Degree Programme**

- To offer a qualification based on successful completion of a coherent programme of post-secondary education that allows for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the workplace, for continuing tertiary level education, and for effective local, regional and global citizenship.
- To provide articulation with other degree and tertiary level programmes.
- To enable persons to obtain Associate Degrees through flexible arrangements.
- To indicate areas of focus for persons continuing education at the post-Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) level.
Two subjects – Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies - are compulsory for each Associate Degree. Educators agreed that students doing post-secondary programmes would benefit from these two subjects as foundation courses. Caribbean Studies is an inter-disciplinary subject which provides students with the opportunity to study issues relevant to the distinctive physical, political and socio-economic challenges facing the small states of the region.

**Caribbean Studies**

Students who successfully complete a course in Caribbean Studies will have developed an appreciation of the challenge and potential of being Caribbean citizens. They will understand their own roles and responsibilities in preserving and contributing to their Caribbean heritage. They will also have acquired skills of enquiry that will enable them to succeed in their academic careers and the world of work, and that will foster the development of their Caribbean identity.

Caribbean Studies Syllabus, 2003

The Communication Studies syllabus focuses specifically on the development of advanced competencies in Standard English and at the same time, attempts to develop an appreciation of the linguistic diversity of the Caribbean and the implications of this diversity for social, cultural and economic transactions.

In implementing the Associate Degree programme, the Council has continued its dialogue with the tertiary institutions, emphasizing that the CXC programme is intended to complement and not compete with other Associate Degree programmes offered in the region. The dialogue has also focused on options available to customise post-secondary education using a mix of college courses and CAPE Units (taken separately or in clusters for the Associate Degree).
Given the need expressed by CARICOM Heads of Government in 1997 to expand access to post-secondary education, the Council is contributing to national and regional efforts through the introduction of the Associate Degree. Students who take CAPE get a certificate for the Units taken; if they take a qualifying cluster of seven Units and obtain Grades I to V they are awarded the Associate Degree. This means that CAPE students are able to use the certificates and/or the Associate Degree to their advantage in various situations.

In 2006, 2 530 candidates were eligible for the award of the CXC Associate Degree.

**Top Awards in CAPE**

Awards for top students in CAPE were made for the first time in 2006. The awards made were in the areas of –

- Most outstanding performance overall
- Most outstanding performance in –

- Business Studies
- Computer Science
- Environmental Science
- Humanities
- Mathematics
- Modern Languages
- Natural Science
- Technical Studies.
At its meeting in Jamaica in 2005, Council agreed that the top overall student in CAPE would receive the Dennis Irvine award in honour of Dr Irvine, a past Chairman of CXC. After the CSEC examinations were well established, Dr Irvine worked with Council to conceptualize CAPE. Dr Irvine passed away in November 2005. Mr Jansen Seheult of Naparima College, Trinidad and Tobago, was the first recipient of the Dennis Irvine award.

The Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence

Over the past ten years, the Council conducted studies and consultations in order to define a programme that would be appropriate for secondary school students with a wider range of abilities than those targeted by the CSEC and CAPE programmes. The need for such a programme became even more critical with the implementation of universal secondary education in Participating Territories, and the need to recognize and certify the competencies of all students.

Policy-makers and educators were concerned that not all students at the end of the secondary cycle took the CSEC examinations. Further, of those who sat the examinations, a significant number did not attain satisfactory grades in five or more subjects. Policy-makers and educators agreed that a new programme and examination were necessary. This new programme would incorporate the knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes and values that all secondary school students should have. By targeting all students, the new programme developed by CXC, the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC), provides opportunity for the acquisition of life skills and competencies required for entry-level employment. The programme responds to concerns expressed by employers that young people entering the workplace often do not demonstrate desirable attitudes and values. The CCSLC addresses these concerns by incorporating in the syllabuses these desirable skills and attitudes for systematic instruction.
Dr Lucy Steward, Registrar CXC, distributes brochures on the CCSLC

The Council developed six subjects specifically for this programme: English and Mathematics, which are compulsory, and Integrated Science, Social Studies, French and Spanish. The certificate is awarded on successful completion of five subjects – English, Mathematics and three other subjects taken from the group mentioned above, or from the CSEC Business and Technical offerings, Creative and Expressive Arts and other Technical and Vocational subjects.

The flexibility of the programme and the emphasis on life skills would enable all students to participate meaningfully in a wide range of offerings at the secondary level and would also serve as a foundation for continuing education and as an entry-level qualification for the work place.

Competencies

Achievement of the CCSLC will attest that the candidate has acquired competencies such as:

- Oral and written communication
- Mathematical literacy
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Informed decision-making
- Management of emotions
- Working in groups
- Dealing with diversity and change
- Handling conflict
- Development of positive self-concept
- Social and citizenship skills
For the first examination for the CCSLC in June 2007, 2,612 candidates registered and 6,633 subject entries were received.

As with all its new programmes, the Council developed a promotion programme for teachers, parents, students and employers. Orientation workshops were held for the teachers and meetings took place in several territories with employer groups. In 2006 and 2007, over 1,400 teachers from across the region participated in orientation workshops for the CCSLC. The first examination of the CCSLC took place in June 2007 and the Council will continue to market and promote the programme in all territories, in order to create among employers, educators, students and institutions, awareness and acceptance of the CCSLC as providing certification of quality, value and integrity.
Dr Lucy Steward, Registrar CXC, presents copies of the CCSLC syllabuses to Honourable M N Rogers, Minister of Education, Anguilla

As part of the promotion exercise an official launch of the CCSLC took place in five territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica and St Kitts and Nevis. Meetings with policy makers, education officials, teachers and other stakeholders were held in all Participating Territories.

A member of the audience speaking at one of the CCSLC Consultations in St Kitts and Nevis
At the launch in St Kitts and Nevis, the Honourable Sam Condor, Minister of Education, Youth, Social and Community Development and Gender Affairs commended CXC in developing this programme and noted that:

‘In recent times, the Government of St Kitts and Nevis and other stakeholders have been addressing concerns regarding the increasing number of students who leave the secondary school system without recognized certification; and the negative impact this has on employment opportunities and consequently economic development and advancement. I wish to commend the CXC, which in keeping with its mandate, has responded to the expressed requests from Governments of Member States, to develop and offer an examination that has the potential to address the developed needs of member states.’

The CCSLC was launched in Jamaica in February 2007. The Honourable Maxine Henry-Wilson, Minister of Education in Jamaica in her message read at the launch in February 2007 noted that:

‘This examination – the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) ... is designed to certify the knowledge, generic competencies and attitudes and values all secondary school leavers should have attained. Its aim is to merge both the general and
technical and vocational subjects as well as develop certain competencies to give school leavers the best opportunity to move to the next stage of their development. In this way, the CCSLC provides an alternative path to ensure that all school leavers at this level are certified.’

At the launch in Jamaica, the CCSLC programme was endorsed by Mrs Jacqueline Coke-Lloyd, Executive Director of the Jamaica Employers’ Federation and by Mr Hopeton Henry, President of the Jamaica Teachers Association.

The innovative posture mandated by the Caribbean Examination Council in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Youth to develop the CCSLC is a strategic move towards national development. The Jamaica Employers Federation appreciates the new appendage to the existing curriculum at the secondary level. Fundamentally, this spearheads the emergence of what can be conceptualized as the ‘hidden curriculum’ in the world of academia. It is hidden to the extent that some areas that the CCSLC will introduce were not formalized in the academic sector leaving many students untrainable and unemployable.

Excerpt from address by Ms Jacqueline Coke-Lloyd, Executive Director of the Jamaica Employers Federation. February 2007

The Jamaica Teachers’ Association is very happy to be Associated with the launch of this new Caribbean Examination. Thousands of our young people will now be given the opportunity to access training or will be given the base that is necessary to build on for further education and for lifelong learning to take place. This will be important for the region as we embark upon the Caribbean Single Market and Economy where there will be free movement of skilled labour.

Excerpt from address by Mr Hopeton Henry, President of the Jamaica Teachers Association. February 2007

**RESOURCE MATERIALS**

The Council actively promoted CAPE when it was introduced in 1998. A booklet on CAPE and one on the Associate Degree were prepared and distributed widely.

Since the CAPE programme was new, resource materials for teachers were developed. With assistance from the Commonwealth of Learning, a project to prepare self-study materials was initiated.
Materials were prepared for four CSEC subjects: English, Mathematics, Principles of Business and Social Studies; and seven CAPE subjects: Accounting, Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, Computer Science, Information Technology, Law and Management of Business.

Promotion materials developed were posters, flyers and brochures for CAPE and the recently introduced CCSLC. Also, with assistance from the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago, a video documentary was prepared for the 30th Anniversary of CXC. The video captured the establishment and growth of CXC and its contribution to education and functional cooperation in the region.

**THE CARIBBEAN VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION**

In a further effort to provide the human resources needed for a diversified regional economy, the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) at its meeting in Guyana in October 2006 agreed that CXC would work with national Training Agencies to award a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) to students in institutions. The CVQ in the various areas of TVET is based on regional standards approved by COHSOD. This came after consultations between CXC and TVET personnel over approximately five years.

The role of the Council in the awarding the CVQ is different from its accustomed role in providing syllabuses and examinations. The TVET providers have developed the syllabuses, curricula, and procedures for assessment and for the training of internal and external verifiers.

The Council will be responsible for quality assurance through processes that include a review of curriculum and assessment documents, sampling work of students, site visits, developing and maintaining a database of student achievement and providing reports on performance, transcripts and certificates.

CXC Participating Territories have welcomed this certification by CXC since the award by an established regional examination body will ensure that the certification has regional and international currency. The CVQ would also contribute to enhancing the status of TVET and would provide a foundation for students to continue education and training in these technical
fields. The CVQ can also be combined with CCSLC English and Mathematics for the award of the CCSLC.

After the agreement by COHSOD in October 2006 for CXC to award the CVQ, two territories – St Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago – signed contracts with the Council for work to begin for the award of the CVQ to students in those territories in 2008.

At the signing ceremony in Trinidad and Tobago, on May 18, 2007, the Principal of a Senior Comprehensive school which is entering students for the CVQ in several areas noted the enthusiasm and high expectations of students for a CXC certificate for the TVET subjects. She commended CXC on its work and observed that “any programme that emphasizes and encourages flexible innovative and creative methodologies and is geared towards the attainment and demonstration of specified competencies in our students must be a good thing and should be supported.”

The Minister of Education, Senator Hazel Manning in her address at the signing ceremony noted that:

‘The signing of this agreement today embodies a bold collaborative link with community and industry. It is a significant step towards tackling student underachievement in the long term because it links community and industry to the new system of Caribbean Vocational Qualifications which expands curriculum possibilities; widens the certification opportunities; and brings the schools, the community and the world of work closer together.’

A signing ceremony was also held in St Kitts and Nevis on May 25, 2007. The Honourable Sam Condor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Youth, Social and Community Development and Gender Affairs complimented CXC for its work with the National Training Agencies in developing a system for quality assurance for the award of the CVQ. He noted that the award “was timely and came at a time when St Kitts and Nevis is vigorously striving to meet the demand for an expanded, skilled workforce by the introduction of Technical and Vocational Education and Training and certification for both the in-school and out-of-school population.”
All territories have expressed interest in the CVQ and the Council expects the CVQ to be a significant growth area in its operations over the next five years.

**The Way Forward**

This paper summarized some of the significant achievements of CXC over the past ten years. It outlined the implementation and growth of CAPE; the award of the CXC Associate Degree; the introduction of the CCSLC; and the initiation of work with National Training Agencies for the award of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, and showed how these achievements have been facilitated by cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders across the region. These achievements provide a basis for future consolidation and further development of the Council’s products and services.

Areas for consolidation and development include increasing use of technology in examination-related activities; improving efficiency; developing new products to respond to emerging needs of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME); and increasing and diversifying income-generating activities.

With respect to the use of technology, the Council has over the years invested significantly in systems that allow for more efficient processing of examination data. These systems are under constant review to determine the enhancements that may be required for automating more of the examination functions. Systems for electronic registration and for the submission of school-based assessment records electronically are already available to territories. The website is also being enhanced to make it more user-friendly and interactive. The Council would be exploring the use of new technologies for various examination-related activities such as computer-based testing; electronic scoring of constructed response questions; and providing secure links with examiners for paper-setting and other examination work.

Efficiency would also improve considerably with adequate accommodation for the increased size of operations. Plans are underway for a new Headquarters building and discussions are also taking place for a new Western Zone Office. The Council appreciates the assistance of the governments of Barbados and Jamaica in this regard. The Chairman of Council, Professor E Nigel Harris, at the 2006 Council meeting expressed his appreciation and noted that:

> “CXC enjoys tremendous support from an extensive network of policy-makers, educators and resource persons across the region. This support is well appreciated as the organization faces many challenges to cope with increasing demands. It is important to underscore the need to address crucial issues such as adequate accommodation for CXC operations and the resource needs of the organization”

**New Products**

With the implementation of the CSME it is imperative that all institutions be pro-active in the regional thrust for human development and capacity building across the region. The award of certificates by CXC as a regional body provides a basis for harmonization of programmes and
setting of standards at various levels. CXC, therefore, has a major role to play in the award of credentials that can be used for further education, employment, transfer from one institution to another and the freer movement of people seeking employment and educational opportunities across the region. Currently, the Council caters mainly to students in institutions, although provision is made for people who are out of school. In the way forward, the Council would explore the development of programmes for a significant adult population that may require certification for personal and professional development.

**Income-generating activities**

The Council’s funding comes from two main sources – government subventions and examination fees which together account for approximately 91 percent of the annual budget. In some cases the government also pays all or part of the examination fees. Some funds also come from royalties from the sale of CXC authorized publications, materials prepared by CXC, and short-term consultancies. Also, currently the Council prepares and administers primary level examinations for two territories and provides technical assistance to process data from local examinations for two other territories.

The Council’s work is well grounded in education provision in Participating Territories so that despite economic pressures, governments remain firmly committed to supporting the work of CXC. However, as past Chairman of Council, Sir Keith Hunte, noted, “...in light of the severe economic pressures that are being exerted on the budgets of our respective governments, we (the Council) should always be exploring the best ways to achieve our objectives in the most cost-effective manner.”

Some areas for increasing revenue base would be expansion of the preparation of self-study materials; increasing capacity to provide technical assistance; and developing new products to certify a more diversified population either by assessment provided by the Council or through quality assurance programmes undertaken by the Council in collaboration with local providers.

An increased role of CXC in capacity building and provision of technical assistance was highlighted by the former Chairman, Professor the Most Honourable Kenneth Hall, ON, OJ, when he noted on the 30th Anniversary of CXC that:

“CXC has developed a level of expertise in teachers, education officers and in its own staff. This expertise can be used in countries of the region and at an international level. There is, therefore, a role for CXC in sharing its accumulated experience and expertise with national governments within the region and internationally.”

**CONCLUSION**

The achievements of the Council over the past ten years have been due to the leadership of the Chairmen, Sir Keith Hunte (1997 to 2002), Professor the Most Honourable Kenneth Hall, ON, OJ (2003 to 2006) and Professor E Nigel Harris (2006 to present); inputs of past Chairmen, Sir Roy Augier and the late Dr Dennis Irvine; support of members of Council and SEC; guidance
from the committees AFC, SUBSEC and FAC; and the work and commitment of staff and the many resource persons who contribute to the Council’s operation.

The continued support and commitment of the policy-makers, educators, resource persons and staff will ensure that CXC will perform the critical role of interpreting and responding (via curricula and examination) to the human needs of the region. This role is all the more critical at this stage in the development of the regional community.

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REFERENCES


2. CXC syllabuses -

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   (2005) Physical Education and Sport
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