

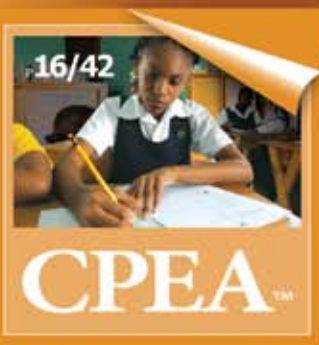


THE CARIBBEAN

# EXAMINER

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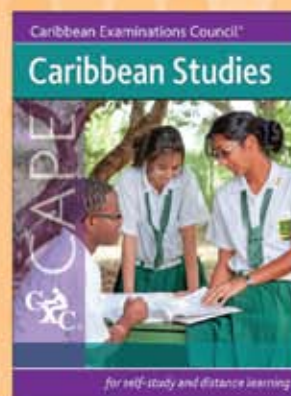
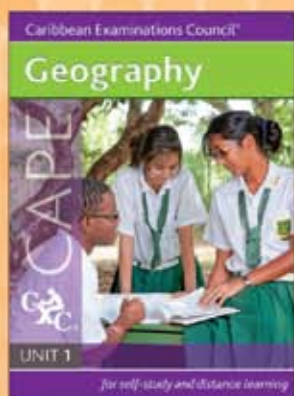
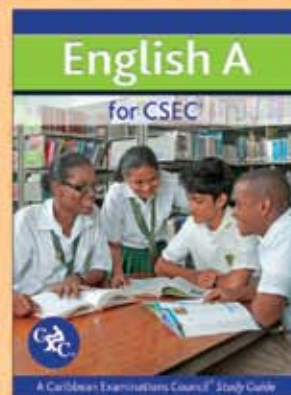
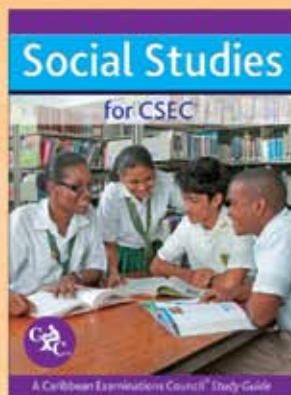
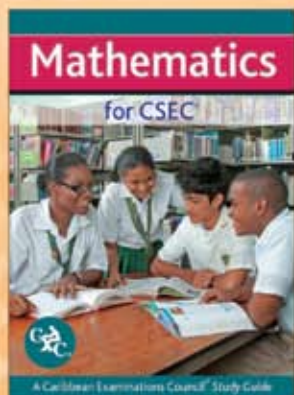
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## CXC Suite of Qualifications

- 08** **CAPE®**  
*The Post-Secondary Advantage*
- 10** **CSEC®**  
*Comes of Age*
- 12** **CCSLC®**  
*A Solid Foundation*
- 14** **The CVQ®**  
*Certifying the Region's Skilled Workforce*
- 16** **CPEA™**  
*Pilot Progressing*

## Recognition of CXC Qualifications

- 30** ECE on CXC Qualifications
- 32** AES on CSEC and CAPE
- 33** CXC Qualifications get Recognition in India
- 33** NCAA on CSEC and CAPE
- 34** US Higher Education Welcomes Caribbean Students
- 36** Creating New Leaders in World Health on the Island of Grenada
- 38** Testimonials of CAPE Students on their Preparedness for University

## P38 TESTIMONIALS OF CAPE STUDENTS



## CXC Examination System

- 18** Understanding Continuous Assessment
- 21** So, what IS so special about the assessment provided by CXC?
- 24** Criterion-Referenced Tests as used by CXC
- 26** Test Development in Public Examinations – CXC Stands Tall



## P08 SUITE OF QUALIFICATIONS

CPEA

CVQ

CCSLC

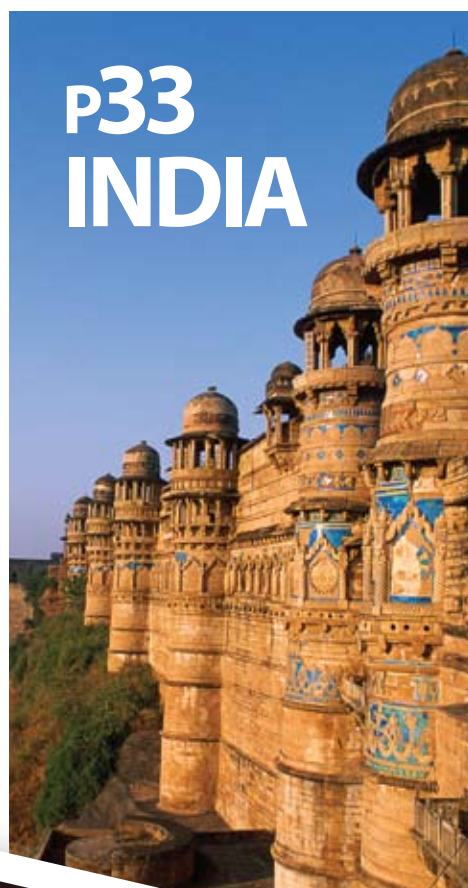
CSEC

CAPE

## CPEA Testimonials

- 42 Teachers' Views
- 44 Students' Views
- 46 Parents' Views
- 47 Principals' Views
- 48 PTA's View
- 49 Officers' Views

P58

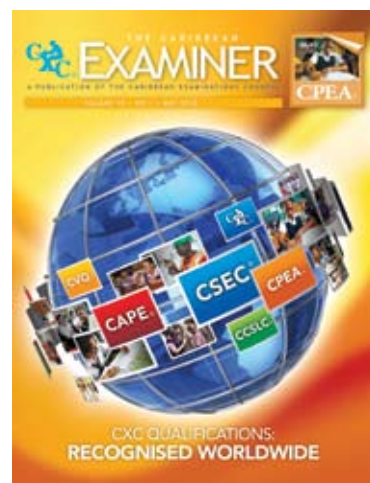


## CXC News

- 50 Dr Gopeesingh: CXC – Region's Strongest Bond
- 52 Top Awardees are Future Caribbean Leaders
- 56 Vote of Thanks
- 58 CXC Top Awardees' TNT Experience
- 64 New Staff Liking CXC's Vision
- 66 Business Subjects 'Pay' Dividends in January Sitting



TNT Experience!



### ABOUT THE COVER

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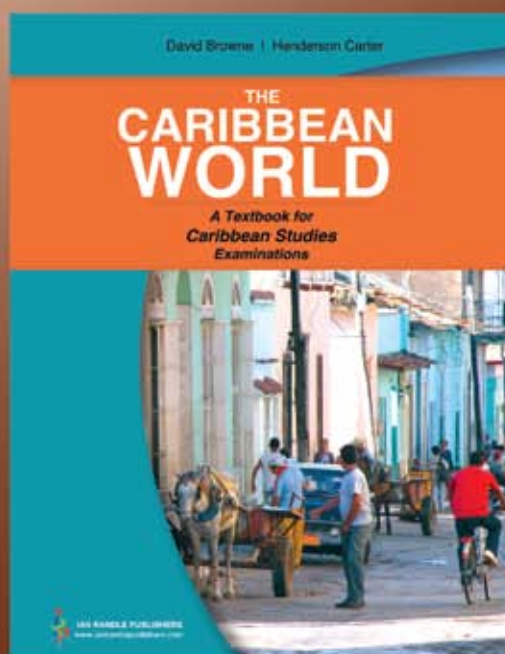
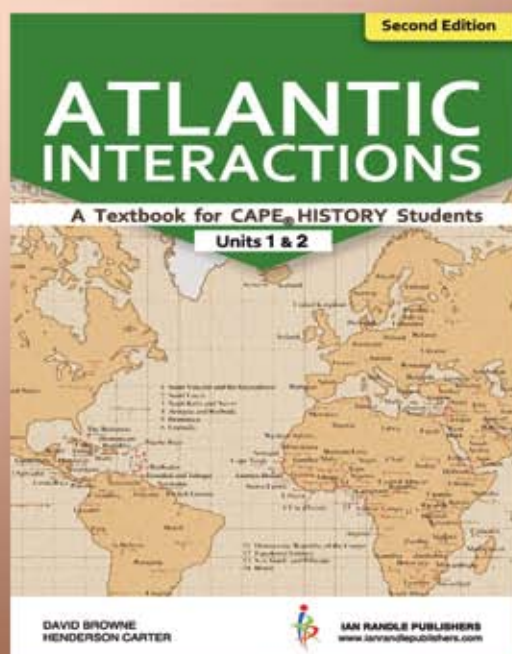
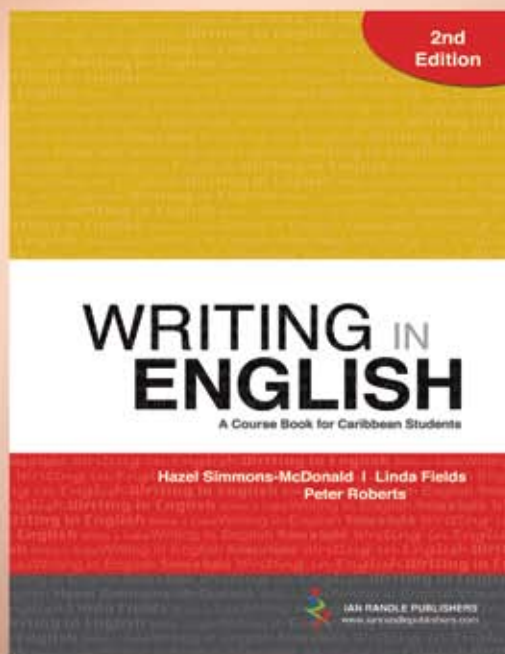
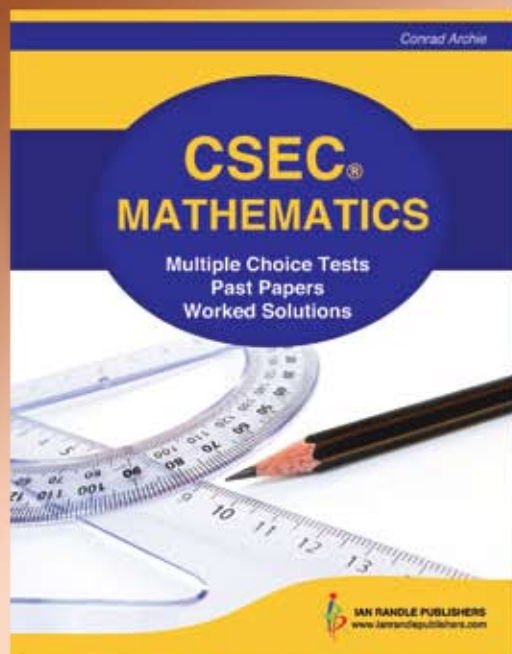
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CXC offered its first examinations in 1979 for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, **CSEC**, commonly called CXCs by most people. Thirty-three years later, CXC offers a suite of five qualifications: **CAPE**, **CSEC**, **CVQ**, **CCSLC** and **CPEA**. This section looks at each of the qualifications.



# CAPE®

## The POST-SECONDARY ADVANTAGE

*By Cherryl Stephens*

Through the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (**CAPE**), the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and its stakeholders have created a post-secondary system that is seamless, inclusive, democratic, socially responsible, developmentally focused and internationally recognised.

By 1979, the Chairman of Council confirmed that the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (**CSEC**) had been successfully launched and that the time had come for CXC to lead the region in creating an alternative to the 'A' Level examination. This would complete the dismantling of the colonial system of education in the region. Caribbean education would then be owned and controlled from pre-school to university, by Caribbean people.

By 1988, through an extensive process of collaboration between CXC staff, representatives of The University of the West Indies, other tertiary institutions and ministries of education, the central concept of the **CAPE** framework was developed.

It was clear from the very beginning that the Council was not just about to replace one examination (Cambridge or London) with another examination (Caribbean). It was to be

a new developmental model which emphasised post 'O' level certification rather than replicating 'A' level examinations in the Caribbean. The social, cultural and economic benefits to the region and its communities were to be substantial. It would give the Caribbean an enormous social and economic advantage in a knowledge-based society in which a post-secondary education had become essential for the vast majority of individuals and should be everyone's birthright. To seize this opportunity would require change; indeed, some significant changes. CXC created an integrated, student-focused system that offered students a fully integrated, seamless system that was accessible, inclusive, affordable, and of high quality. This system afforded students with valuable academic experience to gain access to most colleges and universities.

The new post-secondary system that emerged has turned out to be a truly integrated system, with strong co-ordination mechanism to avoid unnecessary duplication and to ensure resources are used efficiently. In reality, it is a system that provides the Caribbean with a strategic advantage in the area of post-secondary education.

Indeed, the Council was able to break new ground on the education landscape of the world. **CAPE** emerged as a regional examination with full equivalence in standard to the 'Advanced' level examinations but was different in philosophy and structure. It encompassed current arrangements in sixth forms and articulated with programmes of community colleges and universities across the region. It brought together academic, and technical and vocational courses of study within a single system of certification. The target population for the **CAPE** included persons who required certification for entry to regional and international universities, the job market and certain professions with specific pre-requisites. It catered to mature and part-time students who wished to further their education or acquire marketable skills, as well as persons seeking to benefit from opportunities for continuing education and personal development.

**CAPE** is accessible and flexible and offers certification for diverse populations with different destinations. This means that every Caribbean citizen has the opportunity to pursue learning in the field of his or her choice, consistent with the needs and opportunities available within the



## CAPE: The Post-Secondary Advantage

territory, at a cost that is fair and affordable. A comparison of the cost of taking a CAPE Unit with that of a London or Cambridge subject will prove this point. All CAPE subjects offer an alternative to the School-Based Assessment component and can therefore be accessed by in-school and out-of-school candidates.

Students can study a combination of Units that are best suited to their abilities and their career paths. They can complete both Units of a subject, for example, both History Units 1 and 2 in the same school year, and they can also complete Unit 2 before Unit 1. Each Unit is free-standing and this structure is particularly valuable to territories with small classes and limited teacher resource. A student who, for whatever reason, cannot complete one of the Units of a subject can exit at the end of the first year with certification based on the Unit which was completed. Moreover, high-flying students can fast track the time spent in the system by completing as many units that are convenient in one year.

Relevance, responsiveness and comprehensiveness and accessibility are key factors for the success of the region. While it is critical to offer students a place to learn, it is equally important that the place they are offered meets their needs, and the needs of the region, to ensure success in life. CAPE offers more opportunities for post-secondary educational experiences that cross disciplines, pedagogies and orientations. Students can combine their Units in any way that is meaningful to them. Students can take two Units in Physics and one Unit in Electrical and Electronic Technology, while at the same time obtaining the general education needed from the two core one-Unit subjects, Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies. This kind of system does not guarantee a hierarchy of differences, but attempts to achieve a better balance between theoretical and applied learning. This system provides an ever increasing range of post-secondary, applied and occupational subjects attuned to the needs of the region (*see list of developed and developing subjects*). CAPE includes three types of certification: a certificate showing each CAPE Unit completed; the CAPE Diploma which is awarded to candidates who have satisfactorily completed at least six Units, including Caribbean Studies, and the CXC Associate Degree, awarded for the satisfactory completion of a prescribed cluster of seven CAPE Units including Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies.

It is no good if all of the other objectives are met but the product is mediocre. The region needs a post-secondary system of the highest quality, as good as or better than any in the world and CAPE provides this. There will always be debates about what quality actually means and



A student from the Arima Secondary School, Trinidad and Tobago, collecting water samples for CAPE Environmental Science project

1-UNIT CORE COURSES	2-UNIT COURSES		2-UNIT COURSES BEING DEVELOPED
Caribbean Studies Communication Studies	Accounting Law Applied Mathematics Literatures in English Art and Design History Biology Information Technology Chemistry Management of Business Computer Science Pure Mathematics	Economics Physics Electrical and Electronic Technology Sociology Environmental Science Spanish French Food and Nutrition Geography Geometrical and Mechanical Engineering Drawing	Agricultural Science Digital Media Entrepreneurship Performing Arts Physical Education and Sport Tourism

how we know when it is present, but CXC has proven experience (over 35 years) with a variety of approaches to know that some do work, and that it is possible to improve the quality of post-secondary education and programmes through systematic and rigorous evaluation and corrective action. Thus, with the built-in quality assurance regime in CXC, consisting in part of annual reviews after every examination and comprehensive reviews when deemed necessary, it is no miracle that CAPE certificates are accepted by all regional universities, the United Kingdom National Academic Recognition Information Centre, the Association of Indian Universities and universities in Canada and United States.



**Cheryl Stephens** is an Assistant Registrar - Syllabus and Curriculum Development Unit at CXC. Cheryl worked on the development of CAPE from its inception, including working with the Syllabus Panels.



# CSEC® COMES OF AGE!

*By Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald*

*CSEC, CXC's flag-ship examination was first offered in 1979. One of the pioneers in developing the CSEC English syllabus, Professor Simmons-McDonald takes you on nostalgic journey.*

Telescoped through 39 years from 1973 when it started, CXC today is very much the mature lady having shed some old trappings, finessed her systems almost to perfection and embarked in the last few years with new finery to embrace a technologically advanced milieu with confidence and, yes, style. One might even say of her as in that old Virginia Slims advertisement "You've come a long way, baby!"

CXC was built on a solid foundation, carefully designed by a team that sought to provide for the Caribbean an examination system that was more relevant to the culture and life of the people of the region. The governments supported the initiative and all countries were involved in the ground work. National subject panels were established to discuss the concept, the framework for the subjects and to provide suggestions and feedback to CXC for the consideration of the regional subject panels that would shape the syllabuses for the first examination for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) in 1979.

The subject panels comprised representatives who were practicing teachers from various countries. I was familiar with the English Panel which began as an integrated panel for language and literature. The discourse about integration was intense and focused primarily on the possibility that the integration would dilute

the appreciation of literature and denude the fine literary analysis skills that students should develop. The counter argument was that literature provides the best examples and expression of the language and students would be enriched from the exposure to literature in an integrated English syllabus. In the end, the argument for separate language and literature examinations won, and a separate panel for Literature was formed subsequently with Professor Gordon Rohlehr leading it. The English syllabuses and examinations were distinguished by labelling them English A (language) and English B (Literature).

Cecil Grey, lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the Mona Campus, The University of the West Indies, was the Chairman of the English Panel and he had strong support from the panel to retain a literature component on the English 'A' syllabus in both the understanding and expression profiles. The paper still retains the understanding and expression profiles and literature is still included in both profiles. Unlike the route taken for English, CXC offered a double award in Integrated Science and stalwarts like Dr Florence Commissiong, who was the first Convenor of the panel and Chief Examiner of Integrated Science, led a strong promotional campaign for Integrated Science in the school system. CXC offered a modest slate of five

subjects for examination in 1979: English A, Caribbean History, Geography, Mathematics, and Integrated Science.

Panel meetings were well orchestrated by the Pro-Registrar, Mrs Irene Walters, and they were convened in different countries to facilitate meetings with teachers on occasions. Support for subject panels was provided on issues related to profiles and syllabus weighting, in the person of Dr. Tom Christie (a Scot), and on technical matters by a team, including David Beckles (then Head of the Mathematics Department at UWI, St. Augustine) and Betty Canton, IT specialist at CXC. Subject panel meetings and examination panel meetings in particular would sometimes go well into the night, especially when deadlines – set and rigidly enforced by Pro-Registrar Walters – were to be met.

As intense and tiring as those meetings were, they could also be stimulating and exciting, and we found ways to relieve tension. The food shops along Hastings main road and the jerk outlet in New Kingston must have had a special fondness for CXC around meeting times because of the business it brought them. Despite the demanding schedules, we had an overwhelming sense of being pioneers in a wonderful enterprise; we were unwavering in our commitment to the goals of the organisation and steadfast in our desire for it to succeed.



## CSEC Comes of Age!

By 1977 all five panels had prepared sample examinations in the required number of papers (1 and 2 for English) and with the appropriate weightings for the profiles that had been decided for the subjects. These papers were used in selected schools as a test run in simulated examination conditions and they provided CXC with the opportunity to train the teams of Chief Examiners, Examiners, and Assistant Examiners in the processes of standardisation, implementing the marking schemes, assessing rates of marking as well as all the administrative tasks of managing, circulating and keeping track of batches of scripts that were distributed to tables for marking. CXC had already invited Cambridge to visit and they must have been so impressed with the CXC model that the papers coming to the region from Cambridge a few years later mirrored the structure and format of the CXC papers.

The numbers sitting the examinations in the first year, 1979, were relatively small compared with the present. The marking of the English 'A' examination, both Basic and General

proficiencies was accommodated on the third floor of the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, through an arrangement negotiated by the enterprising Pro-Registrar. In those early years, some schools entered their fourth formers for the Basic examination as a test run, we supposed, and the performance at Basic was of a very high quality compared with later years when schools became much more selective about the proficiency for which they enrolled students.

So the lady has grown over the years. Some may say 'fat' facetiously, but I would say, seriously, in both stature and sophistication. Thirty five subjects are now offered at CSEC compared with the five in 1979 and now approximately 210,000 candidates take English and Mathematics compared with a little over 44,000 in '79. In 1998 CXC took a bold step to offer subjects for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) and today 44 Units in 24 subjects are offered at that level.

The sophistication is evident in the ease with which CXC has embraced information technology and has integrated it into the fabric of

her outfit to improve efficiency of administrative operations, manage registrations, examination setting and all aspects of business. The website is a smorgasbord of links that take one to blogs, historical reviews, subject and people profiles, and clicks to the ever pervasive social media that woo students to explore and learn.

The organisation has certainly come a long way since the 1970s but the rigorous systems that were established then for developing syllabuses and creating exam papers still exist and have given currency to a brand that is distinctively Caribbean yet globally acknowledged.



**Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald** is a long-serving resource person for CXC. She served on the first English 'A' Panel and also as Chief Examiner. She is a member of the School Examinations Committee and the Sub-Committee of the School Examinations Committee (SUBSEC).

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# CCSLC®

## A SOLID FOUNDATION

*By Gerard Phillip*

The Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (**CCSLC**) is a certificate offered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) as the foundational Competency-Based Education Training and Assessment (CBETA) qualification in the secondary system. The **CCSLC** is structured to represent a foundation for the integration of knowledge, competencies and affective qualities critical to the region's aspiration for lifelong learning, global competitiveness and sustainable development. The programme is designed to deliver and certify the knowledge, competencies, skills and attitudes every student should have upon completion of secondary education.

### Development Mandate

The **CCSLC** was developed in response to the changing educational paradigm in the Caribbean, consistent with the introduction of Universal Secondary Education in several territories. The resultant heterogeneous intake of students occasioned the need for a programme that could respond to the wider range of abilities of students entering secondary schools. It also became imperative that a common standard be determined for all students leaving the secondary school system. A programme was therefore developed which would ensure that all students leaving secondary school would possess a common set of generic knowledge, competencies, attitudes and values.

The programme was informed by consensus among regional leaders on the position that the region faces the imperative of producing a well-educated and trained labour force to meet the challenges posed by globalisation and the

impact of an increasingly competitive global environment. The proposed implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) which facilitates the free movement of skilled labour across member countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) further accentuated the need for a foundational, regional certification that was recognised and endorsed throughout the region.

### Regional Acceptance

Several countries in the region, recognising the need for a programme that certified students' knowledge, competencies and skills at the end of their secondary education, had developed their own national programmes. These include the Jamaican School Certificate (JSC), the School Leaving Certificate in Barbados, British Virgin Islands and Grenada, as well as the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE) in Trinidad and Tobago. The **CCSLC** responds to and represents the views of stakeholders, including policy-makers, educators, teachers, parents and students, as well as the formulators of existing national programmes in the various territories of the region. It offers the option of a single certificate, with regional acceptance, that seeks to replace the myriad certificate offered by individual countries. The programme therefore brings several benefits to the governments and peoples of the region, including cost-effectiveness, economies of scale, portability, maintenance of a common regional standard, and regional and international recognition.

### For All Secondary School Students

The **CCSLC** was designed for all secondary school students. The programme is not age-specific and facilitates students' learning at any stage in the secondary school system and beyond. As a result, it is envisaged that some candidates may attempt the examinations in Forms 4 and 5, while others may complete the programme after having left secondary school. For most students, **CCSLC** is expected to be an intermediate award, certifying the acquisition of essential knowledge, competencies, skills and values and providing a foundation for further education and training. However, given the realities of life in the region, it may prove to be a terminal award for some students. Students are expected to continue on to other levels of certification, including TVET, **CSEC** and **CAPE**. The **CCSLC** also provides certification for those students who wish to exit secondary school to seek entry-level employment, and continue their education while on the job, or on their own, or out of school.

### Structure of the Programme

The **CCSLC** programme offers a solid foundation for further education and training to students in the secondary school system. Syllabuses were developed for the **CCSLC** in five core subject areas; Mathematics, English, Integrated Science, Social Studies, and Modern Languages (French and Spanish). Each syllabus is organised into five modules with each module containing clearly defined specific objectives, relevant content, suggested teaching and learning activities and suggested formative assessment tasks. These syllabuses were developed following



## CCSLC: A Solid Foundation

extensive consultation with education specialists, teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

The CCSLC syllabuses, and the programme in general, subscribe to the principle of Competency-Based Education Training and Assessment or CBETA. CBETA places emphasis on the practical demonstration of competencies acquired. The CCSLC programme therefore focuses on mastery of competencies and the performance of clearly defined tasks. Assessment of competence is not based solely on knowledge, but more importantly on students' actual demonstration of competence. To this end, teachers are asked to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches to their delivery of instruction. Didactic formal instruction to seated passive learners is eschewed in favour of activity-oriented, practical-based delivery that encourages learners' interaction, discovery and demonstration of competence.

### Generic Competencies

The CCSLC programme also seeks to provide a solid foundation towards the development of generic competencies, considered essential for coping with life's challenges. Interwoven among the objectives of the programme are topics and content that place emphasis on the development of competencies that include:

- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Management of emotions
- Working in groups
- Conflict resolution
- Dealing with diversity and change
- Social and citizenship skills

### Attitudes and Values

The CCSLC programme also seeks to incorporate the attributes of the *Ideal Caribbean Person* as determined and articulated by the Caribbean Education Task Force (CTF) and adopted by the CARICOM Heads of Government at their 18<sup>th</sup> Summit. The positive attitudes and values as delivered by the programme are designed to improve learners' perception of self, their relationship with others in the school community and in society at large. These attitudes and values include:

- a positive image of self, family, community, region and world;
- respect for others irrespective of age, class, creed, gender, ethnicity, physical disability or nationality;
- a dislike for violence in all its forms;
- a commitment to settle disputes through arbitration and reconciliation;
- the capacity to understand that individual freedom is consonant with the acceptance of personal responsibility for one's own actions;
- commitment to ethical and moral societies that recognise equality of opportunity, freedom of expression and association, and the right to fair judicial process.

### Subject-Specific Competencies

Subject-specific competencies, linked to the core syllabuses developed include:

- Oral and written communication skills
- Mathematical literacy
- Scientific literacy
- Social and citizenship skills and
- Foreign language literacy

### Eligibility for the Award

The CCSLC is awarded jointly by the Caribbean Examinations Council and Ministries of Education in respective countries. A candidate will be awarded the CCSLC certificate if he/she, over a period not exceeding five years after the first sitting, successfully completes five subjects: two of which are compulsory, namely CCSLC Mathematics and English; three other subjects can be selected from a group or combination of groups of subjects which include TVET Level 1 programmes, CSEC Business Studies subjects, CSEC Creative and Expressive Arts, programmes certified by other boards, e.g. Royal School of Music and City and Guilds, and locally developed and certified enrichment programmes. The programme is therefore very flexible and caters to a wide range of student abilities and interests.

### Support and Training

Cognizant of the need to provide continued support to teachers delivering the CCSLC programme in secondary schools and other institutions throughout the region, the Council has embarked on several initiatives designed to better apprise teachers, students and other stakeholders about all aspects of the CCSLC. To this end, officers of the Council have been directly engaged in facilitating teacher orientation workshops, teacher training workshops and site visits, each intended to inform teachers of syllabus content and objectives, suggested methodologies for instructional delivery, formative and summative assessment strategies and recording and reporting requirements. During these visits, officers of CXC perform quality assurance checks to ensure compliance with stated syllabus and assessment requirements, discuss with teachers their responsibilities relating to delivery of syllabus objectives, formative and summative assessment, record keeping, and the storage and reporting of summative assessment samples and scores.



Visual Arts is one of the CSEC Creative Arts subjects which can count towards the CCSLC



**Gerard Phillip** is an Assistant Registrar - Syllabus and Curriculum Development Unit based at CXC's Western Zone Office in Jamaica. He is a former Panel Member for CSEC and CAPE IT syllabuses.



# The CVQ®

## CERTIFYING THE REGION'S SKILLED WORKFORCE

*By Pauline Whiteman*

The key to success in a fast-paced national, regional and global economy relies on the skills and abilities of its people. The creation of a skilled workforce is part of CARICOM's vision and we must seize opportunities to enhance our competitiveness. CARICOM has recognised that education is the major mechanism to bring about the required transformation in the Caribbean society. A CARICOM Report on "Strategies for Survival, Development and Prosperity" has highlighted the need for Human Resource Development Strategies to take into account the emerging profiles of the workforce. Such profiles will include competitiveness, the development of abilities, attitudes and skills and technological knowledge necessary for jobs and entrepreneurial development. The report suggested that this approach needs to be promoted in both the formal and informal system.

A survey was jointly conducted in 2009, for the Manufacturing sector in Trinidad and Tobago, by the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association. The survey revealed that some manufacturers had been experiencing skill deficiencies which had a significant impact on their ability to expand operations. It also revealed that 72 per cent of the vacancies exist in food, beverage and tobacco sub sectors, printing, publishing and paper converters among others. In addition, the survey identified absenteeism of employees and decreases in productivity as factors hindering the growth of the sector. The respondents of the survey indicated that they had to employ stringent measures including wage freezes, implementation of a shift system to effectively utilise employees to maximise output, and temporary suspension of incentives and bonuses as a means of staying financially viable. Much to the disadvantage of unemployed nationals, one manufacturer indicated that his company had been 'importing' labour from other countries to alleviate their skill deficiencies. Indeed, this approach was not sustainable and the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) is a viable alternative to this importation of labour.

In order to equip the region with a skilled workforce we must first focus on our education and training system. Statistics have revealed that approximately 70 per cent of the region's annual school cohort enters directly or indirectly into the labour market and therefore the obvious place to initiate workforce preparation is within the secondary school system.

The CVQ is designed to produce a workforce that is globally competitive through a standardised and harmonised Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system.

The CVQ is based on a common regional approach to training, assessment and certification as agreed by the National Training Agencies of the region under the auspices of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA). The regional system for vocational qualifications accepted by CARICOM is a five-level system, facilitating the workforce in any occupation. The certification model employed for the implementation of the CVQ begins with labour market information which is used to inform training needs and the development of industry guided occupational standards.

This industry-based, demand-led training model is implemented using the competency-based education and training (CBET) approach for instructional delivery and assessment. This model is consistent with the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Recommendation 195 concerning human resources development: education, training and lifelong learning.

The CVQ has been implemented in the secondary schools throughout the region, and as with any curriculum innovation, has been subjected to the vagaries associated with change. The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), as the only legal authority to issue awards/ certification CVQs in secondary schools, awards the CVQ.

The implementation of the CVQ has also been extended to TVET institutions, enterprises and community-based programmes with the regional National Training Agencies having the authority to award the CVQ in those instances. To

date, three such agencies have received CARICOM approval to award CVQ certification. These include: the National Council for Technical Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) Jamaica, the TVET Council, Barbados and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTATT). Other NTAs and TVET Apex bodies across the region are in the process of obtaining CARICOM approval to award the CVQ.

As part of the CVQ certification drive, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT), has embarked on the establishment of Workforce Assessment Centres (WACs). The aim was to increase access to and participation in post-secondary education and training, using a system of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) to assess and certify skills, knowledge and attitudes gained through non-formal means. The implementation of such a system presents an excellent opportunity to propel the National Certification Drive as an integral component of workforce development as it allows for the achievement of one of the major goals of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago: a highly skilled, talented and knowledgeable workforce stimulating innovative-driven growth and development. A National System of PLAR also allows for the creation of formal partnerships among Government Ministries, NTAs, Employers (Enterprise), Training Providers (Institution) and individuals of society within a structured National Certification and Qualification Framework.

One approach of alleviating skill deficiencies in a cost effective way, as suggested by the ILO, is through public-private partnerships. In Trinidad and Tobago one such approach is being piloted with the manufacturing sector. Research conducted in the Printing and Packaging Sector has revealed that skill deficiencies exist in a number of occupational areas including Extrusion Operations. The Printing and Packaging Industry Council is therefore partnering with a secondary school to provide the equipment and transfer of knowledge to enable students to build skills in Extrusion Moulding and achieve the CVQ when they have been deemed competent.



## The CVQ: Certifying the Region's Skilled Workforce

The students are exposed to the real world of work environment as they are transported to the factory to obtain the practical training. Indeed this practice can be replicated in any particular sector as it would provide an opportunity to increase the skills of the workforce in the particular sector and by extension the region, which will not only satisfy the demand for skills but also lead to job creation. The advantage of such a programme extends well beyond the secondary school and the partnering industry, as it will raise the bar for our workforce and communicates to other industries looking to grow or expand. Implementation of the CVQ in partnership with industry would serve to maximise the region's resources and indeed realise the vision of a highly competitive, skilled workforce for the region.

In addition to alleviating skills shortages, implementation of the CVQ using the CBET approach can assist in addressing issues related to poor work ethics. In addition to the knowledge and skills criteria, the occupational standards include the critical employability skills or soft skills essential for the world of work. As such, candidates must demonstrate the acquisition and application of these soft skills before they can be deemed competent. The underlying philosophy employed in CBET is

constructivism. With this approach, facilitators are required to design instructional material that will encourage problem solving and critical thinking.

As a region we must continue to develop a highly skilled workforce as we cannot afford to lag behind. The implementation of the CVQ within CARICOM is a reform initiative that we must strive to continually improve and to establish as an equally viable and robust qualification that is recognised internationally. Within the Caribbean Community, we have been able to establish a unique response to the pressures of the global environment via the CVQ. The onus is now on all stakeholders to collaborate and ensure the development of this skilled, certified and competitive workforce.



*Pauline Whiteman is Manager, Programme Development and Management Department, National Training Agency in Trinidad and Tobago.*

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# CPEA™

## PILOT PROGRESSING

*By Benita Byer*

As the first year of the implementation of the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) draws to a close, approximately 1950 pupils from two territories, Anguilla and Grenada, would have completed the first external assessment in Mathematics, Language and Science by the time this magazine is published at the end of May (The pilot examination was offered on 11th May 2012). Although it is expected that as with any examination, there will be anxious moments on the part of pupils, their parents and teachers, the pupils can be confident that their final grades will not depend solely on their performance on that single day, but instead will be determined from their completion of, and involvement in a variety of activities including projects, book reports, portfolios and tests prepared by both teachers and pupils. It has been indeed an exciting though at times challenging time for all persons involved in this first year of implementation.

### CONTINUOUS SUPPORT

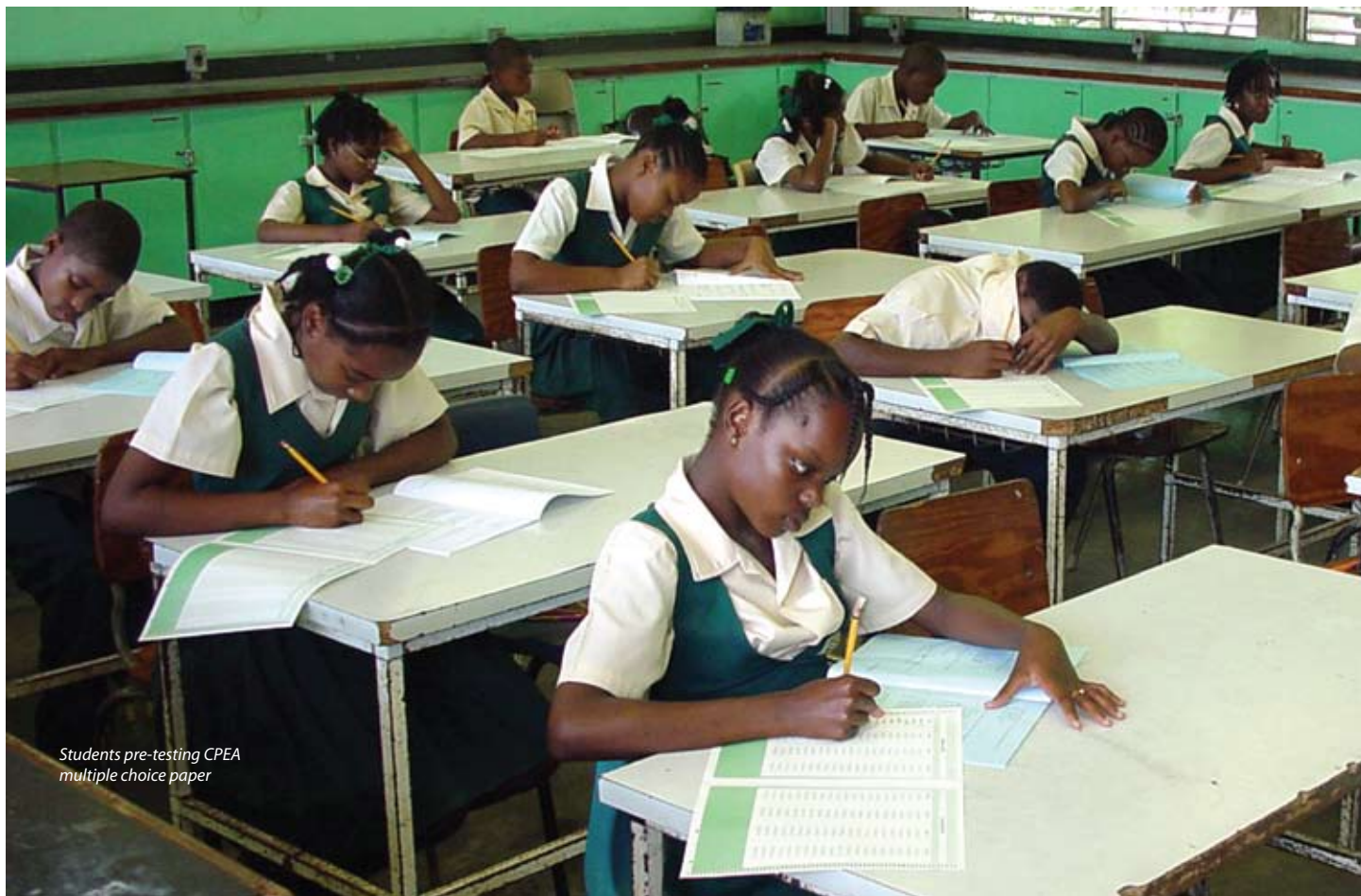
Since the first orientation workshops were held in Grenada and Anguilla in August and November 2011, respectively, CXC has ensured that all stakeholders in these territories were provided with the necessary support and tools to guarantee the successful implementation of the CPEA. As it was not possible to be on site at all times, CXC adopted an open door policy, where teachers, parents and administrators were encouraged to contact the relevant personnel as the need arose. This resulted in regular communication between members of the CXC team and stakeholders where ideas were shared, challenges were discussed and solutions formulated, collaboratively. In addition, the handbooks, training material, sample projects and other resources are all available on the CXC website.

### COUNTRY VISITS

The CPEA implementation plan incorporated termly assessments in each territory. These were conducted in November 2011 and March 2012 and sought primarily to:

- Determine the progress of teachers in effectively implementing the formative components
- Identify challenges faced by teachers, parents and administrators
- Provide support to teachers

While visiting the six schools in Anguilla was possible over a three day period, the assessment in Grenada necessitated a different model. Centres were established in each of the seven districts and teachers from both government and private schools met with the CXC team, as well as personnel from



Students pre-testing CPEA multiple choice paper



## CPEA: Pilot Progressing

the Grenada Ministry of Education at the designated centres. These sessions facilitated interaction with all the Grade VI teachers and provided the opportunity for teachers to showcase some of the work that was completed for the school based assessment. Generally, most teachers had either completed the required tasks or were working towards completion. In a few instances, teachers who had not started a particular component had the opportunity to discuss with the team what challenges were being encountered and how these could be overcome. A common observation from the consultation with teachers was the feeling of being overwhelmed by the numerous tasks required. However, in many cases, it was noted that the teacher had indeed completed what was required, but was demanding extra effort from the pupils to ensure the production of work of the highest possible quality.

The incorporation of can-do-skills as a regular component of the instructional process and the development of both the pupil and teacher tests were areas requiring the most clarification. Although frequent opportunities occurred in the classroom where pupils demonstrated competence in areas taught, teachers were not aware that such activities, as simple as they were, comprised the can-do-skills. One area of concern by the visiting teams was the absence of record keeping and documentation of pupils' performance. Although the discussions revealed that teachers had given pupils the opportunity to improve through regular feedback, this was not reflected in the records kept by the teachers. Secondly, many teachers had to be reminded that all teacher developed tests should be based on a table of specifications that would serve as a blue print for developing the tests.

In spite of the challenges faced, it was evident that excellent work is being done in the classroom as revealed by the work produced by the students. Whether it was the detailed book reports, some of which were enhanced by the construction of collages, costumes or models of scenes depicted in the stories; the projects which came alive through



*Acquiring scientific literacies is one of the learning outcomes of the CPEA*

the charts, pictures and detailed reports or the writing portfolios that documented the improved writing skills of the pupils, the consensus was that all pupils involved in the CPEA are excited about their learning experiences. Perhaps the greatest gain with respect to pupils was the opportunity to develop tests for their peers, a novel activity in most schools. However, many of the teachers who admitted reluctance to allow their pupils to write test items were surprised by the quality of the items and the learning opportunities which emerged.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

One of the principles on which the CPEA was developed was the need for greater parental involvement in the work of the school community. The CPEA team is pleased to report that at all consultations which were planned for the parents, there was standing room only. In the initial

meetings, parents were continually reminded to become more involved in the work of their children and by extension the school, through the provision of resources, expertise and facilitating study at home. Further consultations revealed that parents had heeded this advice and were generally eager to report that they in turn had seen increased interest in reading, the completion of research and heightened motivation by their children.

### CONCLUSION

Generally, the CXC team is satisfied that the requirements for the formative assessment of the programme are being completed. Pupils have grown through activities such as completing projects, working with peers, presenting written and oral reports and engaging in reflection and self-assessment. While the work of the CXC team continues by addressing the major areas of concern as well as on-going orientation in the pilot and other territories, the team is confident that the pupils currently preparing for examinations have benefited from a diverse and unique programme which has prepared them for entry into the next phase of education.



*Maureen Grazette, Measurement and Evaluation Officer at CXC, making a point while in a meeting with teachers at a school in Anguilla*



*Benita Byer is a Measurement and Evaluation Officer in the Examinations Development and Production Division and is a member of the CPEA project team.*



# Understanding CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

In many ways, CXC's examination system is unique, robust and internationally acclaimed. This section gives you an insider's perspective on the system.

By Desmond Broomes, PhD

## Continuous Assessment: Integrating key concepts into a cartesian space

Continuous assessment is an approach to assessment which enables the teacher to use a wide range of methods to gather information about learners from a variety of sources. Airasian (1996) having explored the research literature in assessment in the classroom, defined continuous assessment to include about seven critical features, namely:

1. using a variety of assessment tools ranging from a quiz to a project,
2. collecting data, formally and informally, from different and varied sources,
3. spanning the cognitive, affective and psychomotor features of the learners,
4. conducting and sustaining teaching-learning-assessment activities over an extended period of time,
5. mapping the growth and development of the persons being assessed,
6. using and maintaining a holistic view of the learner,
7. employing formal as well as informal approaches conducted by external and internal agents (teachers and examiners) and complemented by data collected and analysed by the learners themselves; in order to enable teachers to understand their students as learners, to plan and monitor the learners' academic achievement and to encourage the emergence of high self-concept and self-reliance among learners.

Classroom teachers (and their college tutors) have long assumed that there exists a dynamic nexus among positive self-concept and self-reliance and academic achievement. The assumption has been researched and maintained by Brookover and associates about three decades ago (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979).

Continuous assessment attempts to validate this assumption as part and parcel of the classroom environment. Teachers who attended

courses at a teachers' college have studied some of these features and have practised at least one of them in a Caribbean classroom. The challenge, however, is to encourage teachers who work in classrooms during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to link together four, five or six of these features that are associated with continuous assessment.

Many advantages flow from continuous assessment as conceptualised in this article and as defined by Airasian (1991). Four salient advantages endorsed by teachers are:

1. Continuous assessment involves gathering data over a period of time, under a variety of conditions. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that a more accurate measure of the learner's characteristics will emerge.
2. The way the data are collected plays a critical role in diagnosing and remediating the learner's weaknesses and needs and ensuring that the learner plays meaningful roles in understanding the nature of the "gap" and also in "feeding forward" to defining "what's next?"
3. Continuous assessment spans the learner's progress systematically and holistically, and enables the classroom culture to motivate the emergence of certain desirable behaviours among all students and their peers.
4. A big advantage of continuous assessment derives from the central role of the teacher in a formative assessment environment.

Thinking 'formative assessment' as a major component or expression of what constitutes continuous assessment encourages teacher participation in fusing together teaching, learning and assessment. It also guides teachers in constructing 'feedback' as skilful tools in motivating learners to reach for the next level. For the teacher, the 'next level' requires a sensitive understanding of how data may be interpreted and synthesised to define "feed forward" skills.

Continuous assessment is integrated with teaching and learning in order to improve what students learn and how they learn and to help teachers reshape and redirect their teaching process, so as to

1. give each student more responsibility for recognising the "gap" between what he/she has learnt and the goals of the lesson as taught by the teacher; and also to define what activity the student (and the teacher) should engage next in order to close the identified gap and go beyond the specified goals.
2. enable the teacher to redirect and reformat the teaching and the guidance by making use of new understanding of the nature of the task and its interactions with the students.

The assessment is continuous: it occurs at various times as part and parcel of teaching and learning. It may occur at the beginning of the lesson, during the lesson, following the lesson. It may occur at the beginning of the topic, during the presentation of the topic and at the end of the topic. Continuous assessment as it occurs at various times provides regular and immediate information to the teacher and to the students about the teaching, the learning, and the achieving of the learning objectives and content. Most importantly, it allows for teachers and students to engage, within the classroom and among the students who reside in the classrooms, in performance-based activities that are difficult to assess under summative assessment environments and artificial frames (as frequently observed in dull classrooms). Continuous assessment undergirds the model that emphasises formative assessment coupled with a sensitive feedback methodology as advocated in the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) project launched by CXC in 2011.

Most psychometricians extol authentic assessment as one golden way to ensure reliable and valid scores. Authentic assessment is said



# Understanding Continuous Assessment

to occur when the tasks to be engaged by the students are similar to tasks usually encountered in the real world. Continuous assessment, by its definition and its procedures, stimulates the emergence of authentic assessments within a school programme.

Continuous assessment provides a way of viewing assessment that integrates at least five perspectives of assessment. It emphasises the advantages of viewing assessment activities as:

1. **formative along a formative-summative continuum of activities**
2. **internal along an internal-external continuum**
3. **informal along an informal-formal continuum**
4. **process along a process-product continuum, and also**
5. **divergent along a divergent-convergent continuum.**

Brief defining statements of these modes of assessment should serve to convey a sense of the size and scope and structure of continuous assessment, as practised by CXC.

## 1. Formative vs. summative

Formative assessment, designed to inform teachers about future teaching and students about future learning.

Summative assessment, designed to produce a summary of what the student has learnt and can do within a domain usually specified by a syllabus.

## 2. Internal vs. External

Internal assessment - where the assessment is done by someone within the school setting, usually the classroom teacher.

External assessment, where the tasks are devised and set by persons outside the school setting, sometimes by a teacher from another school.

## 3. Informal vs. Formal

Informal assessment - where the assessment is conducted most often during the teaching-learning activities carried out daily in classrooms.

Formal assessment - where the assessment is usually conducted as a set of discrete and highly structured data-collection tasks; tasks are set to fit given specifications and to be done in a set time.

## 4. Process vs. Product

Process assessment - where the assessment is focused on what is being done in real time and usually require the presence of an examiner or teacher.

Product assessment where the assessment is focused on assessing what has been produced in the form of concrete, tangible objects to fit given criteria.

## 5. Divergent vs. Convergent

Divergent assessment - where the responses of the learners to tasks are expected to span a range of answers whose quality is to be judged by the nature of the analysis and soundness of opinion. However, the responses require highly trained marking skills or at least sensible rubrics, flexibly constructed.

Convergent assessment is about assessment which is generally easy to mark, by machines or by persons. Wherever knowledge or mere recall of facts is the primary concern, convergent assessment is valid and rapid.

Continuous assessment is a unitary concept integrating the activities that are defined by the three axes associated with the formative-summative continuum, informal-formal continuum and internal-external continuum activities (see Figure 1).

The space which this miniature symbol (see figure below) attempts to represent is the cartesian space of interest known as continuous assessment. Our senses and everyday experiences enable us to form easy images of a 3-dimensional space. Nevertheless it seems more useful and satisfying to think of the space of interest spanning as many as five dimensions, namely

- Formative - summative
- Internal - external
- Informal - formal
- Process - product
- Divergent - convergent

Continuous assessment is an on-going assessment of all pupils throughout a Grade 5 or Grade 6 programme, for example. It involves the school, teachers, students and teachers' colleges. Its purposes are:

1. a) **encouraging student involvement and motivation**
- b) **involving parents in the tasks done by students**
- c) **encouraging parental involvement at many levels**
2. a) **monitoring and providing feedback to students on their progress**
- b) **linking tasks done in school to tasks done in homes and the community**

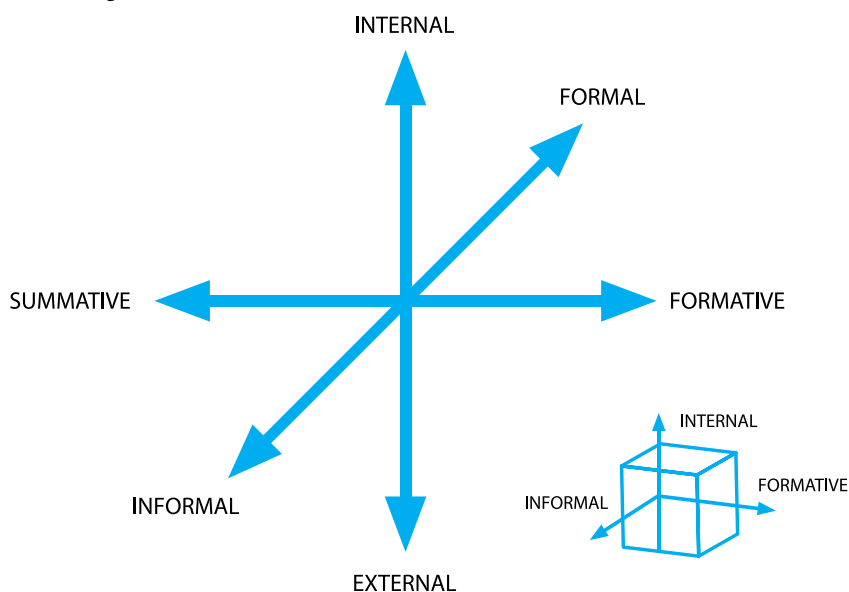


FIGURE 1: Rectangular axes defining a continuous assessment space

# Understanding Continuous Assessment

## 3. helping in shaping the pupils' future learning and career possibilities.

**Terminal assessment may be conceptualised as assessment that takes place at the conclusion of a Grade 5 or Grade 6 programme (say). It involves CXC, teachers, students, parents.**

### Concluding statement

The assessment scheme used by CXC at all levels of examinations make use of School Based Assessments (SBA). Over the years, the practice has been well researched and validated by CXC and other examination boards (Broomes 1997, Harlen 2004).

At an SBA workshop held in Barbados during 2011, Leona Emtage of CXC, having analysed the CSEC examination data for a stratified sample of six schools over three consecutive years, began her presentation by asserting, "a more complete picture of students' performance is obtained when teachers and students are meaningfully engaged in the assessment process" (Emtage, 2011). CXC has maintained that the benefits of SBA are the direct consequences of exploiting formative assessment methodology within the classroom, and of making a skillful use of feedback. This is also the major argument of the extensive work of Black and Wiliam in schools in the UK. (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Continuous assessment as explicated in this article explored the benefits and advantages of the key concepts of formative-summative assessment and also informal-formal, internal-external, divergent-convergent assessments, and boldly goes beyond the thinking of a space within which all these key concepts are integrated and used to initiate the young into the ways of the "tribe" and to go beyond-deeper, further and higher.

Under continuous assessment, as developed in this article, assessment of the highest standards emerges and is remarkable in two dynamic ways:

First and foremost, it seeks to attain prescribed learning outcomes whose critical attributes have been communicated clearly and context-wise to all learners. (One solution relates to the authenticity of the task, so to speak).

Second, the process of the assessment affects the learning process, meta-cognitively, that is, for example, in learning how to learn, in being aware of one's own learning strategies.

Under continuous assessment, as described in this article, those who design tests for use among primary and secondary students have to be more than mere crafters of multiple choice items even though the items comprehensively span the test domains of interest and the realms of meaning fit-for-purpose (See Phenix, 1964).

Teachers as test designers must assume a research-oriented approach in order to coax from the learners useful responses to:

- What does the learner perceive?
- How does the learner seek meaning?
- What prior learning is of most worth to the learner?

Continuous assessment is perceived as a unitary phenomenon integrating at least three major forms of assessment: formative-summative, informal-formal, and internal-external – tended to emphasise the pay-off benefits of achieving shared clarity among learners and teachers.

Learners need to understand the criteria by which, how they learn and what they learn will be judged as appropriate emerging standards.

Teachers need to have a clear grasp of the emerging shape of the process and product of learning; that is, what does learning look like as it grows and develops?

These understandings by learner and teacher are shared and negotiated through the dialectical effects of assessment, especially formative assessment as conceived by Scriven way back in 1967 (Scriven, 1967).

We now know that this shared clarity assumes sharper dimensions and becomes tellingly efficient through peer assessment and self assessment. McDonald, (2004) showed the remarkable transformation that occurred within CXC classrooms and among CXC learners when self assessment became the principal independent variable in a teaching-learning hypothesis.



### Dr Desmond

**Broomes** is one of the leading measurement experts in the Caribbean. A former UWI lecturer, Dr Broomes is a special consultant to CXC on measurement and evaluation matters.

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The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) has been cited by a number of regional leaders, policy makers and experts in the field of education as one of the significant success stories of the regional integration enterprise. The purpose of this article is to share with readers the views of one “insider” at CXC on aspects of our assessment policies and procedures that I am convinced have contributed to CXC’s success to date. I will further suggest that these policies and procedures play an integral part in the sound psychometric practices that are the basis of the development, administration, marking and grading of CXC’s examinations.

The space delimited for this article does not permit a detailed discussion of all of the features of the assessment provided by CXC so I will focus on three that, I believe, have contributed in no small measure to the respect that CXC has earned throughout the region and further afield. These three features are CXC’s:

1. Recognition of **the teacher’s central role** in the assessment of students
2. Strategy of using a **variety of measurement techniques** or approaches to measure a **variety of traits, cognitive abilities or skills**
3. **Commitment to listen** to the users of its syllabuses and examinations

#### The role of the teacher

From its inception CXC has recognised and embraced the classroom teacher as a major partner in the assessment of candidates registering for its examination offerings. It is widely accepted that CXC has made the term ‘school-based assessment’ (SBA) part of the everyday vocabulary in schools and households across the region. What is not so well known is that CXC has been a pioneer among examination boards in this regard, implementing school-based assessment and recognising its contribution to the final grade of candidates well in advance of other boards in the developed and developing countries.

School-based assessment provides classroom teachers with a voice in 20 to 50 per cent of their students’ final grades. Over the years, teachers’ ability to manage SBA has improved and, while quality assurance continues to be a major component of the marking activities each year, on the whole the consistency and fairness of teachers’ marking are strong indicators of the professionalism and expertise that they bring to this process.

In its more recent initiatives, starting with the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) and even more explicitly with the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment

## So, what *IS* so special about the assessment provided by CXC



*By Gordon Harewood, PhD*

(CPEA), CXC has been championing the use of formative assessment (assessment **for** learning) by classroom teachers. The CPEA is still in the pilot phase but initial data indicate its potential to re-shape teaching and learning at primary school level.

SBA gives the teachers (as well as parents) the opportunity to see the strengths and weaknesses of their children, and therefore, become an integral part of the teaching-learning process; this is by no means the only opportunity for teachers to contribute to the CXC assessment process. Practising teachers are also key members of the panels that create the syllabuses; they write questions that are used on CXC’s examinations; they provide feedback on our examinations after each administration and, of course, they mark the examination scripts. To be sure, the relationship is one that is mutually beneficial. CXC’s products are enhanced by the contributions of the region’s brightest and best teachers, while the teachers enjoy training and valuable practical experience in syllabus design and assessment, in particular item writing, preparation of mark schemes and scoring rubrics and, of course, training in marking with the guidance of a standardised, carefully constructed mark scheme.

Finally, discussion of the teachers’ role in assessment would be incomplete without pointing to the order of merit listing and the predicted grades provided by teachers for their groups of students writing the examinations. While the teachers’ predicted grades do not contribute to the overall grades in the same way as the SBA scores do, the use of both predicted grades and SBA scores reflects CXC’s firm conviction that the classroom teachers who have prepared students for the examination are in the ideal position to assess their students’ achievement in relation to the syllabuses defined by CXC.

The value of the teachers’ order of merit rankings and predicted grades has been demonstrated year after year in instances where candidates are affected by special circumstances and for valid reasons are unable to complete all the components of the examination. Such candidates may be eligible for an assessed grade and, if this is the case, the predicted grades and ranking provided by the teacher are used as quality assurance check points against which the assessed grades may be compared to ensure that every candidate has been treated fairly after all the available data have been taken into account.

#### Using multiple methods to measure a variety of outcomes

The multitrait-multimethod approach (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) has a long and distinguished history in social sciences research as a tool for exploring construct validity. In



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*So, what **IS** so special about the assessment provided by CXC?*

**“What is not so well known is that CXC has been a pioneer among examination boards in this regard, implementing school-based assessment and recognising its contribution to the final grade of candidates well in advance of other boards in the developed and developing countries.”**

the context of the CSEC and CAPE assessment procedures, CXC uses multiple methods (multiple choice questions, structured questions, extended essay questions, oral exercises and SBA tasks) to measure a multiplicity of ‘sub-constructs’ (profile dimensions or modules) that make up the larger construct – the subject as defined by the CSEC or CAPE syllabus. In analysing examination data, it is thus possible to examine the ‘**convergent validity**’ (that is, the extent to which different methods of measuring achievement on the same profile or module correlate highly among themselves) and ‘**discriminant validity**’ (the extent to which there is a weaker relationship among distinct profile dimensions as measured by the same method). This approach provides CXC with the empirical data needed to assess the construct validity of our examinations.

From the candidates’ perspective, the use of a variety of question formats provides them with more than just one response mode to demonstrate what they know and can do. In this way, our assessment attempts to cater for the variety of learning styles and intelligences present in the candidate population. This yields a more complete and accurate picture of candidates’ performance, and for CXC, this approach provides strong empirical evidence of the validity of its assessment procedures. Further, these data provide evidence to support and justify the use of candidates’ performance on one paper to predict or estimate performance on another paper, should this become necessary. Again, this is vital evidence that may be used to define procedures for treating in a fair manner with candidates who may be entitled to assessed grades in accordance with approved criteria and conditions for the award of such grades.

#### **Commitment to listen and learn**

Feedback from teachers on examination question papers has always been an integral part of CXC’s assessment procedures. At each sitting of the May – June examinations, questionnaires are administered to teachers soliciting their

comments on the question papers, while teachers who are involved in the marking exercise also provide valuable insight into how candidates have interacted with the questions they encountered when they wrote the examination. Analysis of this feedback serves to inform marking teams’ decisions on whether adjustments need to be made to the mark schemes to ensure that candidates’ responses are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner. This feedback also feeds into the next round of paper setting, as examination committees strive to continually improve and innovate in the tasks created each year to measure candidates’ achievement.

It is important to note that the consultative approach and CXC’s use of feedback from stakeholders are also integral aspects of the syllabus development process. Teachers are included among the membership of syllabus panels who create and revise syllabuses, and draft syllabuses are always circulated to a wide cross section of teachers, curriculum specialists, teacher educators, content experts and other categories of stakeholders for review prior to publication and implementation.

CXC also has available several other channels of communication through which feedback on its examinations and syllabuses may be received. The reports of National Committees’ are among the more traditional means of hearing from the professionals in Ministries of Education, subject associations and other groups in the participating territories. National Committees have been part and parcel of the examinations from their introduction.

In more recent times, however, CXC has actively sought to open other channels, some face-to-face, such as town hall meetings, student forums, stakeholders’ seminars, as well as others which exploit up-to-date information and communication technology to receive comments and questions and hear concerns and complaints. CXC now uses these means to provide the prompt, targeted responses which are expected by teachers and students, especially in the time

period leading up to the examinations or to critical examination-related deadlines. The CXC Facebook page plays a vital role in this regard throughout the year, while the cry of “Put it on the portal” is one of the frequently used expressions during the marking exercises; the portal being the online channel used by markers to, among other things, award (electronic) brickbats or bouquets to CXC during that activity.

#### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the common goal of the three features discussed is the desire to provide assessment that is not only of high psychometric quality, but that also recognises the importance of the region’s teachers and students and is responsive to their concerns. The fact that CXC has been doing this for over three decades and is continually seeking ways to do it better is one of the recurring themes of the CXC success story.

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# CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS AS USED BY CXC

By Anthony Haynes, PhD

## Intended purposes: Why Use Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT)?

Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) were introduced and made popular in educational and assessment fields by Popham and Husek (1969) and Glaser (1963). A criterion-referenced test can be described as one where the candidate's performance on the test is compared with an external criterion or standard of performance without regard to the distribution of scores achieved by other candidates. In other words it is the performance on or mastery of the criteria that matters, even if all the candidates obtain the same score.

There are various definitions of CRT but the one which best describes CXC's experience is that given by Glaser and Nitko (1971, p. 653). They defined a CRT as one

*"...that is deliberately constructed so as to yield measurements that are directly interpretable in terms of specified performance standards.... The performance standards are usually specified by defining some domain of tasks that the student should perform. Representative samples of tasks from this domain are organised into a test. Measurements are taken and are used to*

*make a statement about the performance of each individual relative to that domain."*

From its inception in 1972, CXC adopted the CRT model and used this approach when its first examinations were administered in 1979. CRT was implemented since it provided the means for reporting on students' achievement in relation to content, cognitive abilities and skills that are clearly defined in syllabuses developed by CXC and readily available to the public.

In adopting the CRT model, CXC has focused on three main aspects: performance standards, test development and certification which involves the interpretation of the test scores.

## Performance Standards: Syllabuses

CXC employs a consultative process for syllabus development. Under the guidance of syllabus officers, subject panels prepare syllabuses for the various subjects examined by CXC.

The performance standards for a subject are clearly outlined in the respective syllabus. The required content and skills are arranged into units/content areas, profiles and specific objectives.

Typically, three papers are administered on different occasions. The various steps to enhance test validity involve providing syllabuses with objectives clearly defined, from which specific objectives are targeted to create a table of specifications which is used to plan the test. The selected specific objectives are judged by the examining committee to be important and representative of the test domain. The test items are based on the specific objectives in the table of specifications. These items are written to fit the specific objectives in the table of specifications as well as the profile dimensions specified by each objective. The items are subsequently aligned to the selected criterion grade levels. The specific objectives in the syllabus are considered as criteria to be achieved or skills to be mastered by the candidate. The critical question which must be answered to judge the level of mastery is: has a candidate demonstrated a given level of competence, allowing the examiner to state, with some degree of confidence, that the candidate has achieved the minimum standard required for a particular grade?



## Criterion-Referenced Tests as used by CXC

# From its inception in 1972, CXC adopted the CRT model and used this approach when its first examinations were administered in 1979.

### Test Development: Selection of Test Content

The use of expert judgements is one of the other techniques utilised by CXC in its CRT model. The examining committees regard content validity highly and seek to ensure that the test content adequately represents the content domain and the items adequately reflect the construct.

When setting standards or cut-off scores for each grade, the examiners are primarily concerned with whether or not candidates have reached established levels of mastery. They compare candidates' performance, not with other candidates in the group, but with the pre-set standard judged to be adequate for the award of particular grades.

They also ensure that the items which make up the entire examination consist of a representative sample of the criterion (or specific objectives) chosen from the syllabus. This process begins with the development of a table of specifications which shows the relative weights of each selected objective within each cell, along with the profile dimension specified by each objective. It also outlines the content of the test, the number of items, the item formats, the desired psychometric properties of the items, and the item and section arrangement. Using the test specifications as the blueprint, questions/items are written or selected to be adequate exemplars of the tasks identified and must be important for the proficiency/level for which the examination is intended. Although no test can measure everything of importance, the content is selected on the basis of its significance in the syllabus rather than how well it discriminates among candidates. Based on the judgement of the examiners, some items are retained in spite of statistics which do not meet the criteria of traditional norm referenced examinations, since by discarding items with low correlations with other items or with the total test score, the examiner "risks making the test less representative of the defined universe" (Cronbach, 1970, p. 458). The examiner's process of creating a representative test focuses on identifying the various subsections/units of the syllabus that are specified and then ensuring that the test reflects the proportional weightings of each subsection (Cronbach, 1970). The preliminary grade cut-off scores are also specified at the paper development stage.

### Certification: Test Interpretation and Validation

The validity of the examination is primarily assured at the test construction/paper setting stage, whereas the reliability (scores) is to be assured at the standardising, marking and grading stages. CXC's priority is to ensure that marking is fair and that grades are valid and accurate. The marking is standardised in such a way that the mark scheme is sufficiently clear and unambiguous to be used by markers working with little direct coordination and supervision. There are two aspects to the mark scheme: the first is the profile/skill/content area to which the candidate's performance is judged and a scale to which marks are awarded depending on how much of the skill the candidate exhibits. The different criterion performance levels (grade criteria), which are clearly specified before the test is constructed, are used as standards for interpreting candidates' scores.

The absolute descriptive data on a candidate's performance is provided in terms of an overall grade and profile grades to show what the candidate can or cannot do. After the marking exercise, the preliminary grade cut-off scores which were specified at paper development are reviewed. The review takes the form of a validation process, which occurs during the grading exercise, when the quality of candidates' performance and scores are compared across adjacent years and sittings, and the preliminary cut-off scores may be adjusted. This is done in order to ensure that the objectively defined standard (that is, level of competence) connoted by each grade is maintained across time. This process includes the statistical evaluation of items/questions and profiles to ascertain that they measure what they purport to measure, are appropriate for the test population, minimise the amount of test error, and are coherent in style and format.

### Summary

In terms of testing procedures, CXC has been with the forerunners in instituting criterion-referenced testing, SBA and profiling in achievement testing. CXC has adopted CRT for assessing how well candidates have mastered the specified content domain and associated skills. The criterion-referenced approach is

regarded by CXC as one of the fairest, most transparent systems of assessment, and one that allows the users of its certificates to make sound inferences about candidates' mastery of the domains tested.

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# TEST DEVELOPMENT in Public Examinations – CXC Stands Tall

By John Andor, PhD

## INTRODUCTION

The reputation of any public examination body hinges on three key pillars: the technical quality of its examination papers, the structure of its assessment and the sanctity of its test administration process.

### *The Technical Quality of the Examination Papers*

Here I mean the extent to which the test items, and by extension the examination papers, possess the two key psychometric properties of validity and reliability. Reliability indices are usually available to the examination boards themselves. Their internal systems are designed to generate them. They can be made available on request.

At the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), reliability indices are produced for multiple choice items and papers, paper components and entire subjects for every examination. CXC boasts of very high reliability indices year after year for all its examinations. In furtherance of its avowed aim of enhancing quality in its examinations, an internal recommendation has been made to produce indices to show the extent to which the entire examination (in each subject and components) for two successive years map onto each other – a form of concurrent validity. This will tell CXC how fair it has been to the two cohorts comparatively using their performances as a measure. That done, CXC will be able to make definitive statements on that aspect of its quality assurance process – I do not know of any examination board that produces this information – CXC may be setting the pace.

### *The Structure of the Assessment*

By this I mean the various ways in which the examination is designed to capture the overall learning outcomes of students such that the ultimate certification can reflect the extent to which the assessment mirrors the content domain as laid out in the various syllabuses.

The CXC has a unique triangular model.

Almost every subject examined at both the CSEC and CAPE levels has a multiple-choice component, a written component and a school-based assessment (SBA) component. With this structure, CXC is able to assess a high percentage of the expected learning outcomes in both depth and breadth. Many examination boards, that I know of, do not use multiple-choice items for testing at the advanced level; doing so is a bold decision and CXC needs to be congratulated for doing so because it demonstrates an acceptance of measurement experts' belief that multiple choice can be used for testing even at the highest level.

Until recently, the inclusion of SBA in external certification had not been a feature of most public examinations. The old GCE 'O' and 'A' levels bequeathed to many developing countries in Africa by the British did not have SBA components. Even though some of these boards have now introduced SBAs, they do not come close to what CXC does in terms of giving guidance and in the training of teachers. Some boards simply allocate a fixed percentage of the total mark per subject to the teacher (irrespective of subject). On receipt of the scores from schools, statistical moderation is used to bring the scores into line using the external scores as a moderator.

### *The Sanctity of the Test Administration Process*

Tests and test items can be valid and reliable; the assessment structure can be comprehensive but if the test administration procedure is compromised, the entire examination is worthless.

The key issues in test administration are security, logistics, effective candidate supervision (to avoid examination malpractices) and a transparent marking process.

Every public examination body's worst nightmare is to find out that its papers for an examination yet to be taken or even in some cases already taken, are out there in the market or were out there before the examination was written *verbatim et literatim* on a massive scale. This can be damaging to the board's reputation as reprinting and re-administration is costly. The usual panacea adopted by the boards in paper leakage situations is to fix new dates for the leaked papers to be rewritten. There is an undocumented cost to candidates, whose examination papers have been leaked and who have to rewrite, (which no examination board has ever computed, at least not that I know of) in terms of the inconvenience caused and the psychological trauma that these innocent candidates go through. In such situations, affected candidates believe that the replacement papers are more difficult than the original ones. This is especially true for those whose expected grades fall below their original expectations.

In the Caribbean, examination leakage is very rare compared to sub-Saharan Africa. For this, credit must first go to CXC for designing and adhering to security regulations that have made security breaches a rare occurrence in its examinations. What is even more fascinating how tightly CXC is able to uphold its security procedures across the many separate islands. CXC's agents in the various participating territories, the Local Registrars, play a major role in enforcing and monitoring security procedures relating to the administration of the examinations in their respective countries.

Credit must also go to stakeholders in education in the Caribbean as a whole for upholding high levels of moral discipline.





## Test Development in Public Examinations

Elsewhere, parents, teachers and students are known to go shopping for leaked papers prior to the start and even during the examinations.

Examination leakage (foreknowledge) remains the single most embarrassing headache for most countries in Africa.

### TEST DEVELOPMENT AT CXC AND OTHER BOARDS/COUNTRIES COMPARED

From the above accounts, it can be seen clearly that CXC stands tall when compared with other boards in Africa and the UK under all three factors that determine the credibility of public examination boards. I say this, not as an act of patronage, but out of personal knowledge and experience that I have acquired over the years having dealt with examination boards in three continents dating back to 1981.

My interaction with colleague educationists, both within and outside this subregion makes me believe that my observations about CXC are not frivolous. In fact, I know of an international assessment expert who dealt with CXC many years ago, and who was only recently contracted to set up a credible examination board in a very big country in Asia – naturally he will apply some of what he knows CXC does.

What many stakeholders do not know is how CXC sets its examination papers as compared to other international boards. This is another crucial area where comparisons can be made, lessons can be learnt and best practices adopted.

I do not know of any public examination board that has ever put its test development procedures out to the public; but in the context of the quest for transparency and accountability in the use of public resources as well as the advent of the information superhighway, nothing can be considered a secret anymore; large empires have fallen, the Cold War is over and access to the most hidden information has become a matter of just a tap on the keyboard. CXC will set the pace in this disclosure.

### SO WHO SETS THE EXAMINATION PAPERS FOR PUBLIC EXAMINATION BOARDS?

Public examinations that are domain-based originate from content experts who are preferably people who have been trained to teach, those currently teaching (although for security reasons not the year group for whom the test is meant) or who have some experience in teaching at the level for which the test is meant. Measurement officers of public examination bodies facilitate the paper-setting process and fine-tune the questions to ensure that they meet the psychometric standards required.

The single justification for using people with pedagogical training to write test items is that assessment experts agree that assessment must be aligned to instruction (Gipps 1994, Tucker 2009)

and so it stands to reason that teachers who are trained to deliver classroom instruction and who deliver this instruction on a daily basis are those who should set test items.

It must be emphasised that the ability to write a test item that will suit the learning style of students is a skill that must be developed and nurtured. No one in my opinion can boast of this skill other than teachers who set test items in their classrooms to diagnose student learning difficulties, to evaluate their teaching strategies and determine student mastery of content.

It is widely recognised that teachers are those who are in the best position to determine the suitability of psychological measurement instruments (whether tests or attitudinal scales) meant for pupils who they teach and whose learning styles they know. It is therefore not strange that Logan and Medford (2012) submitted their questionnaires to classroom teachers to evaluate their suitability for the age range of children in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 in their study.

According to Abbas (2008), the newly established Aga Khan University Examinations Board in Pakistan “has several ways to support teachers and expose them to the demands of the new style of examination” (n.p.n). These include conducting one-day workshops for teachers where the examination syllabuses are explained to them; material development workshops to help teachers focus their teaching, “while workshops on item writing prepare teachers to offer quality assessments to their students in class”.

There is considerable research evidence in support of the efficacy of the use of assessment to support teaching and learning. In fact, Gipps (1994) in Rehmani (2003) has suggested that “the major purpose of assessment is to support the teaching and learning process” (p.2).

Tucker (2009), in his paper on how technology-enabled assessment data can be used to improve instruction, has stated that:

“These [test] data could then be used to adapt instruction by creating a better understanding about students’ knowledge, and their conceptual understanding and cognitive development, which would lead not only to better assessment but to significant improvements in instruction and learning (2009 p.2).”

Similarly, Bennett (n.d) in Tucker (2009) “has envisioned testing merged with instruction, which would allow teachers and students to use feedback from testing to adjust teaching to improve student achievement” (op. cit).

What I have tried to do in this section is to adduce research evidence to support the use of content experts, especially those in the classroom, to generate test items. It is a world-wide practice which, apart from helping teachers to refine and improve their teaching, is a fulfillment of the requirement to align assessment to teaching; what

is more, it contributes in no small measure to the development of teacher professionalism.

### HOW ARE THE TEST PAPERS IN CXC EXAMINATIONS SET VIS-À-VIS OTHER BOARDS?

The ‘bible’ on which domain-dependent public examinations are based is the syllabus. The syllabus is more or less the contract document between the boards on one hand, and students, teachers, parents and employers on the other. In some jurisdictions, there is a clear distinction between the teaching syllabus which is designed for teaching in schools by the national education authorities and the examination syllabus which is an extraction from the teaching syllabus of the testable topics. The use of examination syllabuses concurrently as teaching syllabuses is not new. Until the early 1980s, most African countries which wrote the London GCE ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels used those syllabuses as their national teaching syllabuses.

Currently, almost all territories in the subregion use CXC’s syllabuses as their teaching syllabuses. There is nothing wrong with this practice, provided that these syllabuses reflect national and regional aspirations. I have scrutinised CXC documentation and I am more than convinced that CXC is a driver of educational assessment excellence in the subregion; the boundaries of its own educational aspirations and those of the territories are virtually co-terminous.

This article will not give the details of the procedure for question paper setting step by step, but an attempt will be made to show how CXC, like any other credible examination bodies, goes through all the necessary steps to ensure that it designs tests that are not only valid and reliable but also suitable for the level they are meant to test.

In line with internationally accepted practice, CXC identifies content experts with the required experience and gives them the required training in test construction. As mentioned elsewhere in this article, these content experts may be people who are trained to deliver instruction, currently delivering instruction (just above the level for which the test will be used) or who have for many years delivered classroom instruction and are now retired. With this policy, CXC meets the demand of ensuring that assessment, whether high stakes or low stakes, must be aligned to instruction.

### The Initial Draft

Based on identified criteria and the relevant syllabuses, trained subject experts are commissioned to write draft examination questions and submit for consideration. In some jurisdictions, one person can be commissioned to write a whole paper, the advantage of which is that the test writer has a holistic view of the entire



paper in terms of balance and difficulty level in its draft stage. The problem with this approach, however, is that it can be very taxing and the paper may be affected by the personal idiosyncrasies of that single writer.

In other jurisdictions, identified writers are commissioned to write test items for sections of each paper only. The advantages are, firstly, it is less tiresome and secondly, when different items for different sections of the paper from different writers are put together, the complete paper becomes richer because it benefits from the perspectives of not just one person. This is CXC's approach.

### *The Paper-setting Meeting*

The next step in the paper-setting process is to bring together a number of content experts to a roundtable to work on the drafts that have been produced. The Chairperson of this team is the person who has overall responsibility for the question paper and is usually designated the Chief Examiner, appointed beforehand. The job of this small group of experts is to use their professional expertise to look at each item that will eventually constitute the paper to ensure that it is capable of teasing out of the candidate the type of behaviour or learning outcome that the learning objectives stated in the syllabus seek to deliver. In other words, the item must fall within the syllabus, relate to a specific measurable skill/objective, be suitable for the specific age level (Piaget c.1968), and must not measure triviality. The item must also satisfy grammatical rules and be free from ambiguity. Essentially, this group of experts moderates the original draft questions to bring them to the level appropriate for those they are meant to test; hence in some jurisdictions this meeting is called a moderating meeting rather than a paper-setting meeting. It must be emphasised that papers can also be set and moderated at one and the same meeting, (from where the term paper-setting meeting was coined). The disadvantage, however, is that time pressure can lead to quality being sacrificed and/or an incomplete paper-setting exercise. The items from this meeting are eventually compiled into a test paper but that is not the end of the process.

The next stage of the process is for the content experts also to consider the expected answers to the questions – which may have typically been drafted at the time the paper was originally set. These answers to the questions are very important because they are supposed to be used as a common guide for markers who will be recruited to mark candidate scripts after the test has been taken. Together with the question paper, the agreed answers to the questions (usually called a mark scheme with mark allocations) can be likened to a measuring instrument such as a ruler (or tape) or scale used to measure length and determine weight

respectively in everyday life. What we are doing actually in testing is measuring student learning outcomes, hence the title measurement (MED) officers formerly used for designated staff in CXC. The Measurement Officer is the originator and the facilitator of the entire process from paper setting through to marking and grading.

### *Pre- and Peer Editing*

The technical quality of a test paper depends on the quality assurance measures to which it is subjected. Mindful of this, therefore, CXC first subjects the draft paper to a pre- and peer edit after typesetting. At this stage the entire paper and its mark scheme are scrutinised by a professional in-house editor and then by colleague measurement officers to ensure that they meet preliminary identified criteria – conform to house-style, are free from errors and ambiguity, satisfy the information put out in the syllabus and are appropriate for the level being tested.

Experience has shown that this step is extremely useful, as very vital issues that may have eluded the compositors and content experts have in many cases been identified. However, this practice is not universal because it has the single disadvantage of expanding the population that has foreknowledge (albeit authorised) of the contents of the paper. In Africa and elsewhere where question paper leakage is endemic, peer editing is not practised; the subject officer him/herself has the added responsibility of checking the word-processed paper.

### *External/Single/Anonymous Moderator*

After peer edit and amendment, the test paper is taken through another crucial stage. The paper, the mark scheme, the relevant syllabus and other specifications of the paper are forwarded to an independent content expert called the moderator. His/her role is critical and usually his/her identity is not disclosed.

The job of the external moderator, which is part of the quality assurance process, is to consider all the papers that make up the examination of the subject at the specific level, and based on his/her expertise and experience submit an independent professional opinion on any aspect of the paper in terms of the criteria itemized above. The moderator is expected to put himself/herself in the position of the candidate who will be taking the paper and make any observation that he/she thinks fit. In fact, the moderator is supposed to work through the paper and time him/herself to be able to comment meaningfully on the adequacy of the time allotted to the paper.

The use of the moderator in the paper development process is a key feature of the UK public examination system and was inherited by some African examining boards. Unfortunately, here too, because of rampant leakages, this

stage has been scrapped to limit the extent of foreknowledge. CXC uses it to positive effect.

### *The Chief Examiner's Response*

This is another quality assurance measure. The comments of the moderator are forwarded to the Chief Examiner for consideration. The Chief Examiner examines the moderator's comments and where he/she agrees, makes any required change and sends the paper back to CXC. The measurement officer then continues the quality assurance process. The Chief Examiner is also free to disagree with the moderator; in either case reasons must be given and documented. The measurement officer then makes the necessary amendments in the light of the Chief Examiner's responses and puts the paper into near finished form. Examination bodies that do not use the moderator interventions will definitely lose out on the extra quality contribution that this stage makes to the process.

### *Technical Editing*

This is about the last stage of the formal quality assurance process. It is an in-house activity. This stage appears unique to CXC in my experience. Most examination boards do not use it for security reasons but in a society like ours where we can boast of staff honesty and loyalty, there appears to be no risk. Here, the complete paper with the marking scheme and the syllabus and other specifications are submitted to two identified measurement officers for further independent scrutiny. Their written comments on any aspect of the paper are re-submitted to the officer concerned, who then looks at the merits of each comment and decides on what to accept or reject.

### *Chief Examiner's Final Signature*

Before the paper is sent to print, the Chief Examiner is given another opportunity to scrutinise it and give his/her approval by signing it off. Even this is not final. On receipt of the signed paper from the Chief Examiner, the measurement officer still has a responsibility to re-check to ensure that the paper is error-free before authorising printing.

### *Finalisation*

The paper is then finalised and readied for print. At this point the paper is supposed to be free from any form of error as far as humanly possible. Before the paper goes to print however, the Head of Measurement who has overall oversight responsibility for the quality of every question paper also scrutinises it and brings any concerns to the attention of the measurement officer for resolution. In most examination boards in Africa, the Head only has supervisory authority but does not see the live papers.



# Test Development in Public Examinations

## Within Print/In-house Quality Assurance

When the paper is sent to print, it is brought back to the measurement officer for quality checks before mass production. After refining, advance copies are sent back for scrutiny and where necessary, vital remedial action that may be necessary is taken to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged by an error in the final paper during the examination. Quite clearly, it can be seen from this chronology of activities that the quality assurance process for question paper development and production at CXC is designed to rival that of any reputable public examination board anywhere in the world.

## Caution

It is important to mention that for purposes of transparency, CXC ensures that all its officers whose children and relations are registered candidates for a particular examination are not given access to the subjects, anywhere along the line, for which their wards are registered; many other boards do this so as to pre-empt any suspicion of unfair advantage.

## PRE-TESTING AND ITEM BANKING

### Pre-testing

The purpose of pre-testing is to determine in advance the behavior of test items, especially multiple-choice items, using a sample of a population for whom the test is directed. Good items are then selected for the real test. One can thus make more reliable decisions or conclusions about the population. It is a very powerful tool used by almost all examination boards worldwide, including CXC. The only difference with the CXC procedure is that, unlike other boards, the test is administered at a time and to a population different from what other boards use. Other boards use the examination year group a few weeks prior to the actual examination. The advantage is that the sample is a near replica of the population which will eventually be given the final test. CXC may have its own reasons for its present approach but I strongly suggest that we look at the merits of what other boards do as stated here. It is emerging that some boards are beginning to pre-test extended essay items. In my candid opinion, the cost of doing that may far outweigh the benefits. Secondly, it does appear to me that the professional judgment of extended essay paper writers has, over the years, proven quite dependable in ensuring comparability of paper standards from year to year, without pretesting.

### Item-banking

Item-banking in public examinations is a term used to describe the practice of operating a reservoir of test items showing each item's test characteristics. Multiple-choice item banking is widely practised by CXC. This is also done

by almost all reputable examination bodies worldwide. It has many advantages in terms of cost savings, ease of test compilation and stability of item characteristics. This is a practice which some examination boards in Africa need to adopt. So far, they have not done so because the practice relies partly on the honesty of those who supervise the final public examination by way of not making hidden copies of the paper during the final examination, and also by accounting for all copies sent to the centre. If these requirements are not met, the integrity of the items may be compromised.

## CONCLUSION

A test is a series of questions administered to learners (who may have undergone instruction) under specific, supervised and standard security conditions. The results of the test are used to determine the extent to which the learner has attained mastery in a specified content domain (Obemeatta 1993, verbal communication).

A test is therefore a form of psychological measurement instrument used to measure learning outcomes. A test can be low stakes, where its results are used for non-competitive purposes such as diagnosing learner deficiencies in the classroom, or high stakes where its results are used for critical decisions such as evaluating the effectiveness of an educational system, allocating places of higher learning among students, determining teacher pay, policy and promotion, and certifying student learning. Koch and DeLuca (2012) have cited research evidence to suggest that province-wide assessment in Canada such as the type undertaken by public examination bodies like CXC are considered high-stakes because the results are used to make decisions that significantly impact on students, teachers and institutions. Decisions made on the basis of high-stakes assessments in various countries can include grade promotion, admission to higher education, teacher merit pay and allotment of resources to schools (p.99).

It can be seen from the high stakes nature of public examinations that test development procedures must of necessity be transparent, rigorous and robust to be able to stand stakeholder scrutiny and retain public confidence.

What this paper has sought to do is to show the key signposts of the test development procedure in CXC, pointing out the unique quality assurance measures that are employed and comparing them to some internationally accepted practices.

In my opinion, (based on my knowledge and experience of the operations of public examination bodies on three continents), CXC stands tall among recognised international examination bodies worldwide in terms of its test development procedures.



**Dr John Andor** is an Assistant Registrar in the Examinations Development and Production Division at CXC Headquarters. A Ghanaian, Dr Andor has previously been involved in public examinations in Africa (1981 to 2001) and in the UK (2004 to 2010).

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Caribbean students are among the most mobile in the world; therefore, students need to know that the qualifications they earn from CXC are a passport to enable them to pursue tertiary education anywhere in the world. This section samples the recognition of CXC's qualifications by various institutions and documents the testimonials of some past students.

Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE) is a private, non-profit credential evaluation agency established in 1980 in the United States. We prepare reports that identify the United States' equivalents of academic qualifications earned in other countries to facilitate educational exchanges and aid in the mobility of students. ECE has been preparing evaluation report for students holding various Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) qualifications since its inception.

The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) is widely considered to be the equivalent of a US high school diploma. As a recognised examination scheme used primarily as an admission tool throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean, CSEC results are also relied upon for matriculation into higher education institutions in the United States. CSEC results are viewed as an accurate assessment of student performance and a barometer of future success in a collegiate setting. Students who have taken the CSEC tend to have little resistance when applying to colleges and universities, while those who opt not to sit for the examination may find their opportunities for studying abroad somewhat limited. Generally, it is the CSEC results that are used in calculating the overall secondary school grade point average.

The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) are considered by ECE to represent the US equivalent of post-secondary level study. Successful CAPE candidates often transition into US bachelor's degree programmes with significant advanced standing. Because the two-year CAPE programme coincides with two-year, 60-credit or more, associate degree programmes offered by Caribbean community colleges, ECE recommends nine semester hours of undergraduate credit for each CAPE unit achieved. (A curriculum of seven CAPE units is required to earn a CXC Associate Degree).

Since CAPE was developed as a regional replacement for traditional British Advanced level examinations, there is some confusion in the US surrounding the difference in meaning and purpose of the CAPE Associate Degree and Advanced Proficiency Diploma (comprised of six CAPE units) as they relate to A-Levels. US institutions often recommend up to one year of advanced standing in degree programmes for A-levels, but as educational structures in Caribbean countries have shifted away from the British tradition to be more aligned with a US associate degree/bachelor's degree system, up to two years of advanced standing credit may be considered for the CAPE programme. A consistent approach at US universities and colleges is lacking with respect to where or how to place students with a two-year associate degree earned at Caribbean community college versus

# ECE on CXC QUALIFICATIONS

*By Melissa Ganiere*



## What institutions say about **CSEC** and **CAPE**

a two-year **CAPE** associate degree or diploma. It is vital that the CXC continues the effort in spreading the word about **CAPE** examinations. As registrars and admission personnel become more familiar with the CXC examinations and their processes, the transferability of students is increasing.

The reputation of the CXC is one of professionalism, trustworthiness, and rigour. Over time, the availability of certificates and curricular information has increased dramatically, and the CXC's website provides a plethora of data including syllabuses and programme details. The grading systems appear well developed and are simple to interpret, while examination records are straightforward and easy to read. If questions arise regarding these aspects, the CXC is quick to clarify.

The documentation practices of the CXC are laudable, and instances of fraud or alteration are rarely encountered. This is due in part to the various safety features on CXC credentials, along with a clear method of document verification.

Students are able to have their records sent directly from the CXC to overseas institutions and other third parties as the preferred method of delivery. We have heard from students that obtaining certificates from the CXC is a simple and efficient process. The establishment of on-line transcript requests provides students immediate access, and pushes the CXC to the forefront of web-based technology. All of these advances result in a streamlined transfer process for many students.

It is evident that the CXC remains cognizant of the current trends in education, and seeks to incorporate the most relevant and cutting edge philosophies in their pedagogical approaches. This can be witnessed in the development of IT courses at both the **CSEC** and **CAPE** levels, along with competency-based assessment in examinations. The review of course content and student learning outcomes is continuous as the CXC strives to ensure they are contributing to the output of high caliber students from the region.

As the CXC works to establish articulation

agreements with various institutions in the United States, Canada, and within the Caribbean, the number of students studying outside of their home country will inevitably surge. Opportunities for further education are developing both within the Caribbean and abroad, while the worth and importance of the CXC is simultaneously expanding. We look forward to welcoming more and more students to the United States to continue their education. ECE's experience with the CXC has been overwhelmingly positive, and we hope to continue to broaden our connection in the future.



***Melissa Ganiere** is an Evaluator with Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. based in Wisconsin, USA.*



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# AES on CSEC and CAPE

Academic Evaluation Services (AES) is based in Florida and consequently has a large number of applicants from the Caribbean region. Thus, AES has made it a special priority to keep abreast of the latest developments in Caribbean education. Our shared language and historical background and the commonalities between the US educational system and that of the Caribbean can make it difficult for a US admissions counselor to decipher credentials submitted by applicants from the Caribbean. The superficial similarities between the two systems – from high school diplomas to bachelor degrees, from the use of the A-F grading scale on many transcripts to the increasingly common US-style associate degrees – mask some significant differences, the most prominent of which are the examinations and credentials offered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC).

Our philosophy in evaluation is to hold students to the standards expected of them in the education

system in which they study. Therefore, the primary credential that we look for when determining the equivalency of US high school graduation is the Caribbean Examinations Council's Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), rather than diplomas from the high schools attended. We explain on our evaluation reports that high school diplomas, while valuable for entry to the workplace, are not sufficient for university admission in the Caribbean region, and that sitting for the CSEC – and passing the examinations at a certain standard – are required for university admission.

AES goes into great detail on our evaluation reports when the CSEC is submitted. We list each individual examination, whether it was passed at the General, Basic or Technical proficiency level, the grade received and whether the grade was considered "with credit" (Grades I, II and III) or "without credit" (grades below III). We also specify whether or not the examinations for English A and Mathematics were passed with credit, that is Grades I-III, as these grades are normally required for university admission in the Caribbean. While such details can be time-consuming, we have found that the recipients of our evaluation reports appreciate knowing how we arrive at our findings and respect our methodology.

Increasingly, students from the Caribbean region are sitting for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) after successful completion of the CSEC. At AES we encourage holders of the

CAPE to order a course-by-course analysis to receive potential undergraduate transfer credit for these examinations. We recommend up to five semester hours of undergraduate credit for each Unit successfully achieved on the CAPE, that is, Grades I-V. As with the CSEC, we discuss the CAPE in detail on our evaluation reports to explain our methodology and rationale. We have found that the undergraduate transfer credit we recommend for the CAPE is usually honoured by the recipients of our evaluation reports.

AES seeks to obtain the most accurate and up-to-date information available for our credential evaluation resources and for Caribbean students; we have no better partner than the CXC. We appreciate the CXC's presence at international conferences such as NAFSA and make sure our evaluators attend their informative sessions where the latest trends, updates and changes in Caribbean education are discussed. We have also found the staff of the CXC to be extremely helpful whenever we have need to contact them with general questions or questions about specific examinations. With the growing number of Caribbean students taking the CSEC and CAPE, and with the increasing numbers of Caribbean students pursuing further education in the US, AES is looking forward to a long and fruitful partnership with the CXC.

*Academic Evaluation Services (AES) is Florida-based agency which provides US educational equivalencies and translations services.*



## Providing U.S. educational equivalencies & translations

We analyze foreign academic and professional credentials to establish the equivalent degree or years of study that would be awarded in the U.S. educational system, at different levels of education. Among other purposes, an evaluation is generally required for the following uses:

- academic study
- professional licensing
- general employment
- immigration matters



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## What institutions say about CSEC and CAPE

# CXC Qualifications get Recognition in India

The Association of Indian Universities (AIU), the organisation which is the clearing house for international qualifications in India has granted equivalence to the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), the two leading qualifications offered by CXC.

In a letter to CXC, the Indian High Commissioner in Trinidad and Tobago conveyed the news to Dr Didacus Jules, CXC Registrar.

The AIU has granted equivalence to Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) with a minimum of five subjects at Grades I and II with Grade 10 examination of an Indian [examinations] board.

With respect to CAPE, the AIU has accorded equivalence to CAPE with a minimum of five subjects, with a plus-two stage qualification of an Indian [examinations] board; this the AIU states, is also the minimum eligibility requirement for admission to a bachelor degree

programme at an Indian university.

The statement points out that those candidates who are successful at CAPE are eligible to join conventional degree programmes at Indian universities; however, candidates who wish to pursue a professional degree programme are required to have studied Biology, Chemistry, English, Mathematics and Physics at the advance proficiency level.

"This is good news for CXC and the Caribbean," stated Dr Didacus Jules, Registrar of CXC. "It is another statement that assures us in the region that the qualifications offered by CXC are of a very high standard and stand up to international scrutiny."

Dr Jules added that it now means that Caribbean students wishing to study at universities in India can pursue their studies without much of the red tape they encountered in the past.

## NCAA on CSEC and CAPE

By Mike Donahue, PhD

The NCAA Eligibility Center utilises CSEC and CAPE qualifications as proof of upper secondary school graduation. The NCAA has established guidelines for the lowest passing grade (see *NCAA Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility*). This document can be viewed at [www.ncaapublications.com](http://www.ncaapublications.com).

Please note the examinations must be taken in the appropriate time frame for the student's country. The results of the examinations are used to calculate the grade point average used to determine NCAA Division I and II grade point average requirements.

It is important to note that the NCAA expects students to present five or more subject passes at the general level with at least one examination in each of the NCAA core subject areas (English, mathematics, science, social science and a fifth examination in either foreign language, Religious Education, or an additional examination from English, mathematics, science or social science). Repeated examinations do not count as an additional exam.

We encourage students to take a minimum of two CAPE subjects which may be used to meet a required core subject examination. In addition, the CAPE subjects have an important role in determining the NCAA expected graduation date.

The following CSEC and CAPE subjects meet core subject areas:

**ENGLISH:** Communication Studies, English A, English B, and Literatures in English.

**MATHEMATICS:** Additional Mathematics, Mathematics, and Pure Mathematics.

**SCIENCE:** Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Human and Social Biology, Integrated Science, and Physics.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE:** Caribbean History, Caribbean Studies, Economics, Geography, History, Law, Social Studies, and Sociology.

**ADDITIONAL:** French (CAPE or CSEC) Spanish (CAPE or CSEC) and Religious Education.

*Dr Mike Donahue is the Assistant Director of International Academic Certification at the NCAA Eligibility Center in Indiana, USA.*

The University Of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada has been in Barbados for almost every fair. Director of Undergraduate Recruitment, Andre Jardin, said Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) was one of the "strongest systems you could do anywhere – it's actually stronger than our own Canadian curriculum".

**The Nation Newspaper, 8th November 2011**

"We feel that students who have achieved strong results in their CAPE Units 1 and 2 examinations are well prepared for entry to McGill University, for advanced standing credits and exemptions towards our degree programmes and for successful studies with us."

**Katherine Mayhew,**  
Senior Admissions Officer, McGill University

"For each CAPE course, the equivalent of six credit hours at Saint Mary's University is granted".

**Dr Paul Dixon, St Mary's University**

"We will be pleased to commend CAPE as a higher education entry qualification to UK higher education institutions and to present its full flexibility. Our objective would be to ensure that CAPE is well understood by the full range of admissions tutors so that students with CAPE qualifications will maximise their personal benefits from UK higher education."

**UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), July 1999**

"If you are taking CAPE Unit 2 level exams and score Grades I and II on any of the following subjects, and you are admitted to AU and join our global community, you will receive advanced standing AND credits for UA level classes....We at AU value CAPE and the education that you have received at home..."

**Evelyn Levinson, Director of International Admissions at American University**

"CSEC - We have found that these results accurately reflect students' academic abilities and preparation for post-secondary study. SUNY Plattsburgh has been awarding **transfer credit for successful completion of CAPE** for several years. Students with satisfactory CAPE results enter with advanced standing which enables them to complete their bachelor's **degrees in three (3) years**. The content of the CAPEs appears to be comparable in content and intensity to introductory-level courses in various disciplines within our course offerings."

**Mrs. Jacqueline "Jackie" Girard Vogl,**  
Assistant Vice President,  
International Enrollment Management,  
SUNY Plattsburgh



# US Higher Education WELCOMES CARIBBEAN STUDENTS

By Tim Wright

The United States has one of the most diverse, decentralised, and prolific education systems in the world. With more than 4,500 accredited institutions of higher education, there are a plethora of choices, differences, and nuances that contribute to the reputation of academic excellence for which US colleges and universities are known. For nearly a century, US colleges and universities have been a safe haven for international students and scholars and in the past decade alone, the higher education community's interest in attracting international students has grown enormously.

According to the 2011 *Open Doors* report, published by the Institute of International Education, there were 723,227 international students studying in the US during the 2010/11 academic year, a 4.7 per cent increase from the previous year. If you look back to just after September 2011 when there were 582,996 international students in the U.S., this growth is a significant indicator that the US is committed to keeping its doors open to international students. For the past ten years, the number of students from the Caribbean studying in the US has averaged at approximately 15,000. While China, India and South Korea dominate the international student market in the US with 42 per cent of the international total, the Caribbean holds rank as the region that sends more of its college-aged population to study in the US than any other region in the world—all of Asia combined. Admissions offices from US colleges and universities are taking note. With numbers of Caribbean students in the US declining in recent years (12,821 in 2010/11), dozens of institutions are ramping up their recruiting efforts and traveling to the region, either to visit

individual islands or as part of the annual college fairs organised by local ministries, secondary schools or US Embassies.

While there is strong student mobility between the region and the US, Caribbean students lack adventure in their geographic and institutional preferences. As a graduate of Roanoke College, a small liberal arts college in a rural area of southwest Virginia, I know firsthand the value of looking beyond the Ivy League, going to institutions off of your own 'beaten path' and out of your comfort zone. Statistically speaking for the Caribbean, all roads on that beaten path lead to Florida and New York (35% of the total) (see *Table 1*). These are two states with outstanding educational institutions, myriad opportunities for many students to live with relatives or within existing support networks, and a handful of public institutions, especially in Florida, that offer financial incentives specifically for Caribbean students.

While that is just fine and dandy, a student willing to be more adventurous, to wander further from this standard student mobility pathway and look for alternative options will likely be rewarded with a more robust cultural experience as well as a more lucrative financial aid package. This should be a key strategy for a student interested in studying in the US but in need of significant financial assistance: go where no Caribbean student has gone before.

Increasingly, more colleges and universities outside of Florida and New York are recruiting more actively in the Caribbean and looking to increase the number of students from this region on their campuses (see *Table 2*). The Caribbean Examinations Council is helping this effort by doing considerable outreach within the US higher

TABLE 1  
**TOP RECEIVING STATES OF  
CARIBBEAN STUDENTS**

FLORIDA	<b>18.8%</b>
NEW YORK	<b>15.8%</b>
TEXAS	<b>5.3%</b>
GEORGIA	<b>4.2%</b>
LOUISIANA	<b>4.0%</b>

TABLE 2  
**US COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES ENROLLING 100  
OR MORE CARIBBEAN STUDENTS**

Barry University
Broward College
CUNY Bronx Community College
Florida International University
Grambling State University
Miami-Dade College
Nassau Community College
Nova Southeastern University
SUNY Westchester Community College
University of Florida
University of South Florida
University of Tampa
Utah State University
Western Michigan University

SOURCE: OPEN DOORS REPORT: 2011



## What institutions say about **CSEC** and **CAPE**

US Embassy College Fair in Trinidad October 2011



education community to make them aware of the **CSEC**, **CAPE** and Associate Degrees and encourage them to establish admissions policies to award credit for specific scores on these exams. The CXC currently has credit related articulation agreements with Monroe College, Oglethorpe University, SUNY-Plattsburgh, University of South Florida, Johnson and Wales University and Berkeley College (NY). Many other institutions have published equivalency charts, while others offer credit even without articulation agreements and equivalency charts.

With such institutional diversity, geographic breadth, and price variation, an astute student will take the time to research his or her options thoroughly before applying. Though many offer similar academic degrees, athletic options, and extracurricular opportunities, no two colleges or universities are exactly alike. EducationUSA, the US Government's official source on US higher education, has a global network of 400 advising centers supported by the Department of State in 170 countries. These centers provide interested students with accurate, comprehensive

and current information on the full range of accredited colleges and universities in the US and guidance on how to access opportunities for US study. These centers are a great place to get started and more information can be found online at [www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov).

**Tim Wright** is the Regional Director for Education USA in North & Central America and the Caribbean. He can be contacted at [twright@educationusa.info](mailto:twright@educationusa.info).



## DREAM BIG—GO TO COLLEGE IN NEW YORK!

Over the years, many people from the Caribbean have studied at Monroe College in New York. Why? Because they received the education they needed for successful careers. Because they were given tremendous support in a positive environment. And because they learned from a faculty of world-class professionals who teach from experience. Now it's your turn. Come to Monroe College, located just minutes from New York City, the center of the cultural and business worlds. You'll live in a beautiful dorm, your classmates will be people you'll feel comfortable with, and the experience will change your life. Join them now!

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# Creating New Leaders in World Health on the Island of GRENADA

**St. George's University** was founded in 1976 on the tiny island of Grenada in the Caribbean, and is now a recognised leader in global medical education. The University provides unique cross-cultural and international learning experiences to faculty and students from more than 140 countries, including from all Caribbean nations, producing more than 11,000 business leaders, educators, doctors, veterinarians, and other health care professionals now successfully pursuing careers across the world.



## Success After Success

In its 35 years of academic achievement, St. George's students and graduates have continually demonstrated excellence in all measures of testing.

### *For the School of Medicine*

According to a report in the February 2011 *Academic Medicine*, Grenada has the highest 10-year average pass rate on United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1, of any country in the Caribbean. In 2010, SGU first-time takers — from 49 countries—equalled the 92 per cent first-time pass rate of students in US and Canadian schools on the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1. In fact, in the same year, SGU's US and Canadian first-time takers had a 94 per cent pass rate.

### *For the School of Veterinary Medicine*

Over the past five years, St. George's veterinary students have had a 69 per cent pass rate on the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Statutory Membership Examination. Last year alone, graduates of the School of Veterinary Medicine had a 100 per cent pass rate, making up nearly half of the students worldwide who passed the Examination. In 2011, the School was granted full accreditation by the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) Council on Education, the highest standard of achievement for veterinary medical education in the United States.

### *For the Public Health Program*

In 2010, the US Council on Education for Public Health accredited St. George's University's Master of Public Health Program, making the University only the fifth non-US institution, and

the only school in the Caribbean region to be granted the coveted distinction. The University trains practitioners to collaborate with fellow public health professionals and academic communities, while promoting public health regionally and internationally. Both medical and veterinary medical students at St. George's are offered the possibility of earning a dual degree (MD/MPH or DVM/MPH) and they may complete public health practica across most Caribbean islands, in most states across the US, and in countries such as Canada, Botswana, Cambodia, India, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Switzerland, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe.

In addition to the MD, DVM, MD/MPH, and DVM/MPH degrees, St. George's offers premedical, and preveterinary medical degrees as well as independent and dual graduate degrees in the sciences, public health, and business. Undergraduate degree programs are offered through its School of Arts and Sciences. St. George's is affiliated with educational institutions worldwide, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Ireland.

## Campus

St. George's campus is one of the newest in the world and purpose-built for the programs offered. Named True Blue, the campus overlooks the Caribbean Sea and sits on the southwestern corner of Grenada. Over 65 buildings—including administrative, science laboratories, residential facilities, a Small Animal Hospital, an adjacent Large Animal Resource Facility, and a research

institute—were constructed as part of a major \$250 million expansion. Almost 2,000 students live on campus and others live in the surrounding neighborhoods, served by free University-provided bus transportation.

The technology infrastructure at the University matches the excellence of the physical campus and provides all the benefits of digital and information advances to aid students in their education. The University uses technology to extend its instructional activities throughout all of its global locations, while applying technology to improve the quality of instruction and services delivered to students both on and off campus. Technology initiatives include web-based tools enabling students to view schedules, registration information, academic history, schedule, and financial information from any computer with Internet access. Sophisticated information systems, including campus information technology labs, are deployed throughout the University to enhance instructional support, provide classroom technology, connect student housing, and support e-learning.

Information on the University is available at [www.sgu.edu](http://www.sgu.edu), and through **YouTube**, **Facebook**, and **Twitter** at **St Georges U**. Information about St. George's of particular interest to students from the UK, including videos of enrolled UK students, is also available on the University website.



# The Caribbean heart sets the beat for the world.



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Like Carnival, St. George's University has become an integral part of Caribbean tradition. For more than 35 years, St. George's University has been honored to be part of the Caribbean community; together, we've created a university whose students hold global influence.

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- SGU has provided nearly 1,000 scholarships to CARICOM students in the past year
- Programs in Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, other Biological Sciences, Public Health, Research, Business & Information Technology
- Beautiful, technologically advanced campus
- On 2010 USMLE Step 1, the 94% pass rate of SGU's first-time test takers from US and Canada surpassed the 92% first-time pass rate of students at US and Canadian schools
- The MPH program is one of only five non-US programs to receive accreditation by the US Council of Education for Public Health
- MBA Programs offer scheduled online classes with two separate one week residencies on the academic paradise of Grenada
- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program earned full accreditation from the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education (AVMA COE)

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[www.sgu.edu/caribbean](http://www.sgu.edu/caribbean)

Grenada, West Indies



The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) announced its accreditation of the St. George's University's Master of Public Health program, making the University only the fifth non-US institution approved - and the only university in the Caribbean region holding this distinction.





# TESTIMONIALS OF CAPE STUDENTS

## on their preparedness for university



### SHARLAYNE WALLER

## Hindrances and Benefits of attending Yale College with a CAPE Qualification

When I began studies at college in New Haven, Connecticut, it seemed as if every other experience paled in comparison.

However, I will not deny that I dealt with some difficult times during my first year. Adapting to a new culture, living away from my home and the comfort of my family, as well as making new friendships in an unfamiliar environment, all became stressful at times, and the stress was certainly not made less by the fact that I also had to adapt to a different academic system. Though there were a few problems with placement into the correct level courses, because I came to Yale with CAPE grades, these were sorted out in a timely fashion. Once I was in class, for the most part, it was smooth-sailing.

The level of preparation from CAPE was more than adequate for introductory college level courses. For example, after taking CAPE French, I was placed into the highest level French

grammar class at Yale, just based on comparison of the two syllabuses. For chemistry, physics, and biology, the same was true; based on the content covered in CAPE syllabuses, I was able to skip the first set of introductory courses and gain acceleration credits to take higher level courses.

While it is clear that the content of CAPE did prepare me for college level study abroad, problems arose with placement into courses at Yale, because the CAPE were not recognised by the college. Students who received '5's' on AP level tests of the American education system, or 'A's' in A Level Examinations, were able to use their examination results to automatically place themselves into the higher level courses. However, even though I performed just as well, because of our Caribbean CAPE, I was required to sit placement examinations for science and language courses upon arriving at Yale. It was as if I had not taken and passed advanced level examinations at all. This was frustrating, since I had put in so much work for those results, but it turned out that the placement tests were only a minor setback. The content of the CAPE prepared me well enough, and I was able to pass

the tests easily to receive the correct placement levels.

Once in class, I was adequately challenged, and for the most part, I do feel that I was well prepared by CAPE to take on these challenges. I completed my language requirement within one semester of being at Yale, since I placed into such a high level course. It was also interesting to note that in my science courses, the material was similar to what was learned in preparation for CAPE; the difference being that the topics were explained using more advanced concepts. The college course syllabuses went much more in depth than did the CAPE syllabuses, as expected, but it was very beneficial to have at least encountered some of the topics in organic chemistry, physics, and biology, that my colleagues coming from the American education system, in some cases, had not even seen before!

In my opinion, taking CAPE positively affected the Yale College experience. Apart from the issue that Yale did not recognise the CAPE I sat, and therefore my CAPE grades could not be used as a tool to exempt me from placement tests, all worked out well regarding my academic situation in college. I did not encounter many problems with comprehension of concepts and topics in class, and I received acceleration credits for taking the higher level courses in which I was placed. Moreover, I was sometimes even at an advantage, compared to my American colleagues. I do hope, though, that our Caribbean examinations soon become more recognised in colleges in the US, and in other areas of the world, so that Caribbean students will be able to make full use of their CAPE results.

*Sharlayne Waller, a former student of Campion College in Jamaica, won the Regional Top Award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Natural Sciences at CAPE in 2010. She will graduate from Yale in 2014.*

*\*equivalent to Grade I in CAPE*





## CAPE Students' Testimonials



### JENNISA NANDOO

#### The Rigour of CAPE paid off at LSE

Admittedly, after the hype of being admitted to such a prestigious institution like the LSE to study International Relations had died down, I

was assaulted by an attack of nerves and panic, wondering if my secondary school education, and in particular, my CAPE preparation, would leave me at a gross disadvantage to other students coming from different institutional backgrounds. Indeed, the LSE, which boasts students from more than 150 countries, takes in the crème de la crème of students from different internationally recognised examinations such as the International Baccalaureat, A-Levels, SATs and French Baccalaureat. As CAPE was generally a more recent examination system, I could not help but feel intimidated by my new peers, even before classes had actually begun!

However, on my first meeting with my academic advisor who is a lecturer at the LSE, my fears were greatly alleviated when he remarked that he had looked through my academic record and was quite impressed with my achievements. I breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that if a top-notch lecturer who deals with so many students from so many different academic backgrounds could be impressed by my CAPE qualifications, then maybe I wasn't on such a bad footing after all vis-à-vis my future classmates.

Yet it was truly in the classroom that my fears were firmly laid to rest. I realised that CAPE was more than just an examination, that CAPE is a system, designed to encourage students to function at maximum efficiency, giving maximum results. In my French and Spanish classes, I found that the rigorous teaching and training that I had received in Sixth Form and the demands of the CAPE Foreign Language syllabi meant that I easily outperformed my classmates in many areas, or even matched the standards of those who had spent a substantial amount of time in France or Spain, or who were even French or Spanish by nationality. Clearly, this was no small feat.

Even in my other courses where a sharp, critical mind was required to analyse the world around us, and the changing lands CAPE of international relations, I found that the knowledge of History that I had gained from CAPE greatly aided my understanding and



appreciation of course materials. What I had thought was an overloaded syllabus when I was in Sixth Form, turned out to be a blessing in disguise, especially as in my first year at the LSE, I had to take a history course which covered topics that I had already mastered in my CAPE examinations. Furthermore, the countless hours spent in researching and preparing IAs for my foreign language subjects, for History and for Caribbean and Communication Studies made a huge difference to my research ethic when conducting obligatory research assignments of my own at the LSE. Special mention must be made of my History IA and the research methods classes of Caribbean Studies which have truly proven to be worth their weight in gold. The communicative skills taught in the Communication Studies syllabus also proved immensely helpful as I delivered my obligatory class presentations, receiving consistently high marks for my presentation style and content.

Lastly, it is an undeniable fact that to survive and succeed at CAPE, one has to master time management and this taught me invaluable lessons which continue up to today to affect my time at the LSE. I learnt how to manage my academic priorities, with my social and extra-curricular life and I have adapted these lessons to my survival in London. Indeed, CAPE taught me how to cope successfully with a challenging

environment, and a challenging environment certainly characterises what I found myself up against when I commenced my studies at the LSE. In fact, this is a lesson for life especially as the world of work becomes more and more competitive and demanding.

Given these life-long lessons that I acquired during CAPE, I realised on reflection that I was never at a disadvantage to the other students at the LSE. In fact, I was just as good, or even better in some respects, and for this I am truly grateful. There is nothing sweeter than being confident in one's knowledge and in one's ability to do one's work well. The rigours of CAPE helped me to stand secure in this confidence in a world of academic elite, where it is an accepted ethos that hard work truly pays off. Now, as I am about to leave the hallowed halls of LSE, I know for a fact, that had I not mastered the strategies and knowledge imparted by the CAPE system, then I would not have been able to survive the past 3 years. Therefore, it is to this system that I owe a substantial part of my gratitude.

*Jennisa Nandoo won the Regional Top Award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Modern Languages in 2008. She is a former student of Naparima Girls' High School, Trinidad and Tobago. Jennisa is graduating from LSE in 2012.*



## CHANTAL CAVE

### How CAPE prepared me for Medicine at Oxford University

There is naturally a feeling of apprehension when one advances in studies, and my transition to

studying medicine at university was no exception. This was further exacerbated by the fact that I was moving to another culture, leaving Trinidad to study at the University of Oxford, where only four international students were accepted for my year in medicine. Although I was predominantly excited to start a new phase of my life, there was an aspect of trepidation concerning the fact that I had done CAPE, whereas the majority of my counterparts would have done A-levels or the International Baccalaureate. However, after starting my course, I quickly realised that I was not at a disadvantage due to my CAPE background. In fact, many times it seemed like I was more prepared, because many topics that I previously encountered in the CAPE Biology

syllabus were main areas of focus in my new course. Moreover, many of the more complex areas that I am faced with daily are built on the foundation of principles repeatedly covered in the CAPE science subjects. As a result, I feel that I was more than prepared by my secondary school education.

One of the main areas of disappointment that an international medical school applicant may face when applying for schools in the United Kingdom is the requirement of A-levels or the International Baccalaureate as a qualification. During my application process, a large proportion of my time was spent e-mailing schools to make sure that they would accept CAPE. The response was largely positive, most likely due to the fact that previous students from the Caribbean have gone on to study abroad and represent the region very well, and the fact that reviews of CAPE syllabuses have shown that a broad base of knowledge is covered. However, some schools refused to consider my application due to my CAPE qualifications. At the time, it was

disheartening, but now I understand that these issues will most likely change in the near future, since the two leading universities in the UK, Oxford and Cambridge, and scores more, are willing to accept students with CAPE, often in preference to other foreign qualifications. I am happy to say that I know two students from schools in Trinidad who were accepted to read Law at Oxford based on CAPE qualifications.

In conclusion, I believe that my CAPE preparation afforded me the knowledge and understanding to grasp and manage the evolving scientific concepts that I encountered in my course. Moreover, there is an additional element of pride due to the fact that I was able to do a Caribbean-based exam, and also learn more about my heritage in the Caribbean Studies course. Testament to the benefits of CAPE can be seen in many others, both home and away, who continue to excel in university and work due to the foundation provided by this united Caribbean education, as well as hard work and dedication.

*Chantal Cave, formerly of St Joseph's Convent, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, won the Regional Top Award in 2009 for the Most Outstanding Performance in Natural Sciences at CAPE.*



## KYLE HUTTON

### CSEC and CAPE – good training ground

Four years later, as my matriculation at Howard University approaches its conclusion, I have been undoubtedly able to attribute many of my

successes to the academic training field that is CSEC/CAPE. Upon entry into Howard University in 2008, my CAPE Economics, Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, and Accounting grades transferred and granted me 18 credits at the start of my college degree. This was beneficial because it gave me the option to complete the first-degree in under the traditional four years for US colleges. What I soon realised however was that the credit I received was significantly more robust than the knowledge received by other students for the exact course offered at the university level.

Preparing for CSEC fostered a holistic

approach to education that was greatly leveraged at the university level. As a business-focused Hillview College student at the CSEC level, I had comparatively limited exposure to the sciences and languages through Spanish and Integrated Science. Nevertheless, the minimum level that was in fact received was crucial for the core language and science requirement typical at most liberal US colleges.

The most significant advantage came directly from the dedicated preparation required for CAPE. Firstly, the emphasis on writing essays and internalising information was key, as a disturbing majority of examination formats I experienced in my early years were less writing-intensive. The second benefit from having studied for CAPE was derived by having a sheer wider knowledge of concepts and theories than my peers who may have even taken the related course in a US college. For example, the CAPE curriculum for Management of Business focused its learning on having less depth, but a broad width of knowledge on core areas. As a result I

have been able to seamlessly transfer knowledge from the CAPE curriculum and apply it to other areas of study.

The study techniques and work ethic required for success at the CAPE level were equally as important during my time at Howard. In terms of academic intensity, I believe that the first 2 years of my college-career were equally as difficult as the 2 years I spent studying for CAPE. The awards that I have received thus far are not simply isolated occurrences. In fact, each year for the past 3 years, the Howard University School of Business valedictorian has been a Caribbean national educated under CSEC/CAPE; and this year I hope to continue such a tradition pending final year grades.

*Kyle Hutton won the Regional Top Award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Business Education at CAPE in 2008. He is a former student of Hillview College, Trinidad and Tobago. Kyle is graduating from Howard University in 2012.*



## CAPE Students' Testimonials



## OJEDA VANTERPOOL

## Fully equipped by CAPE for Queen Mary

I never regretted the day I pursued studies at the CAPE level. In retrospect, I have benefitted in several ways, not the least of which is equipping

me with the matriculation requirements for pursuing law at one of the most highly esteemed and competitive institutions of higher learning in the UK – Queen Mary University of London. CAPE has afforded me a learning experience that allowed for a smooth induction into studies outside my familiar environment. As a result of CAPE's recognition, I never felt any less than the student coming from a metropolitan country. Yes, I was on par, and I would dare say, ahead in many respects.



My exposure to CAPE has grounded me in a wealth of knowledge in several fields and I have been cultured to work hard. As such, I have developed multiple skills that have placed me in

a strong position to excel. At Queen Mary, the CAPE experience resonates as a daily reminder to think critically, research extensively, and analyse deeply. Queen Mary has demanded the same values that CAPE engendered in me: hard work, discipline and a positive attitude. While I was not without challenges, it must be known that the CAPE experience allowed me to tackle them confidently.

CXC has touched my life through its CAPE programme. Now I am armed to touch lives in the practical world of work. Thank you CXC, for a remarkable learning experience.

*Ojeda Vanterpool is a former student of the Albena Lake Hodge Comprehensive School in Anguilla. Ojeda won the Eric Williams CAPE History Prize in 2009 for the best performance in CAPE History.*



## IVAN LEONCE

## Top Awardee Gets Chancellor's Scholar Designation at UBC

The strength of the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) continues to be validated by educational

institutions around the world. One of the latest stories starts in Maraval, Trinidad and Tobago and reaches thousands of miles away in Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada.

Ivan Leonce, of St Mary's College in Trinidad and Tobago completed his CAPE programme in May/June 2011 and applied to University of British Columbia, (UBC). When Ivan received his acceptance letter in mid March 2012 he was delighted by the news, but he was also surprised by one paragraph in the letter.

"In recognition of your outstanding academic achievement, UBC designates you as a Chancellor's Scholar," the acceptance letter stated in part.

Ivan immediately went to facebook to spread the good news to the world.

"Just got a letter from UBC (University of British Columbia)," he posted. "Apparently my CAPE grades translate to +95% in the Canadian system, so I have one of the highest admissions averages of the entering

year and was selected as one of the "Chancellor's Scholars" for 2012!"

The post immediately evoked scores of congratulatory notes and 'likes' on Ivan's facebook page. Of course the question of what Chancellor's Scholar means also followed. To answer that question we went to UBC's website.

"UBC is proud to recognise the outstanding academic achievements of high-school and post-secondary students by designating select students as Chancellor's Scholars," the website stated. The Chancellor's Scholar designation is awarded each year on a competitive basis to students entering UBC."

"As a Chancellor's Scholar, your outstanding achievements will be recognised with a notation that will appear on your academic record and your official UBC transcript," the website further stated.

According to *The Ubysey* online newspaper, the university introduced the Chancellor's Scholar Award to take effect from September 2012 for applicants with an average of 95 per cent or higher. Ivan is therefore one of the first recipients of this prestigious award. He will join an exclusive group of students, approximately 15 per cent of the in-coming undergraduate population.

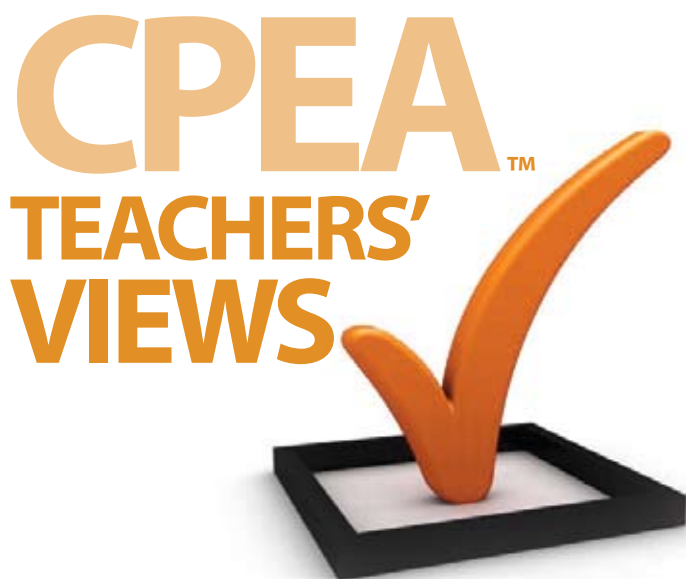
The newspaper quotes Associate Vice

President and Registrar of UBC Enrolment Services James Ridge, as saying that the 95 per cent cut-off ensures that the award is selective. "At 90 [per cent], just about everybody who gets into Sciences would get the award. [But] 95 and up, that really is an extraordinary accomplishment in high school, and we want to recognise that."

Ivan is no ordinary student. In December 2011, he received the Regional Top Award for Outstanding Performance in Environmental Science in the 2011 May/June CAPE from CXC at a ceremony hosted at the Hyatt Regency Port of Spain. He achieved Grade I in eight Units – Biology Units 1 and 2, Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, Environmental Science Units 1 and 2 and Geography Units 1 and 2. With these impressive grades Ivan will be exempted from all first year Biology courses and will also receive credits for the CAPE courses.

Passionate about things environmental, Ivan plans to pursue a career in this field in the future. He will use his first year at UBC to decide which direction to go - Geography, Environmental Science, Biology or Natural Resource Conservation.

*CXC congratulates Ivan and wishes him all the best in his endeavours.*



The Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) is being piloted in Anguilla and Grenada this year (see article on **page 16**). Students, teachers, principals, parents and officers from the Ministries of Education have been working with CXC to implement the CPEA. The *Caribbean Examiner* presents the views of some persons who are involved in the programme in the two territories.



Teachers in Anguilla working in a group during CPEA training

#### VALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

### Desiree Richardson (Grade 6 Teacher)

I am an advocate for the CPEA programme. The CPEA programme has so many aspects where the student has opportunities to develop his or her interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through various individual presentations and teamwork exercises.

The programme allows students to review work as a collection rather than in isolation. Pupils are given the opportunity to see growth/progress in their performance when items are viewed as a collection of work.

Pupils are also given the opportunity to have a critical eye on work presented by their classmates. This practice is an extremely good technique as it forces the students to fully grasp the concepts and have a clear

understanding of what is expected in order for them to critique another's work. Having this understanding and knowledge, pupils are then better able to produce a higher standard of work for themselves.

Initially, the programme can seem to be a lot of work, but when strategies are implemented to incorporate in the daily classroom work it is not an overwhelming experience for the students. All content for the programme is what is already taught in class so the different assessment requirements are easily attained once strategically given and spaced out rather than given all at once. It is additional observation and assessment, which translate into more work for the teacher, however with organisation and proactiveness it

can be achieved within the time frame stipulated.

The programme for me is especially important because it requires our children to do presentations. It helps and allows them to develop their public speaking skills through the various presentations. This aspect of the programme is very beneficial as our children have a great need for improvement in public speaking. It also taps into their creative thinking through the various types of writings and their personal response to a book they have read. I appreciate the programme and do hope that once fully implemented the required resources, continued training and assistance will be given to ensure that students, parents and teachers benefit from the programme as it was designed and intended to do.

#### ALWYN ALISON PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

### Olivia Lake (Grade 6 Teacher)

As educators, I believe, it is always our intention to motivate and challenge our students to go beyond what we think that they are capable of. I believe this is one of the goals of the CPEA, and I welcome the challenge.

However, it has been quite overwhelming for me for several reasons:

Book reports were a new concept to my

students. I recommend starting this from as early as Grade 3.

Story writing (although compulsory) was a daunting task because of the several times students had to correct their assignments. My middle and lower achievers especially, became rather frustrated after having to re-write the same story three or four times.

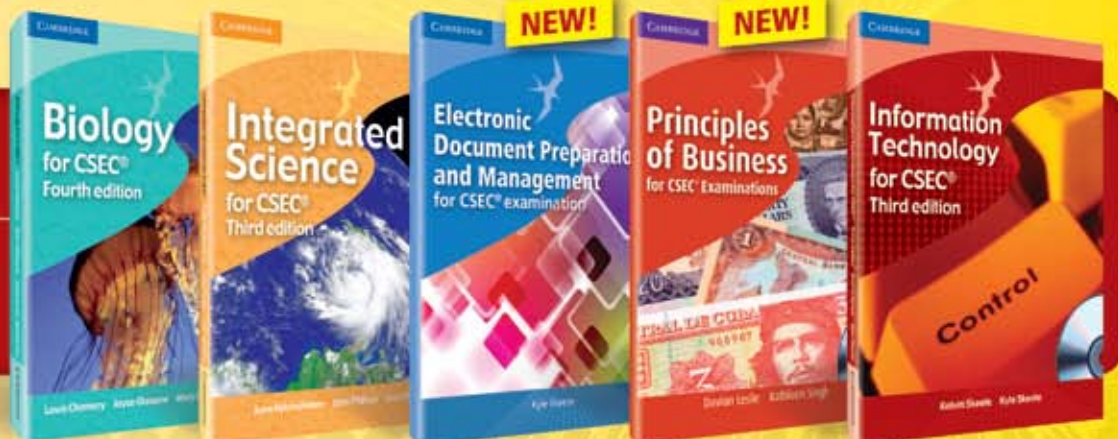
In everything, the first year or two is usually a challenge. I support the idea of the CPEA, but because of some of my challenges, I would propose that this not only be done at Grades 5 and 6, but at Grade 4. This way, students will have two years exposure and by year 3 it will be much easier on students and teachers.



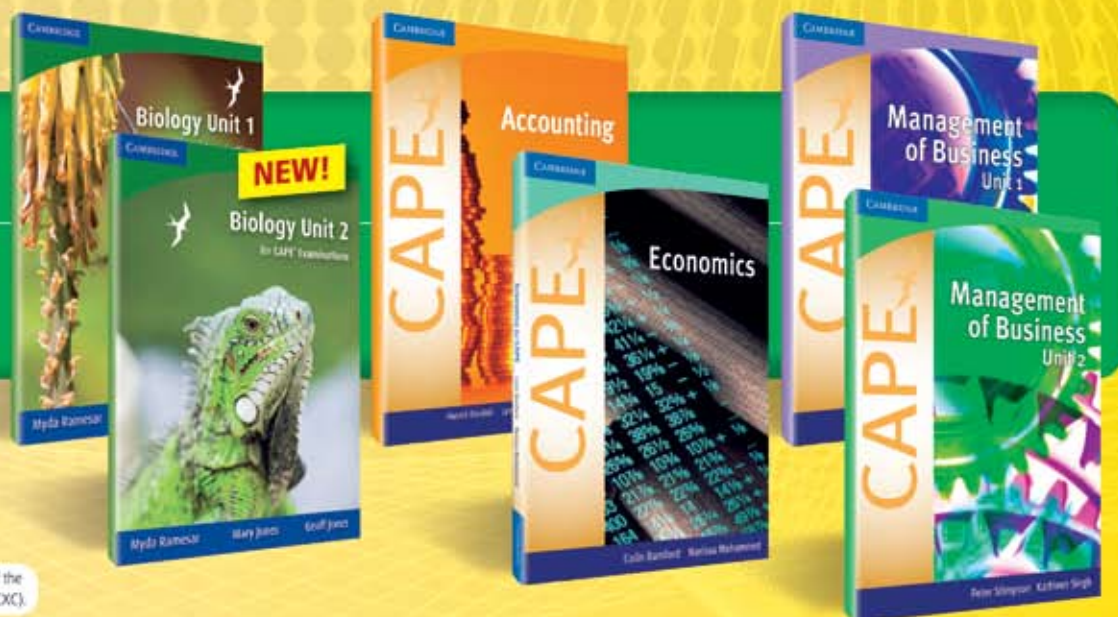
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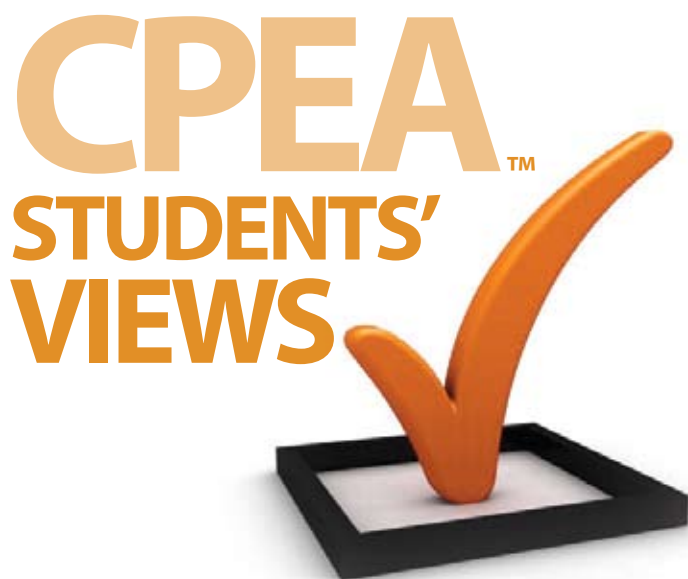
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**ADRIAN T. HAZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA****Mavis C. Fleming-Drakes** (*Principal*)

My interpretation of the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) is that it assesses literacies. It is a required assessment that focuses on a set of literacies common to the primary school curricula in the region. These literacies are necessary for students to achieve at higher levels of education.

These literacies are inclusive of mathematic, language, civic and scientific literacies. The CPEA focuses on the assessment of literacies and not individual subjects. It is used to define literacies achieved or standards reached.

I am hoping that this process will provide the foundations for transitioning to a sound secondary education.

It also provides multiple measures which tap different aspects of a pupil's knowledge, skills and abilities that are obtained under a variety of conditions from a variety of sources. These assessments, formative and summative, are in joint collaboration with teachers, pupils, parents and CXC.

My hope is that the students, teachers and parents can have a better picture of the students' academic knowledge, skills and abilities. The involvement of all stakeholders is essential to the betterment of our students.

**ADRIAN T. HAZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL****Denecia Connor** (*Grade 6*)

The CPEA is too much work because the portfolios take too much time. The repeated writing gets boring. After the long and tiring work, then we have to study again for the test including Test of Standards.

**ADRIAN T. HAZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL****Orlisha Hawley** (*Grade 6*)

I feel that CPEA is too much work but to get to pass through the 6th Grade to high school, I have to study hard. In a way, I feel happy because I think I am going to pass. I am so frightened about this exam, portfolio grades. I am trying to keep up with the assignments and stay focus on what I need to do to make a high score.

**ADRIAN T. HAZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL****Keivel Richardson** (*Grade 6*)

My opinion of the CPEA process is that it is a lot of work. It is hard to complete the requirements. The Education department should lessen the work load especially with Test of Standards. I feel we should only do one thing (assessment). CPEA helps us to check our work with our class students, teacher and our parents. The principal also looks over our portfolio. She makes sure that we do all our work.

**ADRIAN T. HAZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL****Khalik Richardson** (*Grade 6*)

The CPEA is a programme that is quite interesting. It is a lot of work, but I think that if I study and work hard I will pass.

**ADRIAN T. HAZELL PRIMARY SCHOOL****Ava Carty** (*Grade 6*)

My opinion of the CPEA portfolios is that it is a great thing. I like that you get to work on projects, grade ourselves and our classmates. The projects can be interesting. The thing that bothers me most is the fact that I still have to study for Test of Standards. I have no time to study for Test of Standard because I spend so much time with the portfolio and getting all the materials and writing needed for the portfolio. I like that we have to discuss each area of our assignment with our teacher and that my parent has to work with me and talk about the assignments. The end of term test, the Test of Standards and the CPEA assessments are too much for us in one year.



*The CPEA promotes students' active involvement in their learning*



## CPEA Testimonials

### MORRIS VANTERPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

#### Angela Guinto (Grade 6)

CPEA (Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment) is a new examination in most of the Caribbean islands. They test you on many skills such as, expository, narrative, argumentative, written and oral book reports and your project skills. In CPEA you have to do all of these individually and also some group work as well. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May there will be a test of the three main subjects, Language Arts, Mathematics and Science.

In my opinion CPEA is a helpful test that encourages you to do more creative writing. It also encourages you to study for the test and others such as Test of Standards and End of term.

There are also some disadvantages to CPEA. Sometimes there is too much work to be done. You have to do two book reports and several copies of the same kind of writing; then, you have to study for in-class tests, learn words for spelling bees, and study for quizzes. Time may also be limited if you are playing sports and have to practise regularly. So for me, CPEA can be time consuming. When the teacher is supposed to be teaching her class she has to stop to help some of us with our writing and she still has to check and recheck.

In conclusion CPEA can be time consuming and lots of work and at the same time it helps us study, do different activities and sometimes we have fun working together in groups.

### MORRIS VANTERPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

#### Ronequa Hodge (Grade 6)

CPEA (Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment) just came to our island in 2011. CPEA can help you to become organised and help you to understand what you are doing. It helps you to find information and to do this sometimes you have to talk with different interesting persons; it helps with communication and research.

You also have to do the different types of writings and this can help with your writing skills. We also have to complete book reports which force us to read.

On the other hand CPEA is a lot of work. Several copies of the same writing, book reports, projects plus we have to still complete class work and participate in other school activities such as spelling bee and Anguilla Day Quiz. I also play sports and have to practise and I also do music, which I have to study for as well.

CPEA can be a bit distracting although we learn a lot, but my focus is more on Test of Standards and I would like to receive some awards this year.

### VIVIAN VANTERPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

#### Timoya Hodge (Grade 6)

When the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment was first introduced to us at school, I felt worried. I thought that I had more exams which meant more work. Now that I am actually doing the different parts of the Assessment, I believe that it is a very good idea.

As I have worked on my Writing portfolio, the comments that my teacher has made have been very useful. She pointed out the areas that I had problems with or could improve. The Book Reports gave me the opportunity to reflect on stories I have read and to be creative in my presentations. The Group Project helped us to work as a team. I also realised that even though we do not learn the same way, we all have talents and abilities. When we encouraged each other, we made others feel good about themselves. When I was asked to write questions for my classmates, I felt like a teacher. I had to think about what to ask and how to write so that all could understand. I also had to know the answer to my questions.

Even though the items are graded, I do not feel frightened. I know that when I go into the exam room I am going in with a grade which I will add to. This makes me aim to do the best I can in my class work. Putting my pieces together and having to look over my work makes me feel proud. In the end when I do the exams I will be more prepared to show all I have learnt in class.



Active parental involvement in their child's education is one of the principles of CPEA





# CPEA<sup>TM</sup>

## PARENT'S VIEWS



Colleen Horsford, CXC Local Registrar in Anguilla in discussion with Mrs Ornette Edwards-Gumbs, Principal of Alwyn Richardson Primary School during a CPEA - related visit to the school

### THE ALLWYN A. RICHARDSON PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

**Beth Barry** (*Mother of Jovial E. Barry*)

#### *What has Jovial's attitude toward assignments been like?*

Jovial likes to do well in school, so he's been putting effort into doing well with the CPEA assignments. He has however been very clear that last year's 6th grade class was not required to participate in this type of programme and was able to graduate. He feels being in the programme is an extra burden on top of other things required of 6th graders.

#### *What has my input with him been in relation to the CPEA pilot?*

Jovial is a very self-motivated student and does most of his school work on his own, only asking for help if he feels he needs it after trying to work things out on his own. I haven't been very aware of the CPEA pilot and I think Jovial has had little trouble completing the assignments on his own.

### ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN SENIOR SCHOOL – GRENADA

**Mary Campbell**

As a parent I think that the CPEA was a good thing. At first I was a bit scared thinking that it was not going to work at all. I thought the children would have had too much assignments and I would not be able to give my son the necessary assistance and support he needed. However, my mind changed when I saw how he was progressing with his assignments and projects. CPEA brought out the best in my son. He made a more conscious effort to get his work done even though some of it to me was difficult and frustrating. My biggest concern now is 'how would they determine which school my son goes too'.

### CONSTANTINE METHODIST SCHOOL – GRENADA

**Lisa Ambrose**

I applaud the insight of the persons who are involved in this form of assessment. Although it's a bit time consuming, as a parent you're directly involved in every aspect of your child's learning. It forces you to learn new things and be really creative. Although it's a bit costly, this cannot be compared to the benefits of long-term retention and being actively engaged in their learning.

### 3R'S PRIVATE SCHOOL GRENADA

**Neveah Edwards**

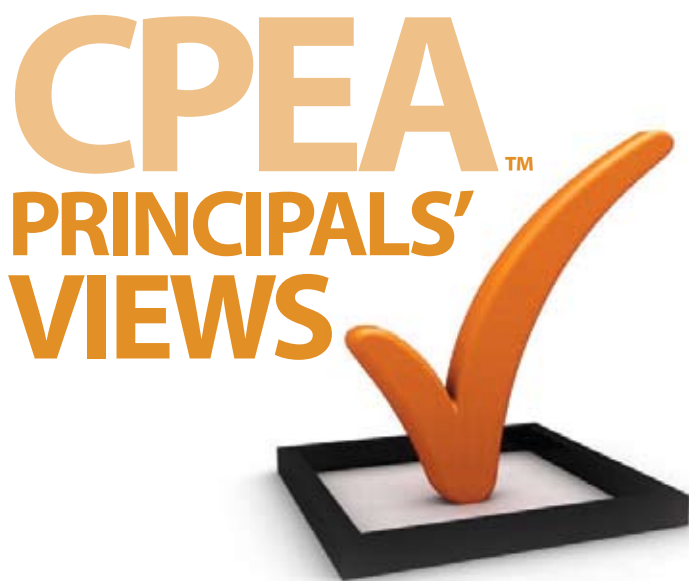
The CPEA is a very good programme. The children have a better chance of getting a higher grade because they get marks from the book reports, projects, tests and writing portfolios. I prefer the CPEA than the Common Entrance because there is only one mark to get on the day of the Common Entrance.

I was glad to see the interesting projects the children did. They were always researching and that is very good, as when they go to secondary school they will be ready to do their SBAs.

I hope that the children who do well go to the secondary school of their choice. I don't know much about zoning schools, but it can be unfair to children who have worked hard.



## CPEA Testimonials



## OREALIA KELLY PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

**Jasmine A Hodge-Thomas** (*Principal*)

“In today’s world of the modern educator, the teacher is expected to take full responsibility for the students’ education and therefore, if the student has not learnt the teacher has not taught.” Not surprisingly, however, Lavare Henry, a teacher of Computer Science at Campion College in Jamaica, does not share this philosophy and as a primary school principal, neither do I. I, too, believe that it must be a shared responsibility.

The most recent offering of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) – the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) provides a system of assessment which requires a reorganisation of the school community and redefines the roles of all stakeholders – school administrators, teachers, parents and the students themselves. This system definitely caters for that desired shared responsibility. The CPEA model incorporates assessment for learning which demands that the teacher provides regular feedback to the students. This ongoing assessment ensures improvement of the students’ performance. From my perspective, the benefits gained as a result of utilising this model far outnumber the challenges some teachers may be experiencing. For the students and teachers, there is no new curriculum to cause confusion or frustration. Subject integration becomes easier to manage and there are more opportunities for teacher-student interactions as they establish goals and devise strategies for achieving these goals. As students are engaged in the various projects, their skills of research, investigation and oral and written presentation improve. The cooperative sharing, listening and clear communicating of ideas promote good team spirit. The model also ensures the involvement of parents as critical players in the learning process.

This system of assessment encompasses the whole child and targets the various learning styles of the students. Indeed, because of this, no child should be left behind.

## VIVIEN VANTERPOOL PRIMARY – ANGUILLA

**Tracelyn Hamilton** (*Principal*)

From my perspective, the pilot of the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (Pilot) produces a ‘snapshot’ view of pupils’ achievement. The programme incorporates day to day, continuous assessment based on the students’ ability to fulfill learning intentions. The engagement of pupils in a variety of course work activities namely, book reports, can-do-test, pupils’ tests and group projects is very essential and timely. Additionally, while students experience some measure of success at every level of assessment, they are still made aware of ways in which they could improve. The ultimate goal of this process is the achievement of the mastery level. The learning is therefore more meaningful to pupils.

More importantly, teachers, pupils and parents share in the processes. Teachers are more conscious of providing explicit feedback. Pupils know where success was achieved and where improvement could be made. Parents function in a supportive role as they assist their children by listening to them read, collecting materials and engaging in dialogue with the teacher.

The idea of familiarising the senior classes with the varied assessment tools is very appropriate. This will ensure sustainability of the CPEA. Furthermore, the rich data describe more adequately the strengths and potential areas of improvement of the pupils. Hence, provision for further learning is guided by the outcomes.



Paula Etienne, (L) Principal of Valley Primary School listening as Rashica David, (R) Grade 6 teacher speaking about the progress of her CPEA students

“From my perspective, the benefits gained as a result of utilising this model far outnumber the challenges some teachers may be experiencing.”



# CPEA<sup>TM</sup>

## PTA'S VIEWS



### OREALIA KELLY PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANGUILLA

#### Sanford Richardson

*President of the Parent Teacher Association*

My initial reaction as a parent and president of the Orealia Kelly Primary School Parent Teachers Association to this initiative was, "It's about time." Any ingenuity that enables a better measure to be obtained of a student's aptitude should be embraced. This, of course, implies that it upholds or improves existing standards and the examination instruments yield reliable and valid results.

I was particularly impressed that a variety of methods will be used to teach and assess students. The formative aspect and the acquisition of transferrable life-skills are also positives. Besides, our students must understand that as part of the 'global village' it is imperative, from early, that they see themselves as such and thus aim for optimum returns at all times.

There has been no discernible increase in the exchange of information (quantity and frequency) between the school and home. Concern persists for those students who are unrepresented at PTA meetings, for example. That said, the onus remains with parents to ensure they stay abreast with developments in this area.

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## CPEA Testimonials

# CPEA™

## OFFICERS' VIEWS



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION – ANGUILLA

**Chanelle Petty-Barrett**

*Permanent Secretary*

The Ministry of Education is supportive of the efforts to establish the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA). With the involvement of CXC in this process, the Ministry is assured that every effort will be made to ensure the quality and integrity of the certification provided, as CXC certification is already a well established benchmark for educational success in the Caribbean. In our view, the CPEA provides another means of measuring education quality across the region and is a useful tool for improving teaching practice. Additionally, we are especially pleased that the CPEA involves the assessment of students over time and therefore is a fairer form of assessment and a better measure of a student's abilities than a single examination. This, we believe, is one of its most beneficial features.

Our Ministry is pleased with the support we have received from CXC in the pilot phase of the CPEA. We have had several visits from CXC officials to conduct training, inspections and give support and feedback. The response from teachers, students and parents to the CPEA has also been encouraging. They appear excited about it and the new perspective it brings to the teaching and learning process. We are hopeful that the implementation of the CPEA will result in improvements in student performance.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION – ANGUILLA

**Veda Harrigan**

*Education Officer Primary, Pre-Primary*

The CPEA which is being piloted in Anguilla commenced with a visit from personnel from CXC. During the visit a workshop was held for Officers, Principals and Grade 6 teachers. In addition, meetings were also held with parents from the various schools. From the onset parents from other schools who were not participating in the pilot project were interested in gathering information about CPEA and voiced their dissatisfaction in their non-involvement in the pilot. This indicates their deep interest in their children's performance in their exam and their placement in ALHCS. Parents' enthusiasm, assistance and support were also evident in their attendance to the Science Fair where they openly stated that their children were getting marks for CPEA. The island needs a renewed interest in education which an external exam can bring with it.

CPEA provides the students with a wide range of competencies and prepares them for the CSEC, which involves not only the final exam, but projects and SBAs. The teacher has to employ several strategies to enable the students to obtain these competencies. The CPEA experience can only help to widen the teacher's knowledge of the curriculum they teach. Students are at an advantage in that they

can score marks from the school based projects in addition to the marks they score in the examination. Monitoring of the schools/classes provided the Officers with the opportunity to visit the classroom more often and having a detailed view of what teachers were doing in preparation for the exam.

The results of the CPEA are eagerly anticipated by all stakeholders. Whatever the Ministry's decision in the final analysis, it was a worthwhile experience which will force the DOE to rethink how the Test of Standards is currently done if it is continued in the future.



**“From the onset parents from other schools who were not participating in the pilot project were interested in gathering information about CPEA and voiced their dissatisfaction in their non-involvement in the pilot. This indicates their deep interest in their children's performance in their exam...”**



*Dr The Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago delivering the feature address at the opening of Council*

# DR GOPEESINGH: *CXC–Region’s Strongest Bond*

*By Cleveland Sam*

Not West Indies cricket, not The University of the West Indies; but the Caribbean Examinations Council, is seen as creating the strongest regional bond among Caribbean people.

This is the assertion of Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago as he delivered the feature address at the opening ceremony of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Council and the presentation of regional top awards for outstanding performances in the 2011 May/June examinations.

Dr Gopeesingh said that over the years, people have looked to the West Indies cricket team as the beacon and symbol of true unity, that seems more and more, as the years go by, to elude us as a region. He noted however, that CXC has been overlooked as the glue that binds the region and it is time this is rectified.

“But interestingly enough, our region and national societies have perhaps never viewed the Caribbean Examinations Council as one very crucial, significant element of regional unity, and I say tonight that the time has come for us to change this,” the Minister explained. “But more than that, you should congratulate yourself with the realisation that far beyond ensuring that our region’s top students know they are recognised and appreciated—you have subconsciously played a very major role in enhancing Caribbean unity and the development of our region as a people and an international academic commodity.”

Minister Gopeesingh added that while the region recognises that the tertiary education system, in the form of The University of the West Indies, is one of its common regional bonds, it does not apply this to the secondary school system.

Addressing regional educators at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain, he posited that “... in fact, the common exams that our children sit annually in the form of CSEC and CAPE, is perhaps our strongest existing regional bond.”

“We therefore tell the world, by that, our children share an educational bond that unites them in the method in which they fundamentally think and for that, the Council must realise that it is perhaps one of the most important institutions of our region’s past, present and future development and survival.”

A medical doctor by training, Dr Gopeesingh noted that over the years, when individual countries have diverse economic prosperity and political and cultural differences, “CXC remained the only institution which ensures that the region’s children have equal access to education



## CXC - Region's Strongest Bond

and academic qualification, and thus, equal access to social mobility and transformation.”

According to the Minister of Education, CXC is “the best example” of great things which can be achieved in the developing world when vision and will are present.

### Responsibility

CXC, according to the Minister, has a great responsibility because of the role it plays in determining the academic future of the region's children. This role he said speaks to the very survival and progress of the nations in the Caribbean, and as such CXC needs to be the best examinations body in the world.

“In this age of globalisation and a worldwide economic crisis, when small countries and a region like ours are under the very real threat of being made irrelevant, the CXC re-organised and re-developed itself into a Council which can train our children to be the best products, academically and otherwise, in the global market,” Dr Gopeesingh explained.

Speaking about the challenges for CXC in his address at the opening ceremony, Dr Didacus Jules, CXC Registrar was on the same page as the Minister.

“What is the challenge today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” Dr Jules asked rhetorically. “It is for a new self-definition in an age of unprecedented change, globalised crisis and globalised opportunity. It is to recast oneself as a global citizen securely and confidently rooted in a local context,” he opined.

Noting that academic excellence is important, Minister Gopeesingh challenged CXC to lead the region in diversifying the educational system towards one which offers several choices. He said that under his stewardship, the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken an aggressive drive towards curriculum review and educational reform. This is in an effort to ensure that the learning systems are applicable and relevant to the daily lives of students.

In this regard, Dr Jules explained that CXC has created a suite of examinations which enables assessment of different competencies, abilities and capabilities and that they show the relationship between each other so that multiple pathways to success are created for a more differentiated demographic.

Recognising the need for a new education system which is equally concerned with academic excellence and the holistic development of an individual, Dr Gopeesingh said Trinidad and Tobago has moved to infuse sports, visual arts, civics, agri-science and information technology into the curriculum. He urged CXC to adopt this philosophy.



Minister Gopeesingh greeting Anderson Marshall, Director of Corporate Services, Dr Gordon Harewood, Senior Assistant Registrar (SAR) - Examinations Development and Production Division and Susan Giles, SAR-Examinations Administration and Security

**“We therefore tell the world, by that, our children share an educational bond that unites them in the method in which they fundamentally think and for that, the Council must realise that it is perhaps one of the most important institutions of our region's past, present and future development and survival.”**

Demonstrating similar thinking to the Minister, the CXC Registrar stated that a major challenge for CXC is to convey the understanding that there are many roads to success and many ways of measuring success. He asserted that some in the region are still stuck in the colonial paradigm of one size fits all and prematurely categorise students into the so called academically inclined and the non-academically inclined.

“This architecture of certification that we are creating in CXC – the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA), Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC), Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ), Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) and the CXC Associate Degrees will ensure that we assess the fish by their ability to swim, the birds by their ability to fly and the tree climbers by their ability to climb a tree,” Dr Jules explained, with assistance from this Albert Einstein quotation.



A member of the paramilitary group smartly parading Dominica's national flag



# Top Awardees are FUTURE CARIBBEAN LEADERS

By Cleveland Sam



**Regional Top Awardees** and their parents pose with (seated from left to right) Mr Pulandar Kandhi, CXC Deputy Chairman, Ms Kathleen Thomas, Permanent Secretary, Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago, Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago, Professor E. Nigel Harris, CXC Chairman, Dr Didacus Jules, CXC Registrar

The regality and grandeur of the Port of Spain Ballroom at the Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain was the setting. La crème de la crème of Caribbean secondary school intellectuals, dressed in a kaleidoscope of uniform colours from five countries were the main acts. The supporting cast included principals and teachers who had helped them to reach this far; parents who gave them support on their journeys; members of CXC's decision-making bodies who deliberated over the examinations they had written; and the media who were there to tell the world of their accomplishments.

At 6:10 pm, the announcer, almost out of nowhere, asked the well-dressed crowd to stand for the parade of flags of the CXC Participating Countries. With that, marching music echoed as the smartly clad members of the paramilitary outfit executed a slow march towards the stage carrying the national flags of the countries.

With the flags colourfully adorning the stage and the militia saluting, turning smartly and marching quickly off the stage; it was now time for the speeches.

Dr, the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago was the feature speaker. Professor E Nigel Harris, Chairman of CXC gave an address; Dr Didacus Jules, Registrar of CXC delivered remarks

and Anuradha Dev, Most Outstanding CSEC Candidate Overall gave the vote of thanks.

## Courtesy Calls

While in the Twin-Island Republic, the awardees along with a CXC delegation paid courtesy calls on some of the country's dignitaries. Top among them was President of the Republic, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards. During the visit, the President welcomed the students to Trinidad and Tobago and gave them an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Noting that he served on the Council in the past, he told the awardees that CXC is viewed as a pioneer in measurement and testing, and other examination boards are now doing some of the things CXC introduced from its inception.

The delegation also paid a courtesy call on Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education. Dr Gopeesingh told the awardees they are the future leaders of the Caribbean and world; and as they move into higher education they would find that they have to compete with students from around the world.

During a trip to Tobago, the awardees and a CXC delegation were hosted to a breakfast meeting by Honourable Orville London, Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assemble and

Mr Whitney Alfred Secretary for the Division of Education, Youth Affairs and Sport in Tobago.

"Suitably impressed"; "mind boggling"; "totally overwhelmed"; were some of the phrases the Chief Secretary used to describe the awardees after hearing about their accomplishments in the May/June CAPE and CSEC examinations.

"The Caribbean should be proud of you," Mr London said. "What I am seeing here is the future of the Caribbean."

He said he felt extremely privileged to have met so many exceptional young people.

## TNT Culture

The awardees also had several opportunities to experience the rich cultural diversity of Trinidad and Tobago; from the cuisine to the mas; from religion to steel pan; even a ride on the fast ferry to San Fernando and back to Port of Spain.

Part of their TNT cultural immersion included a visit to Roslyn Gabriel Mas Camp to witness the building of costumes for carnival 2012; a stop at SFO Radical Sherzando Pan Theatre where they saw how steel pans are created; and a visit to the dance studio of Classical Indian dancer/instructor Sandra Sookdeo of the Sandra Sookdeo Dance Company, where they were treated to classical Indian dances and participated in an impromptu dance class much to their delight.



## Future Caribbean Leaders

While on Tobago, the awardees were thoroughly entertained by students of the Speyside High School who hosted an hour-long cultural package for them. Performances included steel pan, calypso, poetry, and musical renditions by the school's band.

Awardees also toured the historic and scenic Fort King George where they stopped for several photo opportunities; they toured the island, accompanied by an on-board string band which provided entertainment for most of the day.

### Awards

This time around there were 14 awardees, seven for outstanding performance in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and seven for outstanding performance in the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). Eight were males and six were females. Of the 14 awardees only Jonathan Lym of Campion College, Jamaica did not make it to the ceremony because of examinations commitments at The University of Pennsylvania. His parents however made the trip to Port of Spain to receive the prize on his behalf.

### QC Tops Again

After being knocked off its perch in 2010, Queen's College, Guyana returned with a bang in 2011 and capture four of the awards. Anuradha Dev of Queen's College not only won the award for the Most Outstanding Performance Overall in the Region, but also captured the award for Most Outstanding Performance in the Sciences. Anuradha achieved Grade I in 15 subjects, with A Profiles in all subjects except one B Profile in Spanish. Anuradha achieved Grade I in Agricultural Science (Double Award), Biology, Caribbean History, Chemistry, Electronic

Document Preparation and Management, English A, English B, Geography, Human and Social Biology, Information Technology, Integrated Science, Mathematics, Physics, Social Studies and Spanish.

Mariesa Jagnanan, another Queen's College student, copped the award for the Most Outstanding Candidate in Business Education. Mariesa also achieved Grade I in 14 subjects – Economics, English A, English B, Electronic Document Preparation and Management, French, Geography, Information Technology, Integrated Science, Mathematics, Office Administration, Principles of Accounts, Principles of Business, Social Studies and Spanish.

Yet another QC student, fourth former Nathan Indarsingh, penned his way into the awards, winning the prize for the Best Short Story in the English A examination. Nathan's short story was in response to the stimulus in Question 5 – *"A cold hand grasped his wrist as he slumped to his knees"*. The story is set in the deep rainforests of South America, where a group of prospectors are seeking gold. Nathan's gripping account of the prospectors' mission captivated the Examining team.

### Jamaicans take Art Awards

Two students from Jamaica received the awards for Most Outstanding Performance in Visual Arts – 2-Dimensional and 3-Dimensional work.

Kemar Williams of Seaforth High School, the same school which produced the winner of this award the previous year, received the prize for the Most Outstanding Performance in Visual Arts 2-Dimensional work. Kemar's winning piece is in the Painting and Mixed-Media Expressive Form and depicts the theme "Spirit of the Caribbean". His composition was

an outstanding response to the theme. It had immediate impact and portrayed the culture, lifestyle, appearance, architecture and flora and people of the Caribbean.

"The layout of the various elements into a cohesive composition was successful. The use of colour and the size and placement of the elements contributed to perspective in the composition. The large figure in the foreground emphasised this and acted as the centre of interest. This allowed the eyes to move from the foreground to the background of the composition. It is obvious that quite a lot of thought was put into the selection of the collaged elements. "The candidate displayed excellent concept development and development of design was deemed to be quite original," the Chief Examiner reported.

Jodessi Thompson of St George's College copped the award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Visual Arts – 3-Dimensional work. Jodessi produced a piece of work in the Sculpture and Ceramics Expressive Form entitled "Decay".

Reporting on Jodessi's piece, the Chief Examiner commented, "In the selection of the theme Jodessi equated the aging of the human face with the aging and decaying of a tree. The choice of material, in this case clay, was appropriate to the task and he displayed a high level of skill in the manipulation of that material."

"There was a high level of skill in creating the features of the face; mouth, eyes and nose, and the texture of the tree trunk. The piece displayed a high level of success in the manipulation of design elements: line, texture, shape, mass and space. The texture of the tree trunk was a good contrast to the smooth surface of the face. The features droop and the tree trunk is obviously without life to portray the concept of 'decay'. The piece was balanced and unified."

After an absence of three years, a student from the St Vincent Girls' High School was among the awardees this year. River Providence received the award for the Most Outstanding Performance in the Humanities with Grade I in 11 subjects, with all A Profiles except one B Profile in Information Technology. River achieved Grade I in Biology, Caribbean History, Chemistry, English A, English B, French, Geography, Information Technology, Mathematics, Physics and Social Studies.

Jonas Sanchez of the Edward P Yorke High School kept the Belize flag flying high again, copping the award for the Most Outstanding Candidate in Technical/Vocational Education. Jonas wrote 16 subjects and achieved Grade I in 13 subjects - Building Technology (Woods), Chemistry, English A, Electronic Document Preparation and Management, Human and Social

Regional Top Awardees and their hosts pose for a photo while on tour on Tobago





Biology, Information Technology, Integrated Science, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Office Administration, Physics, Spanish and Technical Drawing. He also achieved Grade II in English B and Social Studies and Grade III in Visual Arts.

Mrs Nadia Hollingsworth, Principal of Queen's College received the prize for the CSEC School of the Year.

All the CSEC awardees were presented with a cash prize, a plaque, dictionary with CD ROM from Longman/Pearson and an offer letter of a full scholarship from The University of the West Indies.

### Presentation College, SF Repeats

For the first time, a student from the same school has won the Dennis Irvine Award for the Most Outstanding Performance in CAPE in two consecutive years.

Kerry Singh of Presentation College, San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago followed in the footsteps of Nicholas Sammy in 2010 to top the awardees in CAPE.

Kerry walked home with a hand-full of awards: Dennis Irvine Award for Most Outstanding Candidate Overall; Most Outstanding Performance in Mathematics; and Most Outstanding Performance in Natural Sciences.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)-bound student achieved Grade I in 12 Units, all with As in the Module grades. He achieved Grade I in Applied Mathematics Units 1 and 2, Biology Units 1 and 2, Caribbean Studies, Chemistry Units 1 and 2, Communication Studies, Physics Units 1 and 2 and Pure Mathematics Units 1 and 2.

Kerry led a parade of Trinidadian students, who, like in previous years won most of the CAPE awards. Once again, a student from Lakshmi Girls' Hindu School received the award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Business Studies. Shalini Singh achieved Grade I in eight Units, all with A on the Module grade. These Units are Accounting Units 1 and 2, Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, Economics Units 1 and 2 and Management of Business Units 1 and 2. This is the third consecutive year a student from Lakshmi Girls' Hindu School is winning this award.

Shalini is currently working as a research analyst with a financial firm in Trinidad and Tobago and hopes to go to the United Kingdom in the fall to study Law.

Shastri Ram of Presentation College, Chaguanas received the award for the Most Outstanding Candidate in Technical Studies. Shastri achieved Grade I in 10 Units – Applied Mathematics Units 1 and 2, Caribbean



**Jamaican Connection** – Kemar Williams (L) and Jodessi Thompson (R), the two Regional Top Award winners for Visual Arts, pose with Donovan Lym, father of Jonathan Lym, winner of the CAPE Regional Award for Outstanding Performance in ICT



Mr Pulandar Kandhi, CXC Deputy Chairman, presents prizes to Jonas Sanchez of Belize, CSEC Regional Top Award winner for Most Outstanding Performance in Technical/Vocational Education

Studies, Communication Studies, Geometrical Engineering Drawing Units 1 and 2, Physics Units 1 and 2 and Pure Mathematics Units 1 and 2.

Shastri is currently a Project Engineer Intern at the National Infrastructure Development Company. He has been accepted to Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, where he will major in Electrical Engineering and minor in Robotics. He plans to pursue a career in robotics in the future.

Ivan Leonce of St Mary's College won the award for the Most Outstanding Candidate in Environmental Science. Ivan, who will be attending the University of British Columbia in the fall, achieved Grade I in eight Units –

Biology Units 1 and 2, Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, Environmental Science Units 1 and 2 and Geography Units 1 and 2. With his impressive CAPE qualifications, Ivan has been accepted to UBC with the Chancellor's Scholar designation.

Currently employed as Data Analysis Intern at Coastal Dynamics Limited in Trinidad and Tobago, Ivan hopes to pursue a career in the area of conservation/environmental science.

Celeste Dass of St Joseph's Convent, San Fernando copped the award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Humanities. Celeste achieved Grade I in seven Units – Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, History Unit 2, Literatures in English Units 1 and 2 and Sociology Units 1 and 2. Celeste also achieved Grade II in History Unit 1.

Celeste is currently a student at UWI, St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago pursuing a BSc in Psychology.

Samantha Khan of St Augustine Girls' High School was the winner of the award for the Most Outstanding Performance in Modern Languages. Samantha achieved Grade I in eight Units with all As in the Module grades. She achieved Grade I in Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, French Units 1 and 2, Literatures in English Units 1 and 2 and Spanish Units 1 and 2.

Samantha will be attending Kings College in London from September to pursue a degree in Liberal Arts. She hopes to specialise in English and one day become an author.



## Future Caribbean Leaders

### Campion College holds on to ICT award

Like Lakshmi Girls' Hindu School has done for the Business Studies award, Campion College, Jamaica has also 'owned' the award for the Most Outstanding Candidate in Information and Communication Technology for the last three consecutive years. This time around Jonathan Lym was the recipient. Jonathan achieved Grade I in 10 Units – Caribbean Studies, Chemistry Units 1 and 2, Communication Studies, Computer Science Units 1 and 2, Physics Units 1 and 2 and Pure Mathematics Unit 1 and 2. Jonathan's father Donovan Lym was on hand to receive the award for his son. Jonathan is a student at University of Pennsylvania where he is pursuing a degree in Chemical Engineering.

Mr Errol Jaikeransingh Principal of Presentation College, San Fernando received the plaque for CAPE School of the Year for the second consecutive year.

The CAPE awardees received prize money, a plaque and life-skills books from Longman/Pearson.



*Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago presents prizes to Celeste Dass of Trinidad and Tobago, CAPE Regional Top Award winner for the Most Outstanding Performance in Humanities*

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Securing Your World



## Vote of Thanks Anuradha Dev

*Most Outstanding CSEC Candidate  
Overall in the Region in the  
2011 May/June Examinations*

Chairman of today's proceedings, distinguished members of the head table, parents, honoured guests, fellow awardees, good evening.

I am extremely honored to have been asked to deliver the vote of thanks, to **all** that have contributed towards making this event, the resounding success that it has been. There are so many, so where do I begin?

I commence with **God** – by whatever name we choose to call Him – or in my case, “Her” – Mother Saraswatee – since my tradition allows me to acknowledge that if God is beyond **all** categories, how can we even **think** to limit her by gender? We offer Her profound gratitude for our very existence since not an atom vibrates but by Her will.

And by starting with God, I can share the creation narrative of my tradition: In the beginning, God thought – *Ekò ham bahusyaam*: I am one let me be many. And the diversity of this universe came into being.

We West Indians only have to look around to apprehend this truth. God could just as well have said: let me create the West Indies! For where else can we experience the diversity of God's creation? – Whether flora or fauna, whether the sea or the land, whether the plains or the mountains. As the national anthem of

this beautiful land that has hosted us for the past week announces: “Here every creed and race find an equal place.”

On behalf of my fellow awardees, I thank CXC – not just for the awards and the wonderful vacation – but for its curriculum, through which I was able to develop an abiding appreciation for our diversity.

How vast is that diversity? Let me count the ways”

West Indian history taught me about the origins of our peoples and our economies and, of the deeply embedded forces that we have to struggle against to overcome so that we may find an equal place in this world.

**Geography** taught me about our far flung lands – yes, even in my own country. For my SBA I visited my interior savannahs bordering Brazil, for the very first time. It was mind blowing and I invite all of you to visit sometime.

**Literature** (and I must say I have a problem with the bureaucratically titled “English B”) taught me to see our peoples from within the imagination of our writers. And compare them with the departed British, who many yet hold to be the standard. I have one quibble. I remind CXC that Indians are 20 per cent of our diverse Caribbean, and the new syllabus seems to have “silenced” that presence. At least in my year I

could relate to Dabydeen's “Coolie Mother”.

But you get the idea...so many subjects; so many ways to appreciate our diversity.

I offer profound thanks to all my teachers, who in my tradition we are exhorted to see as “Guru” – those who remove darkness from our eyes. Much was removed from **my** eyes! I thank those teachers who taught me to ask the right questions more than cramming the right answers.

As Carl Jung once said, and I quote: “One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.”

On behalf of all awardees, I thank all the important personages that took time off from their hectic schedules to meet with us and to share their words of encouragement – His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards President of Trinidad and Tobago; Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, Minister of Education, Mr. Orville London, the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly, and Her Worship, the Mayor of San Fernando, Ms Marlene Coudray.

I want to especially thank my friends at Queen's College. In the years we spent together

*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. **Explore. Dream. Discover.**”*



## Vote of Thanks

we formed special bonds – beyond the ‘old school tie’ – that I am sure will last our lifetimes or if you share my tradition, several lifetimes!

I want to say how appreciative we are to the CXC staff and chaperones on site that made our wonderful vacation so hassle free. I expunge from my mind all thoughts previously held that you were just out to torture me with tricky exam questions!

I extend thanks to all our parents who sacrificed so much that we can be here today. I thank my father for teaching me his *sutra* or maxim: “I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.” And in that spirit, I thank my mother for making me understand the meaning of love.

I would now like to thank Dr Didacus Jules, Professor E. Nigel Harris and Dr the Honorable Tim Gopeensingh for their beautifully crafted speeches which were both inspirational and informative.

I ask to be excused, if perchance, I forgot to thank someone or **anyone** who extended help or kindness on this occasion or over the past week.

And I have saved the best for last. To my fellow awardees, we have formed such close ties in this short time that parting will indeed be “sweet sorrow”. But we have strengthened the bonds that make us the “Caribbean people”, bonds, which our politicians seem determined to cast asunder.

I offer them (and myself) some words of advice from the wit and wisdom of Mark Twain, one of my favourite writers:

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

And, from the “Desiderata” I offer this certainty: “And whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.”

*Thank You.*



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# CXC TOP AWARDEES'

# TNT experience

## Samantha Khan

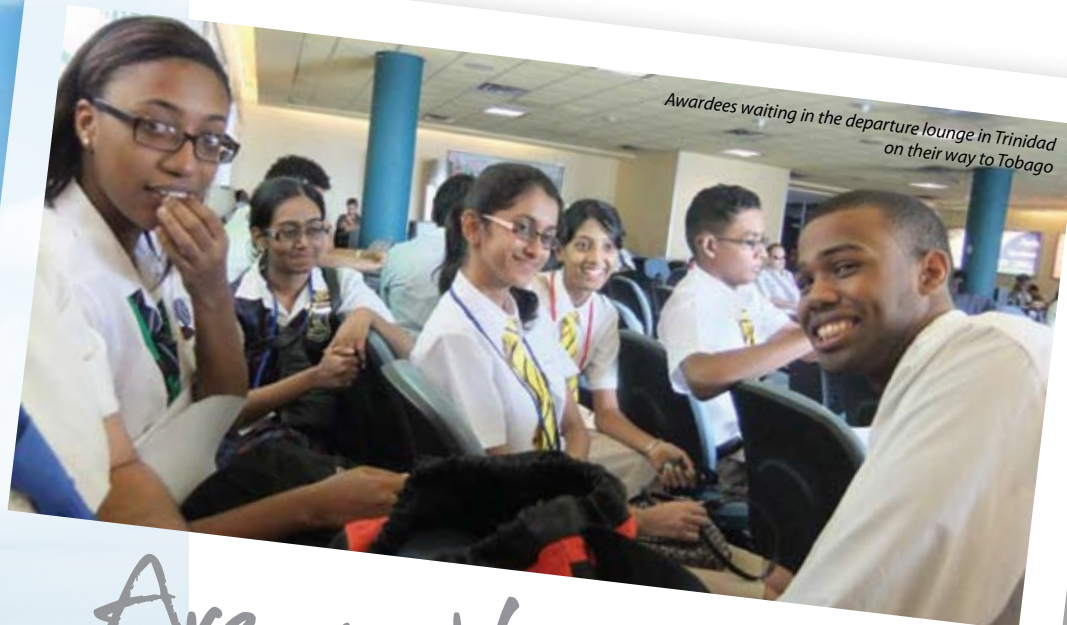
The call came around nine in the morning. I can't remember much of what I was doing, only that I thought it was strange for my former high school to be contacting me at that hour of the day. My mother answered the phone and within a few seconds her eyes widened, shooting me a meaningful glance. I could tell from her tone that it was good news. But calling this particular bit of news "good" might be one of the biggest understatements that I have ever made. Good? Maybe. Fantastic? Closer. Life-changing? Definitely.

The feeling of being named one of CXC's top awardees is almost indescribable. It was a mixture of shock, excitement, joy, extreme accomplishment and even a little confusion. I felt certain that they had made a mistake. It was only when we, the awardees, were all gathered around the dining table at the Hyatt Regency Hotel did I really understand that it was not a mistake. We fell into such warm chatter, getting to know each other as we laughed about nothing at all, and it was clear that we were always meant to be friends. Thus began one of the most memorable weeks of my life.

The days were spent on an action-packed official schedule and the nights trying to evade

sleep as long as humanly possible. We met both the President and Minister of Education (events that only occur in the land of dreams), visited many historical sites and experienced the culture of Trinidad and Tobago like never before. Each moment was exciting, enriching and almost surreal. We spent our bus rides laughing, singing and generally making noise as we tried to get as much as we could out of every second with each other. Sometimes though, we were completely silent when at last we gave in to the fatigue dragging at our eyelids and said, "Ok, let's sleep now so we can wake tonight." And wake we did. Every night, without fail, we gathered in a different room





Are we there yet?

## River Providence

Whether we like it or not, from young, expectations are thrust upon us by all around us. Go to school, try your hardest, get a job, try your hardest, live well, and try your hardest. How one deals with these demands is yet another thing all together. Truthfully, sometimes it's easier to accept these demands, other times, not to try at all. I've tried hard though, in my life, to do what's best for me and to be satisfied with my best. Therefore, it is, for want of a better, 'wicked' when your best can be the best. It is almost unbelievable that you could accomplish so much for all your hard work and be recognised for your efforts.

For my sister and I, our trip to Trinidad and Tobago was a celebration of our effort. We saw this trip as a celebration of all of our efforts, all the late nights studying, the gallons of coffee we drank and the days we went to school looking like zombies. Had we any expectations of our time to come? Not really, but I suppose that is what the draw was after we got through the initial shock of it all. It was a chance to experience something new, in a new place with new people, the awardees, who, in just four days, we grew to love so much that it seemed that we had been friends forever.

Looking back on our time in Trinidad and Tobago, although every aspect was wonderful, it would be the camaraderie that we valued the most. The chance to meet and get to know such wonderful people, the awardees, our wonderful sixth form tour guides all across sweet Trinidad

and Tobago and our caretakers on the trip. However, the chance to meet such brilliant, intelligent people such as the awardees, with whom we shared so much in common, from all across our beautiful region, embodied exactly what it means to be West Indian, whether they were, from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana or even as far away as Belize. We embodied our region through our love of cricket, our many accents, our musical styles, our foods, how we ate them, through our favourite types of literature, our favourite authors and our many traditions. Sharing and learning with so many with whom we had so much in common, was an amazing and freeing experience.

Trinidad and Tobago left us with moments that will last forever. From our first day exploring big, beautiful Port-of-Spain, that seemed to vibrate with an energy that, if you listened closely you could hear the air hum, to meeting so many interesting people, so ready to share stories that remind you of people back home and seeing the daily grind, the daily struggle of people to live, that was almost comforting for me. I experienced the vibrant personalities of Trinidadians and the lovely calm, cheerfulness of Tobagonians, and most of all, being with people you like, respect and care about. We will always remember our days in Trinidad and Tobago with our friends, eating lots, playing Mao and sleeping in the corridors of the Hyatt. We can barely wait for the reunion.

and made some more noise, interacting like long-lost siblings, finding things in common with each other that we didn't know one could have in common with another person.

The top awardees programme succeeded in giving us insight into the behind-the-scenes work of CXC and strengthening our concept of the importance of inter-regional ties. It surprised us with a wonderful reward for our diligence and let us know just how much that diligence is valued, inspiring us to continue to be dedicated to our education. Most of all, it helped a band of unique young people to meet each other, forming bonds that will undoubtedly last beyond a lifetime.



## Jonas Sanchez

I was extremely happy with my results in August 2011 when I received my electronic pre-slip: 13 Grade Is, two Grade IIs and a Grade III in Visual Arts. In nine of the 16 subjects I achieved all As on my profile grades.

I rushed to my high school and showed Ms Flowers and Mr King my vice principals the results. The goal was 16 ones, but a late start in the challenging subjects and clashes with extra classes slowed me down in a few others. I could still remember telling Ms Flowers and later Mr King that I qualified for the Technical/Vocational Studies award. I was predicting which award I could win that year.

All that was left to do was to wait for the news of the 2011 CSEC/CAPE regional awards. Again, I visited the CXC office in Belize several times as I frequently asked for news of the awards. Too often, the words 'come next week' were all that I received for an answer.

After a particularly bad day at school in October, I visited my high school. My former Human and Social Biology teacher (then acting vice principal) Mrs Canto called me and told me Mr King (then acting principal) wanted to see me. There was a strange smile on her face which showed muted joy that contrasted with everything that had happened that day. I was sore and tired, but promptly made my way to the principal's office.

After a brief "afternoon sir," I was told to take a seat since the news might be a little too much for me. I immediately asked if word had been received on my query which would hopefully see the two grade twos upgraded to grade ones.

Mr King simply mentioned that he got a call from Barbados earlier that afternoon from a Mr Sam at CXC, but he didn't say what Mr Sam said on the phone, and only stated that the query didn't seem to change anything. I wasn't enthusiastic for one more headache that day and got up to leave. 'Hold on...wait, take a seat,' he insisted.

I couldn't think of anything else that could have been relevant to my exam results. More curious than tired, I took my seat.

'We have been informed that...well; Mr Sam informed me that...you won the Technical/Vocational Studies award.'

I had to ask him to repeat his statement. I was shaken. I unconsciously tossed my bag to the floor and I had to control myself from shouting as a few parents were patiently waiting outside the office. I paced the office round and round, only quickening my pace as Mr King told me more of the details. I was



Beating pan! Nathan Indarsingh of Guyana trying his hand at making a pan

## Beat Pan!

a little teary-eyed and as teachers walked into the office, I hugged each one; they were not surprised as the entire staff seemed to have caught wind of the news before I did and offered words of congratulations. I ran home to tell my parents; dashed across the street, up an alley and down the street to my home, still shaken. My parents weren't at home and I told them later that day. I was so excited and happy.

The award ceremony was slated for Trinidad and Tobago and the time had come for me to travel from Belize to Miami and onto Trinidad. In Trinidad, I shared memorable times with the rest of the region's awardees as well as with our chaperones. We visited Tobago and visited the cities of Port-of-Spain and San Fernando.

On the Thursday night, I was where many others in the previous years were, walking up the stage to accept my award. Looking down on my plaque after stepping down from the stage, I couldn't help but smile to myself.

I am eternally grateful to Mrs Illoo for sponsoring a few A-Level and CAPE textbooks for me. I also received an exciting offer to come to Trinidad to pursue my CAPE studies and took it up.

## Kemar Williams

On 28 November, 2011, I left Jamaica for the first time to visit Trinidad. This was a surprise trip as a reward for my performance in the 2011 CSEC Visual Arts examination. After my Principal told me about the CXC-sponsored trip, my whole being was transported. The week leading up to the trip was spent in extreme excited mode. I have never packed so often in my life.

While going through the Jamaican immigration, my mind raced as to possible causes to be sent back home, I had heard of persons being sent back at immigration; would I be one of those persons? Finally, a huge hamburger and a soda later, I was on my way to Trinidad.

Upon landing in Trinidad, I heard my name being called on the intercom. I felt the muscles in my stomach tightened, just as I felt when I walked through Jamaican immigration. "Something must be very wrong", I thought, "I certainly will be sent back home, but Lord let it not be tonight". To my eternal delight we were being officially welcomed by the Ministry of Education officials. We were whisked to the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Trinidad (later I was told it was the best hotel in Trinidad). It had everything I had imagined and more. I shared a room with a Trinidadian awardee, who became my best friend during my five-day stay. Thanks Shastri Ram. We visited different places of interest and learnt a bit about Trinidad and Tobago.

The CXC award ceremony has left an indelible mark on my mind. I felt so proud when my country's name was called, and the Jamaican flag was brought in. When my name and school were called and I went up to collect my award, I felt as if my heart had stopped beating. This was unbelievable.

This experience has enabled me to be more focused in my pursuit of higher education.



At the Wild Fowl Trust



## Shastri Ram

I clearly remember the day I received word that I topped the Caribbean in Technical Studies for CAPE 2011. Mere words cannot describe the joy and excitement that surged through me as I read the first paragraph of the letter. As I continued, I read that I had the opportunity to attend a week of fun activities with the other awardees at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Trinidad. My exhilaration knew no bounds. From that moment I began counting down, week by week, day by day, hour by hour till the night before. I could barely sleep with the anticipation of the week ahead.

As I entered the hotel's restaurant, twelve cheery yet inquisitive faces greeted me. I sat and introduced myself. I scanned all their faces. So these are my fellow awardees with whom I will be spending a week. Will they be friendly? Can we get along? Will there be competition among us? Will we be able to understand each other? Do I have a roommate? That means I have to share a room! I have never shared a room with a stranger! How will that be possible? All these questions and a million more raced through my mind at the same time. Little did I know that this would be the most amazing week of my life.

We all began chatting at the table. I learned that along with my fellow countrymen, there were representatives from Guyana, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica. We barely knew each other but sitting there it was amazingly easy to strike up a conversation. The table became so lively, laughter and chatter echoed through the room. Everyone had their own uniqueness to add to the dynamism of the conversation. It was truly a spectacle to behold. Here are total strangers about to spend a week together, yet we seem to have known each other for years. Then it dawned upon me. The wealth of this week lay not in the activities and the dignitary visits, but in the people with whom I am about to share it.

The first night was spent jibbing to the sweet melodies of soca and dancehall at a 'Soca Party' in Shalini's room. Everyone shared their own taste in music and we enjoyed it all. We sang, made jokes, told stories, laughed and then nearly fell asleep on each other. It was an amazing first night. The nightly parties became our norm. Each night someone else would host a party. It made the perfect end to a busy day.

Our second day together was spent in Tobago where we visited the Tobago House of Assembly and met with its Chief Secretary, the Honourable Orville London. The remainder of the day was spent touring Tobago. Over the

next few days we toured Trinidad and met with some of its most influential people. Most vivid in my mind were our meetings with the President of The Republic, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards and the Minister of Education, Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh. The majority of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago never get to meet such individuals in person, yet here we were shaking hands with them and sitting down to have meaningful discussions. It certainly was a humbling experience.

Though I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and I have been to almost every part of it, I was equally as enthused as my foreign friends to visit our sites of attraction. I became the unofficial tour guide and they all turned to me to ask questions about different aspects of the country. I felt a sense of pride being able to showcase my country to such an esteemed group of people. Yet there were new experiences for me as well. I learnt Indian Classical Dance and thoroughly enjoyed it. The most memorable occasion must be our trip to West Mall and Movie Towne. It could not have been a more fun packed evening, with shopping, arcade, photo-booths and a movie to top it all off. Most definitely it would not have been that enjoyable if it were not for friends with whom I shared it.

Throughout the week we grew closer and closer to each other. Our conversations were more in depth and thought provoking. We grew accustomed to each other's personality and each person formed a unique relationship with one another. I tried to learn about everyone. It astonished me that everyone was so different yet alike in so many ways. Everyone had an amazing story behind their success. For example Jonas from Belize did seventeen subjects and Anuradha from Guyana got all ones in all of her fourteen subjects. Statistics such as these left me speechless. Yet everyone was so humble and easy to interact with. No one claimed to be greater than each other. We all shared similar success stories. Each of us had a goal to work towards and



Say cheese!

**Double take!**  
Twin sisters, River  
Providence and  
Stephanie from St  
Vincent and the  
Grenadines with  
Shalini Singh of  
Trinidad and  
Tobago at a mall

we pursued that with all the determination it took. It is the common thread by which we were bound and learning of each other's path to success fortified it.

Nowhere else could more exquisite minds and personalities have been brought together. Over the week we had amazing moments of fun and laughter. We sang, played games, took tons of photos and videos, ate, danced and looked at movies together. Never a moment spent without each other and not a single one of those moments regretted. It still astounds me that such similar people like me exist. Oh how I wish I knew them sooner!

But alas, it could not last forever as our week drew to an end. The final gala event was the Awards Ceremony itself. It was superbly organised and delightfully showcased all of Trinidad and Tobago's cultures. We all received our awards and took pictures with the dignitaries. Yet through it all a heavy shadow loomed over. This was the grand finale. That was the last night we would spend with each other. That night we all sat in the hallway of our floor reminiscing about the past week. With heavy hearts we signed each other's books and exchanged contact information. We reveled in the fact that we all became best friends in a week. We formed relationships that would certainly last a lifetime.

Parting was a bittersweet affair. Sadness filled us and tears welled up in our eyes. We had our own lives to get back to and continue on our paths to success. Yet we all looked forward to the future, one where we will rise to all challenges and become tomorrow's leaders, one where, even though we are hundreds of miles apart, we will be able to keep in contact with each other through modern technology. I am happy to say the present in both sense of the word, had now become our future. Thank you CXC.



## Nathan Indarsingh

He stepped onto the dark, warm tarmac, walking behind two complete strangers. Making new friends was not one of his regular activities, but then again, neither was climbing aboard an aircraft for an all expenses paid trip to Trinidad. The thought stuck in his mind as he mounted the stairs, taking pictures with the two strangers in his dream. No, this was definitely not his life, it was someone else's. He was not among the top students of the entire Caribbean region, staying at the Hyatt Regency. No, he was hallucinating. That was soon smashed by the exhilarating sensation hurtling across asphalt like a bullet, then came the temporary feeling of weightlessness, and the aluminum tube thundered into a beautiful Guyanese morning sky of sapphire and cotton. An hour later, his world became a long tunnel, his footsteps hollow and apprehensive, then it opened up into the interior of an airport. Just like that, they had left one culture and crossed an unseen barrier into another; different, yet similar. West Indian was the only word he could find. The next fifteen minutes was a blur, with goodbyes made, an initially futile search for the assembly point, the warm welcome via the chaperone, and a scenic, relaxing and interactive drive with his two fellow Guyanese. This was broken by the vehicle stopping before their huge hotel; they disembarked, more aware of their surroundings. He would never forget the location where he met some of the coolest adults in the world: Second Floor, Hyatt Regency, Trinidad. This stay was about to become amazing.

That day happened to be the awardees' only free one. A great meal, an amazing room with a stunning view of the Atlantic, quiet time spent exploring the building, intrigued, a television... it was a perfect day, however limited the company was. By nightfall the other students were streaming in, and then there was another awesome meal, after which they retreated to the eighth floor to break more of the ice. None of them were destined more than five hours of sleep. This would soon become routine among them. The next morning, he hauled himself to the shower by pure will, ready for another dream day. That came in the form of another fantastic plane ride, this time, to Tobago. For him, it was still a dream, and minutes flew, from the seat of Tobago's Local Government, to Fort King George, to the other end of the island, then a food stop at a beachside restaurant. Along the way, there was live music and a very interactive guide, and when the time came for the return trip,

his only comfort was the aircraft – the third in his life. Back home, as they called it, he had what was probably his only full night's sleep, due to a fever. The next day came, and the dream still hadn't ended. What he could remember was them piling into the bus, then stopping, then repeating the procedure, from a Pan Yard, to the president's office, and to Queen's Royal College where there was a practical experience with Indian dance. As if that weren't enough, when night approached the city, the contingent were piled into the ever present bus and driven off to the movies. Following that was another sleepless night, self inflicted.

San Fernando hill has an intricate history with the native Indians, and that was their major destination the following day, almost on the other side of the island, after a visit to a government office. The view from the top was the greatest he had gotten of Trinidad, even from the air, with the town stretching away beneath him, ships anchored offshore in the distance, and in an unseen location near to an oil refinery, a nature reserve. That was destination two. There, it almost seemed as if he had been transported back home, to a world of wildlife. The return journey by ferry was scenic, with the catamaran skirting the huge cargo ships in open water, and then they were almost literally dispatched to their doorstep, just in time to prepare for something only a select few had done: collecting an award from the Caribbean Examinations Council. At the ceremony, worn from the fever and lack of sleep, he was the recipient of an award he felt he didn't deserve. The boy who had started writing stories by mirroring a friend had written the best short story in the Caribbean. The few hours after the ceremony was initially spent in reminiscent conversation, but this deteriorated into horror stories, and soon, they began to part, after forming bonds that only CXC could. As he began boarding his fourth aircraft in the same number of days, he wondered, was he going to return? Nathan Indarsingh strapped himself into his seat, felt the plane accelerating, then losing contact with the ground, looked at the quickly receding island in the middle of the sea, caught between green water and blue sky, and he closed his eyes.



Awardees getting a lesson in traditional Indian dance

*I can do this!*

## Ivan Leonce

It is impossible to truly describe the cascade of emotions I felt when I learned of my accomplishment. It was so surreal that I couldn't even think straight. All the effort I had put in to maneuvering the grueling gauntlet of education, better known as **CAPE**, for the first time, felt truly worth it.

My emotions in the weeks leading up to my arrival at The Hyatt were even more confusing. It was a kaleidoscope of anxiety, excitement and insatiable curiosity for what lay ahead. However, at the end of the very first night with the awardees, the curiosity and anxiety had left, making room for the now boundless excitement that I felt because of how quickly we all got along. It was one of those rare experiences where you meet a group of people and it feels like you've already been best friends for decades. For those five days, we were each other's brothers and sisters, friends and companions; for those five days, the 14 of us were one big, quirky, Caribbean family.

Having lived in Trinidad and Tobago my entire life, I thought that what the Council had in store for us would be nothing of any real novelty for me, but for the first time in my life, I was truly happy to have been proven wrong! We learned traditional Indian dance, helped make a Steel pan and got to play in a mini-orchestra afterwards! Though I was born and raised here, I'd never seen my beautiful twin island republic from the perspective of a tourist, so my experience as a national was no less as exciting as those of the foreign awardees, thanks to the brilliant planning on the Council's part.

On countless occasions since that amazing week with CXC, I've been asked what my favorite part was. And I know my fellow awardees would agree with me in saying - in the end, it was neither the recognition nor the physical award that we treasured most, rather it was each other, we knew we had made memories not soon forgotten and forged friendships that will never fade, and that was the greatest prize of all.



## Anuradha Dev

Einstein bagged a Nobel Prize for positing that “time is relative”. My four days with my other awardees in T&T felt like a single day. And yet, I feel like I’ve known them since forever. Old Einstein was definitely on to something! But I think the folk wisdom, “time flies when you’re having fun” is a better explanation for my theory of relativity. I certainly had a grand time.

It shouldn’t have been possible for a group of persons to get along so well and to become so close so quickly, but that’s just what we did. We came from different lands, from different cultures, from different age groups, but everything just fell into place during those four days. We were just eleven kids, ready for new experiences, ready to face everything with open minds, with a sense of fun, with a sense of humor.

The trip taught me a lot about myself: about other cultures and most importantly, that while we are one as a Caribbean people, we don’t have to be identical. It’s our differences, our individuality, our uniqueness that make us who we are, and made it work, and made it so very special.

I may not have received my official letter welcoming me to Hogwarts five years ago, but I received something very much like it four months ago - a letter from CXC inviting me to the awards ceremony. I think the only fitting way to describe the trip and the entire experience would be, that it was magical.

The journey itself was incredible- Trinidad and Tobago was spectacular and it was an honor to be a guest of such a beautiful country.

I think one of the things that touched me the most about the trip was the effort that CXC took to make us feel special. Oftentimes many

institutions, when honouring persons, especially students, will say that the honourees are special. But it takes a great deal more time, effort and care to make the awardees *feel* special. And I thank CXC for doing just that: being rushed to the head of check-in counters; staying at the Hyatt Regency and meeting many of the people who basically run the country certainly made me feel special!

There was a bit of everything on the trip - the city experience with malls and Movietowne contra posed with the beautiful and untouched nature at the Wildfowl Nature Reserve.

In those magical four days we sampled a taste of the diverse cultures and customs of Trinidad. We were given hands-on experience in steel pan making; we went to a Mass Camp and were awed by the meticulous intricacies of the costumes. Something new simply took your breath away at every turn.

It was an occasion where sleeping was considered wasting time; the number one priority was to cram in as much fun as possible into every second. Frenetic activity defined us. And we managed – just managed - to rally at five am to plunge into another day of sightseeing even with just half an hour’s sleep.

on tours of Trinidad and Tobago and hosted meetings with the most distinguished of guests, such as the Minister of Education, Dr the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh and the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly, the Honourable Orville London.

We were taken to the Wild Fowl Trust in Pointe-a-Pierre, an esteemed Mas Camp in Port-of-Spain and an enjoyable and unforgettable day in Tobago where we met with several students of the Speyside Secondary School, and were treated to an amazing afternoon of creative arts.

The awards ceremony which took place on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2011, was

well coordinated and organised as expected with several speakers from CXC making valuable comments and contributions about the awardees and the Council in general. The prizes for the CAPE awardees were a monetary reward, a set of books and a commemorative plaque. The entire trip itself was considered a gift from the CXC, congratulating us on our achievements.

It was truly an unforgettable and inspiring experience. I have made both regional and local friends and I plan to keep in contact with them regularly—they are some of the humblest and kindest people I’ve had the pleasure of meeting.



**Back for carnival?**  
Marisa Jagnanan  
and Anuradha Dev  
of Guyana wearing  
costume head pieces  
at a mas camp

*Back for Carnival!*

## Celeste Jade Dass

Words are not enough to fully describe the week I spent in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Trinidad and Tobago to celebrate the accomplishments of several young academic achievers. Never in my wildest dreams did I even place myself amongst some of the brightest and most wonderful people of my age...people I am most honoured to call my friends.

The Caribbean Examinations Council, (CXC) certainly outdid itself as they took the entire group, both CSEC and CAPE winners,

# New Staff Liking CXC's Vision

The newest additions to CXC's staff are all excited about the direction the organisation is heading. In an interview with the *Caribbean Examiner* magazine, all three appointees expressed positive views on the direction of the Council.



## Mr Decentice Small

*Network Administrator*

Mr Decentice Small joined the staff of the Council on 9 January 2012 as Network Administrator in the Information Systems Division.

Mr Small possesses a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Warwick in the UK and a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus.

He is a Microsoft Certified System Engineer, a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and the Project Management Institute (PMI).

Decentice has over a decade of experience in the IT industry as an IT Infrastructural Manager as well as an Information Technology

Manager, who is conversant with a number of IT Technologies ranging from the Implementation of LAN and WAN network Infrastructure Security and hardware and software policies for a number of local, regional and international clients.

"I am learning a lot of stuff and I do hope I am also imparting some knowledge in terms of network and security," Decentice responded when asked about his tenure to date.

Noting that he finds the staff to be very friendly, he added, "ISD is a progressive and responsive division and the camaraderie in terms of ideas and professionalism is very good. It is a good work atmosphere."

**"ISD is a progressive and responsive division and the camaraderie in terms of ideas and professionalism is very good. *It is a good work atmosphere.*"**



## Ms Michelle Stephens

*Business Development Officer*

Ms Michelle Stephens joined the staff of the Council in the position of Business Development Officer in the Corporate Strategy and Business Development Unit, with effect from 16 January 2012.

Michelle possesses a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) with emphasis on Strategic Planning from Edinburgh Business School, Herriot Watt University, Scotland; A Post Graduate Certificate in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK and a Diploma in Public Relations from Ciprani Labour College in Trinidad and Tobago.

Michelle last held the post of Manager, Market Product Development in the Products,

Marketing and Channels Unit, RBC Financial Caribbean.

"Business development is a growing child at CXC and there is need for systems and processes in terms of how CXC looks at business development," Michelle explained when asked about her experience at CXC to date. "We need to focus on our core alignment and internal capacity to maximise business opportunities which exist."

Two things stand out in Michelle's mind so far. One is the pervasive use of technology in CXC to maximise performance and the other is the drive of the Registrar to support organisational change.

***"Business development is a growing child at CXC and there is need for systems and processes in terms of how CXC looks at business development."***





## Mrs Deborah Currency-Hunte

*Human Resources Business Partner*

Mrs Deborah Currency-Hunte joined the staff of the Caribbean Examinations Council on 9 January 2012 in the capacity of Human

Resources Business Partner in the HR Division.

Among her credentials, Deborah possesses a Masters of Science (MSc.) in Human Resource Management from the University of Surrey, UK and an Executive Diploma in Human Resource Management, from the UWI, Cave Hill School of Management.

Prior to joining CXC Deborah was Senior Human Resource Associate and Consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers and served as Ethics Officer on the East Caribbean firm's Ethics and Business Conduct Committee for the past eight years.

She is currently Vice President of the Human Resources Management Association of Barbados Inc. (HRMAB Inc.) as well as a standing board member of the National Human Resource Development Advisory Council which operates within the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

When asked to describe her time at CXC so far, she smiled, sighed and then said, "It has been a significant challenge and it is very different from the other places where I have worked."

The major differences are the fact that CXC is a unionised environment and the structure of the organisation.

"Normally in an organisation when there are financial challenges and a recession as we are in now, training is one of the first things that gets cut," the HR professional observed, "but at CXC it is different. CXC supports training for staff and pushes you to get training to take you to the next level – world class."

"I like the outlook of the organisation and its leader, the Registrar," Mrs Currency-Hunte quipped. "He inspires me."

One of Deborah's projects since joining CXC was the National Initiative for Service Excellence 100 Improvements in 100 Days. She said working on the project has assisted her with fast-tracking improvements in the different divisions as well as helping in building relationships with other members of staff much faster. "The initiative has added a lot of value to my work relationships."



## Mrs Sheree Deslandes

*Assistant Registrar, Corporate Services Western Zone Office (WZO)*

Mrs Sheree Deslandes has been promoted to the post of Assistant Registrar, Corporate Services at CXC's Western Zone Office (WZO) in Jamaica with effect from 1 November 2011. Sheree joined the Western Zone Office on 8 July 2002, as Accounting Officer, in the Administration Unit, where she supervised the Accounts Unit. Sheree is a Chartered Accountant and has among her credentials an MBA in Banking and Finance from the Mona School of Business, as well as a BSc in Accounting and Management Studies from The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. She also holds a Certificate in

Forensic Accounting and Fraud Prevention and a Certificate in International Financial Reporting Standards. As the Assistant Registrar-Corporate Services, Sheree is responsible for Finance and Office Management Unit at WZO.

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# Business Subjects 'Pay' Dividends in January Sitting

Performance improved on seven of the 13 subjects and declined on six subjects in the 2012 January Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations. However, overall performance declined slightly by four per cent. This year, 45 per cent of entries achieved Grades I–III, compared with 49 per cent in 2011.

## Business

Principles of Accounts was the subject with the greatest improvement in performance. This year 63 per cent of entries achieved Grades I to III, compared with 37 per cent in 2011, a 26 per cent increase. The Subject Awards Committee attributed the improvement to a number of strategies implemented by the Examining Committee. These included the presentation of questions in a variety of ways: work sheets, charts and tables.

Office Administration produced the best overall result with 88 per cent of entries achieving Grades I–III, compared with 71 per cent in 2011. The other business subject examined in January, Principles of Business, also saw improved performance with 71 per cent of entries achieving acceptable grades compared with 62 per cent last year.

There was a 17 per cent improvement in performance in Information Technology this year when compared with 2011. Forty-eight per cent of entries achieved Grades I–III compared with 31 per cent last year. The improvement has been attributed to better performance in Profile 3 (Problem Solving and Programming), which has been an area of weakness in previous years. Performance on this profile improved by 20 percentage points; from 13 per cent of entries obtaining acceptable grades in 2011 to 33 per cent this year.

Improved performances were recorded in Mathematics and Physics. Forty per cent of entries achieved acceptable grades in Mathematics compared with 37 per cent last year; while for Physics 53 per cent of entries achieved acceptable grades compared with 49 per cent last year.

This year performance on Spanish climbed back to the 2010 levels after a dip in 2011. Sixty-nine per cent of entries achieved Grades I–III, compared with 60 per cent last year.

## English

The most significant decline in performance was in English B, which was being offered for the second time in January this year. Last year when the subject was offered for the first time at the January sitting a very satisfactory 61 per cent of entries achieved Grades I–III. However, this year that percentage dropped to 32.

Two major issues affected the performance on English B. There was a very high absentee rate and some students appeared to have prepared for the examination using the incorrect texts for Section 1, (Drama). As a result, those candidates were unable to respond to any of the four questions in the Drama Section.

"Questions on Section 1 are text-specific and the January 2012 examination were set on the texts *Merchant of Venice* and *Fences*. Those candidates who had prepared using the June 2012 texts *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Old Story Time* were therefore unable to answer any question in this section", the English B Subject Awards Committee reported to the Final Awards Committee. The Subject Awards Committee noted that of the 805 candidates who wrote the examination, 140 of them did not respond to any question in Section 1. "This difference had a negative impact on candidates' performance on Profile 1 (Drama)."

Performance also declined on English A, from 54 per cent of entries achieving acceptable grades in 2011 to 43 per cent this year. The percentage of candidates achieving grades at the higher end of the scale declined as well: Five per cent achieved Grade I this year compared with nine per cent last year.

"A decline in the quality of response was evident in Question 2, the narrative comprehension passage, and Question 4, the short story, based on a picture stimulus", the Subject Awards Committee reported. The

Committee also recommended that teachers help candidates master the comprehension of literary devices and develop effective reading skills.

Social Studies saw a 21 per cent decline in performance compared with 2011; from 70 per cent to 49 per cent. Performance on all three papers declined, but significantly on Paper 02. On Paper 01, 68 per cent of entries achieved Grades I–III compared with 84 per cent in 2011; on Paper 02, 32 per cent compared with 62 per cent in 2011 and for Paper 03, it was 50 per cent compared with 52 per cent last year.

Additionally, performance declined on Profile 1 (Knowledge and Comprehension) on all three papers. The Subject Awards Committee attributed this general decline in performance at the January sitting to "unpreparedness as seen in the lack of understanding of fundamental Social Studies concepts, the failure to expand responses to questions which asked for explanations, description and reasons for suggestions."

## Entries

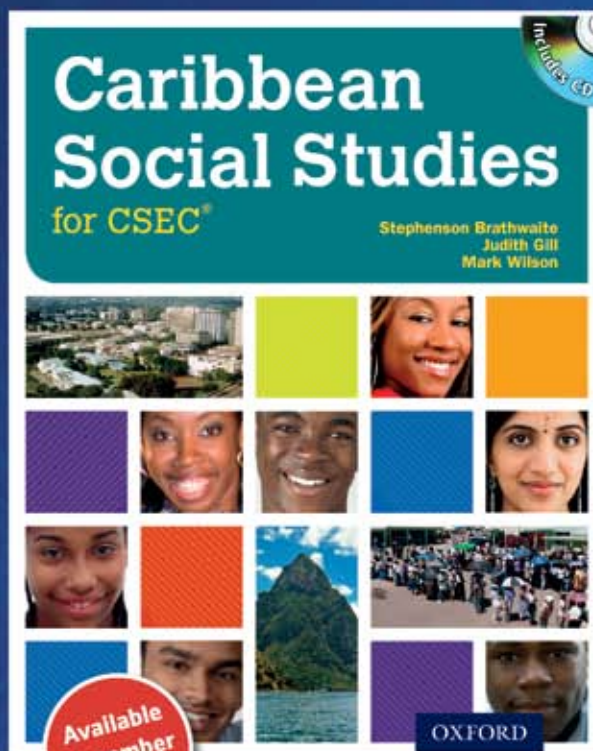
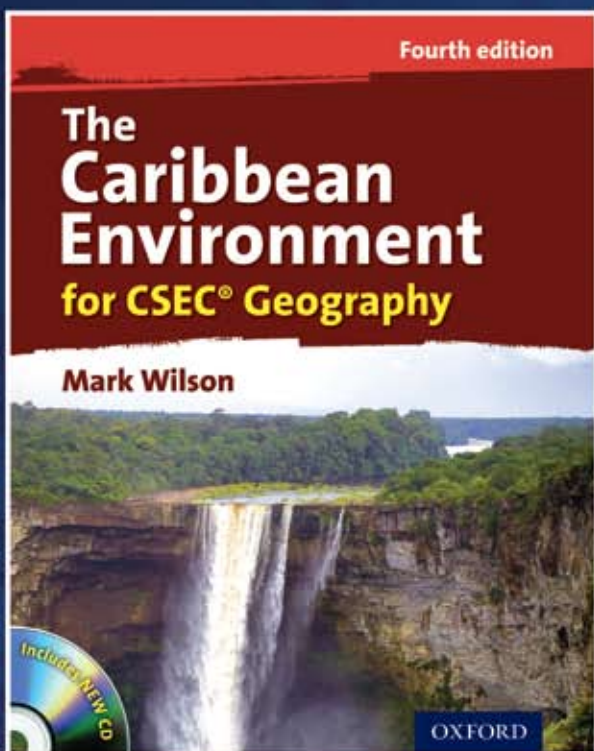
This year candidate entries increased but subject entries declined. Twenty-seven thousand, seven hundred and sixty candidates registered for the 13 subjects offered. This was a slight increase over the 27, 349 who registered in 2011. Subject entries declined from 76, 870 last year to 64,366 this year.

The January sitting continues to attract the region's mature population. More than 50 per cent or over 14,000 candidates were in the 19 years and over age group, while another 3000 fell within the age group of 18 to 19 years.

Mathematics was the most subscribed subject with 18,402 entries, followed by English A with 15,474; Social Studies 6,157 and Human and Social Biology 4,639 entries.

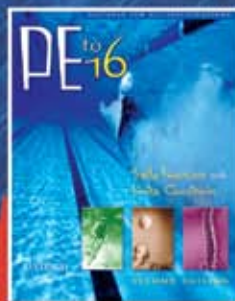
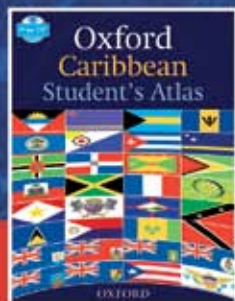
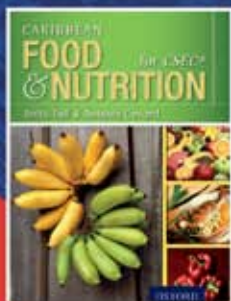
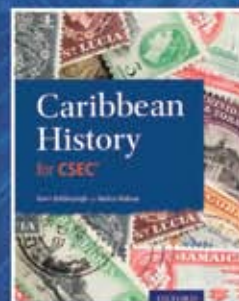
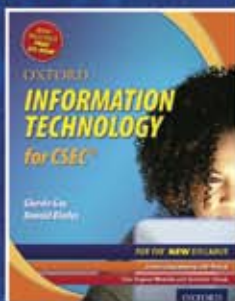
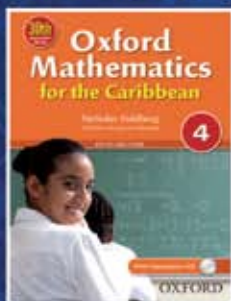


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