

## **Associate Degrees at the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College**

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College (SVGCC) currently offers a number of Associate Degrees. These are outlined below with a brief summary on the status of each.

1. **Teacher Education;** This Associate Degree in Teacher Education is offered in conjunction with the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean. This Eastern Caribbean JBTE is based within the School of Education (SOE), University of the West Indies, Cave Hill campus. The outlines are developed by the JBTE and taught by lecturers at the different Teachers' Colleges and Community Colleges in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean. Examinations are prepared by the JBTE in collaboration with the Colleges, taken by students and marked at the Colleges and moderated by a panel of lecturers from the Colleges. Students receive a UWI JBTE Associate Degree on successful completion and can matriculate into and complete a BEd programme at UWI or many other institutions. In 2005, the College transitioned from the earlier Teachers' Certificate to this Associate Degree in Teacher Education. There are different disciplines including Secondary Education, Primary Education, Early Childhood Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
2. **Hospitality Studies;** This Applied Associate degree was developed by the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization. While the curriculum was developed by the aforementioned entities, all assessments are set by SVGCC lecturers. Students who successfully complete this programme receive an SVGCC Applied Associate Degree and can matriculate into the UWI or the College of the Bahamas to complete their Bachelors Degree in Hospitality Studies in two years. More recently, the SVGCC has signed an articulation agreement with Munroe College which formalized this same arrangement. In fact, Munroe has been accepting our students for several years prior to any formal arrangement. The SVGCC has been offering this Associate degree since 2008.
3. **Business Studies, Psychology, Information Technology, Paralegal Studies;** This group of Associate Degrees were developed by the SVGCC and first delivered to part time students in 2010. The template for these programmes and all SVGCC developed Associate degrees is that developed by the UWI in collaboration with the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI). These programmes are comprised of a General Education component of 6 to 7 courses and Core course and elective components of 13 to 14 courses. Associate Degrees developed along the recommendations of the UWI have the advantage of not only offering matriculation into relevant three year degree programmes (just like GCE A' Levels or CAPE) but also offer Advanced Placement at many Universities and Colleges including the UWI, St. Georges University, University of Technology and Munroe College. Since their development, three of these programmes (Business Studies, Psychology and Information Technology) have already been assessed by regional and extra-regional Educational Institutions (UWI, UTECH, St. Georges

University and Munroe College). Business Studies and Psychology were assessed by a UWI cross-campus team in 2012. This assessment shows that students who successfully complete these programmes with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.7 and a Grade of at least a B- in specified courses, would merit equivalence and exemption with credit (i.e. advanced placement).

Monroe College has done a similar assessment of the Business Studies and Information Technology programmes and Monroe College will accept credits from 20-21 courses (depending on the programme) from students who have completed the SVGCC Associate Degree in good academic standing.

St. Georges University also did an assessment of the Business Studies, Psychology and Information Technology Associate degrees and are willing to offer our graduates in these programmes Advanced Placement into their corresponding Bachelors Degree programmes.

The University of Technology (UTECH), Jamaica, has also done an assessment of the Information Technology Associate Degree Programme and students who successfully complete this programme matriculate with Advanced standing into UTECH B.Sc. in Computer Science. This B.Sc. programme is currently being done on Franchise at the SVGCC and several graduates of the SVGCC Associate Degree in IT are students in this Bachelors programme.

SVGCC has requested a similar assessment for the Paralegal programme and the Fine Arts, Design and Cultural Communication programme. This assessment should have been completed last year but the UWI team was unable to complete at the pre-arranged time. A new date is to be established.

4. **Fine Arts, Design and Cultural Communication;** This programme began in 2011 and has now completely replaced the Cambridge A'level Art and Design programme. While there has been no formal assessment of this programme by any external institution (was also scheduled for 2013), the quality of the graduates and their work means that they are constantly employed and extremely busy productive citizens of SVG. Their work can be seen throughout the length and breadth of our country in Art, Fashion designing and film.
5. **Performing Arts and Media Studies;** These two Associate Degree programmes were launched in 2012. It is not usual that assessment or Accreditation is sought for a programme before a cohort has completed the programme. Such cohort completion is necessary because the assessment involves looking at the courses, examinations, speaking with students and lecturers and seeing how graduates have integrated the skills learnt. The first cohort of Performing Arts students graduated in June 2014. The first cohort in media Studies will not complete until December 2014.

6. **Applied Associate Degrees in the following 9 areas:** Hospitality (already mentioned), Business, ICT, Building Construction, Electrical Engineering Technology, Automotive Repair, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, Mechanical Technology and Agricultural Science. These programmes have been developed utilizing course outlines developed by UTECH as part of the STATVET (STABEX through Vocational Education and Training) project funded by the European Union in 2000. These programmes have been taught at the Division of Technical and Vocational Education since 2010.
7. **Nursing Education;** The Registered Nursing Programme was converted in 2012 from a Certificate Programme to an Associate Degree programme. This curriculum harnesses the best of both worlds as student nurses not only do the core Nursing Disciplines but also General Education courses such as Communication and Sociology. Successful students will continue to write the Regional Examination for Nurse Registration.

**In summary,** we wish to say the following;

1. The SVGCC Act of 2005 makes it clear that one of the functions of the College is “to offer courses leading to degrees, to confer degrees and grant diplomas, certificates, other awards and honours as are usually conferred by similar institutions”.
2. The SVGCC has begun the process of seeking accreditation and the first step of this process was achieved when we received our certificate of Registration (Pre-Accreditation) in November 2013.
3. Accreditation is a process and can only be granted by an Accreditation body such as the National Accreditation Board of SVG.
4. Educational institutions like the UWI cannot provide accreditation. They can provide recognition for and articulation to their programmes. This we have sought and continue to seek.
5. From our experience, well qualified students with excellent grades in whatever programme will always be considered for related higher education programmes. The challenge comes when there are poor grades and low GPA’s. There are large numbers of SVGCC alumni pursuing higher education at reputable institutions on the strength of their SVGCC earned Associate Degrees. When these institutions are not sure about the qualification, they will contact the SVGCC for course outlines or other information to seek to make an equivalency check.
6. Rome was not built in a day. Our regional UWI which has been around since 1948 has just gone through its first Accreditation exercise. Yet the quality of the graduates and its programmes over the years has meant its degrees have been recognized worldwide even prior to accreditation. The SVGCC is a relatively young institution that has already made significant strides. We offer on Franchise arrangements Accredited Bachelor’s Degrees from Accredited Institutions: UWI, UTECH and Jamaica Theological Seminary.

7. The SVGCC has been approached by the UWI towards making the College a University College of the UWI. These discussions are in their early days but speak to the cordial and professional nature of the current and future relations between the SVGCC and the UWI.
8. Our graduates are functioning effectively in all areas of SVG and the world over. We will continue to work with the Ministry of Education, the National Accreditation Board and all other willing stakeholders to strengthen our structures and systems for the benefit of all Vincentians.

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September 17, 2014