

TVET Quality Assurance Review

A review of current TVET
Assessment, Verification and
Competency Claim Validation
Process and Practice in four Eastern
Caribbean States (Dominica, St.
Lucia, St. Vincent and the
Grenadines, Grenada)

By

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May 2022



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Acknowledgement

The authors wish to express sincere appreciation to the SkYE Country Coordinators, Technical and Operations Teams who provided invaluable support in making the field visits to each of the four countries a reality.

We must express our sincere gratitude to the numerous stakeholders consisting of Centre Managers, Administrative Staff, Internal and External Verifiers, Assessors, Learners and Team Members from National Training Authorities, in the respective countries, who provided us with the requisite information and data for this Quality Assurance Review.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the endorsement of Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA) in permitting the Quality Assurance Review of its established assessment procedures.

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Acronyms

ACE	Adult and Continuing Education
AED	Adult Education Division
APL	Assessment of Prior Learning
BTC	Business Training Centre
BTI	Barrouallie Technical Institute
CARE	Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education
CANTA	Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities
CBT	Community Based Training
CDACT	Centre for Development and Certification Training
CALLS	Centre Where Adolescents Learn to Love
CEEP	Centre for Enhancing Educational Performance
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
COHSOD	Council for Human and Social Development
CP TI	Campden Park Technical Institute
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DYBT	Dominica Youth Business Trust
EBT	Enterprise Base Training
EC	Eastern Caribbean
EV	External Verifier
FOPD	Faith Organisation for People's Development
GCLTVET	Grenada Council on Technical Vocational Education and Training
GNTA	Grenada National Training Authority
GTI	Georgetown Technical Institute
IV	Internal Verifier
KTI	Kingstown Technical Institute
MoE	Ministry of Education
NELP	National Enrichment Learning Programme
NEWLO	New life Organisation
NSCDS	National Skills Development Centre
NTA	National Training Agency
NOS	National Occupational Standard
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OJT	On the Job Training
QA	Quality Assurance
OS	Occupational Standards
ROS	Regional Occupational Standards
SLCTVET	St. Lucia TVET Council
SSDA/NQG	Sector Skills Development Agency/National Qualifications Department
SKYE	Skills for Youth Employment in the Caribbean
SVGCC	St. Vincent and Grenadines Community College

SVG
TVET
YDD

St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Technical Vocational Education and Training
Youth Development Department

1 Introduction and Background

The assessment of learners' competencies for the award of a qualification in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a critical function that is governed by the National Training Authorities (NTAs) in the Caribbean. All NTAs in the English-speaking Caribbean are members of the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA). CANTA Quality Assurance Criteria and Guidelines for the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, 2015 (CVQ) is used as the basis for each of the NTA's governance models for the quality assurance of TVET.

The training and assessment systems governed by the NTAs are grounded in the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) philosophy that judges learners' competency based on the performance of a sequence of job tasks outlined by approved occupational standards. Training and assessment are done in accordance with the practical competencies, underpinning knowledge and attitudinal requirements outlined in such standards.

These standards are either locally or regionally approved. National Occupational Standards (NOS) are developed in each country. Regional Occupational Standards (ROS) are those national standards that are submitted for approval by CANTA and the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). ROS are intended for regional TVET training and assessment across the Caribbean and are linked to the CVQs.

The standards-based TVET system in the Caribbean requires that learners be assessed reliably, so that the TVET system not only produces competent and quality workers that are acceptable to industry and employers, but the certificates awarded to graduates are trusted as reliable signals of this competence. Hence, NTAs are mandated to create for implementation, a Quality Assurance (QA) framework for the training and assessment systems that guarantees these outputs. NTAs' Quality Assurance systems must therefore be efficient, effective and actively implemented and monitored. It is within this context that Caribbean TVET systems are able to diagnose and recognize learners' occupational competencies and thereby award certification in NVOs, CVQs and Statements of Unit Competencies.

The Quality Assurance Framework for TVET outputs requires systemic assessment, verification and moderation processes. This QA framework is needed to reliably and consistently verify and validate the competency outputs emerging from the different TVET training providers across the region. This is the basic framework for the CVQs which allows for the unfettered free movement of skilled and competent employment-seeking workers throughout the region.

1.1 Quality Assurance Criteria and Guidelines

The Quality Assurance Criteria and Guidelines for the CVQ as well as NVOs, detail the following:

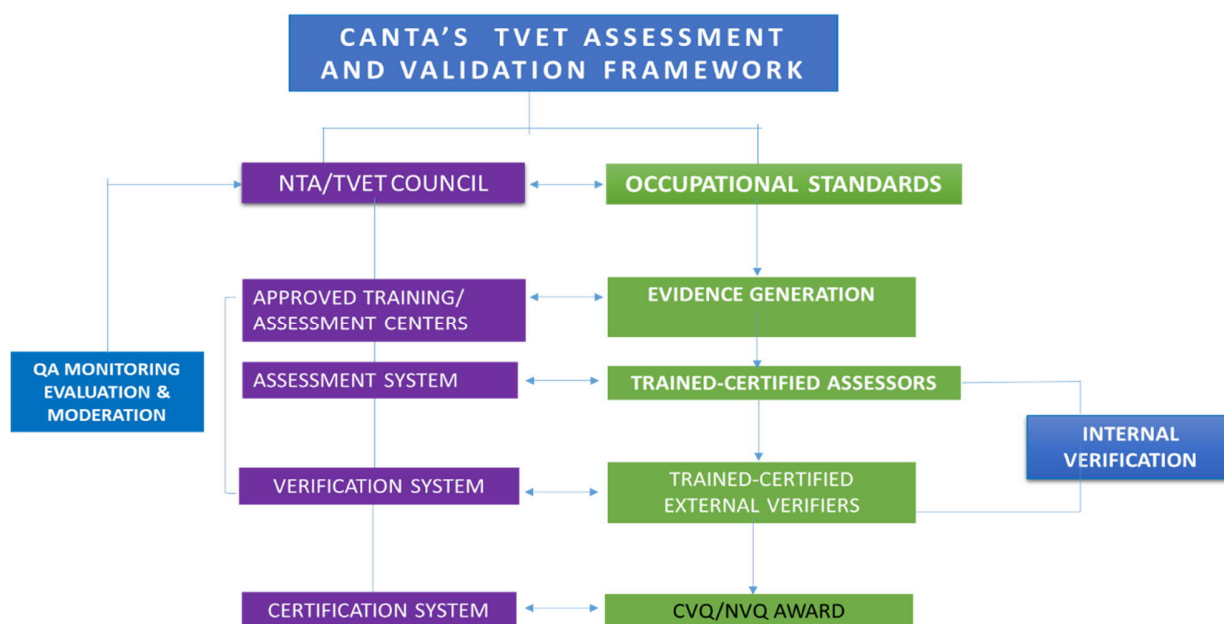
- training of TVET professionals in CBET and Assessment Level 4 qualification as Assessors;
- training of identified TVET instructors and administrative personnel as Internal Verifiers;

- identification of industry personnel with experience and qualifications who are trained and deployed as External Verifiers;
- the planning, conducting and reviewing of assessments by trained and certified Assessors;
- the approval of assessment instruments, strategies, and collating of assessment records by Internal Verifiers;
- the verification and validation of assessment outcomes by trained and certified External Verifiers;
- a final validation process of assessment outcomes via monitoring and evaluation functions performed by Quality Assurance Technical Officers from the NTAs.

Once learners are judged to be competent within an occupation, and this judgement has been confirmed by external sources, they are recommended for approval for the award of a qualification to a sub-committee of NTAs Board of Directors or by the Board itself. Once approved, CVQs or NVQs certifications are awarded by the NTA.

Figure 1 below represents CANTA's quality assurance guide and process flow for assessment activities amongst TVET Apex bodies throughout its membership.

Figure 1: TVET Certification Framework



1.2 Commissioning of the QA Review Consultancy

The Skills for Youth Employment in the Caribbean (SkYE) Programme assists four (4) Eastern Caribbean countries to provide basic skills training (technical and life skills) for disadvantaged and 'at-risk' young people, as well as individuals with disabilities. The SkYE assistance also facilitates training and certification of skilled workers for employment opportunities. The four countries are St. Vincent and the Grenadines,

Grenada, St. Lucia, and Dominica. SKYE places emphasis on the delivery of accredited training that leads to recognised certificates, especially NVQs/CVQs. The programme also provides support to strengthen capacity within the TVET system, for example by funding training for additional assessors and verifiers. This Quality Assurance Review was commissioned by the SKYE project.

The primary objective of the Quality Assurance Review was to explore the best practices that are linked to assessment, external verification, validation and moderation across the four countries so that opportunities for improvement could be shared. The methodology for the review took into account the reality that all persons who are involved in the implementation of TVET assessment and validation processes contribute collectively to the quality of the assessment. It was therefore designed as a highly consultative process, with a large number of stakeholder interviews and observations of assessment and validation practices.

The QA review examined the levels of the authenticity, validity and reliability of national TVET assessment and certification practices. In addition, it compared the consistency, efficacy and effectiveness of the quality assurance of assessment practices across the Training Providers in the four countries.

The QA review examined the two established QA frameworks for assessment used within the sub-region. One framework uses internal instructor-assessors for all assessments including final assessments, where as the other uses external assessors for summative assessment. The first type of framework purports that the best persons to assess and determine learners' competencies are instructors who are trained, certified and registered by the NTA. It also recognises the value in integrating formal assessment into the learning process, and allowing trainees to gather credits towards their final qualification during their training. The second type of framework relies on Independent Assessors who were not involved in the training process, but were contracted to plan, conduct and review the assessment activities. The QA review analysed both systems and established the pros and cons thereto in order to suggest ways to strengthen each assessment approach.

1.3 TOR and QA Review Approach

In order to fulfill the Terms Of Reference (TOR) of the work, the consultants chose appropriate quality assurance review strategies and methods to gather the relevant data on the quality of TVET assessment systems so that the findings formed the basis for review and analysis. These are discussed at Section 2 of the report.

2 Quality Assurance Review Implementation and Methodology

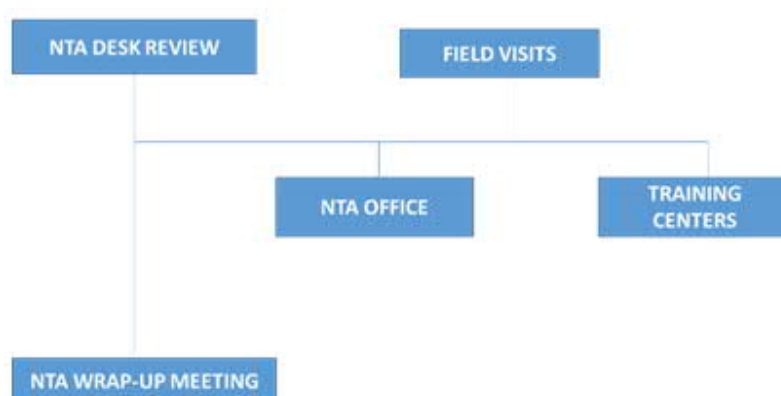
2.1 QA Review Work Plan

A thirty-day work plan was finalised with the SkYE project team. The plan identified desk reviews and field visits as the two major strategies to be used for the QA review in each of the four countries. The plan also defined the timelines for the desk reviews and the field visits and listed the areas and associated activities the review would cover. In effect, the plan created the platform from which the consultants could examine and analyse the TVET assessment and validation systems across the four countries.

2.2 QA Review Methodology

The desk review and field visits allowed the consultants to gather the information needed to identify and analyse the issues that are affecting the TVET assessment and validation systems, as well as to design recommendations to address those issues. The desk review and field visits were designed to provide opportunities for discussions with the NTAs' technical staff. The centre-based field visits were also designed to allow the consultants to interact with Centre Managers, Instructional Staff, Assessors, Internal Verifiers, External Verifiers and learners through interviews and discussions. Further, the centre visits permitted the observation of assessment activities, all of which were focused on SkYE-sponsored training programmes. These interactions and observations provided information which was then analysed and reported with recommendations. The methodology flow for the QA review is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: QA Review Methodology



The intention of this report is to assist SkYE and the four (4) NTAs to improve efficiency and responsiveness of the TVET assessment and validation system within their respective jurisdictions, and in particular, to make recommendations about how SkYE can work with programme partners (including the NTAs) to achieve the programme's results.

It is hoped that this information can also be utilized to support the ongoing development of each country's CBET training, assessment, verification and certification system, more broadly. By focusing on experiences of training providers that deliver training co-funded by the SkYE programme, this review ensures that lessons learned by SkYE programme partners 'on the ground' are captured, reflected upon and communicated as part of a broader systemic review, and that they inform recommendations for system strengthening. In this way, the review makes a significant contribution towards the realisation of SkYE's Theory of Change, and the programme's learning agenda. The findings, once shared with NTAs and the Strategic Advisory Committee, offer substantial opportunity for adaptive management of the SkYE programme.

2.3 Report Outline

The findings of the quality assurance review are presented in Sections 3 to 6 of this report. Findings include the advantages and disadvantages of the quality assurance approaches used for assessment and validation. The advantages highlighted best practices which may be replicated by other NTAs where they maybe lacking. The disadvantages highlight the existing gaps and deficiencies. These are used to propose corrective actions for the enhancement of the CBET assessment and validation processes. A Risk Register for each country was included, along with suggested mitigation strategies.

Section 7 provides a tabulated summary of the findings across the four NTAs, with a synopsis that identifies NTAs' adherence with CANTA's CVQ Awarding Body Audit Criteria re: Section 3 - Award and Assessment.

Section 8 identifies the collective issues emerging from the findings of the QA review across the four territories. A summary analysis addresses each issue with the associated recommendations and conclusion.

Section 9 outlines the concluding statements.

3 Findings – SSDA/NQD: SVG Desk Review and Field Visit

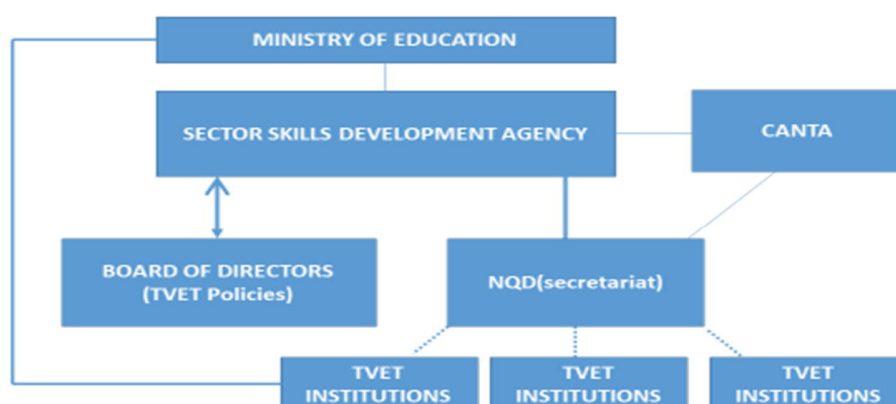
3.1 Overview

The Sector Skills Development Agency/National Qualifications Department (SSDA/NQD) is the Apex Body with responsibility for TVET activities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). A desk review was conducted from February 23, 2022, as well as online interviews and discussions with the Director, Programmes and Training Officer and the Quality Assurance and Assessment Officer of the SSDA/NQD. This was followed by the field visit from March 7-11, 2022. First, there was an opening meeting with the said Technical team from the SSDA/NQD. This was followed with visits to four (4) Technical Institutes (TIs). Assessment activities were observed at the TIs and interviews were held with the Centre Managers, Instructors, Internal Verifiers, Assessors and learners. At the end of the field visits, a closing meeting was once again held with the SSDA/NQD staff to discuss the main findings and to provide clarity of the issues thereto.

The SSDA/NQD was established by the Sector Skills Development Agency Act of 2010. It is a statutory body and consists of a Board and a Secretariat. The Secretariat is referred to as the National Qualifications Department (NQD). The NQD reports to the Board of the SSDA and the Ministry of Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

The SSDA/NQD was accredited by CANTA and COHSOD of CARICOM to award the CVQ. Consequently, it awards both NVQs and CVQs at a particular level to competent learners upon completion of training and assessment at an approved training institution, in the units of competence within an occupational standard/qualification. Figure 3 below provides a graphical representation of the organisational framework of the SSDA/NQD.

Figure 3: Organisational Framework SSDA/NQD



3.2 Training and Assessment System

The SSDA/NQD conducts centre approval audits of all public and private TVET facilities involved delivering qualifications, through training and assessment. This is to ensure that the requisite facilities and procedures are available to accommodate training and assessment activities required for the various programmes / qualifications. In SVG, TVET programmes are primarily delivered by four (4) main Technical Institutes (TIs). These consist Kingstown, Campden Park, Georgetown and Barrouallie. The TIs account for a significant percentage of the Levels 1 and 2 vocational qualification certificates awarded by the SSDA/NQD each year. These institutes are also responsible for delivering the largest volume of the SKYE training initiatives provided in SVG.

SSDA/NQD also awards NVOs, as well as Statements of Competence in the numerous custom-designed short courses under the SKYE initiative. These customized course designs were quality assured using the CANTA QA guidelines for CVQ.

The Technical Division of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College (SVGCC) is a satellite training provider and offers a Level 3 qualification in General Construction. The Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) department, through its community training centers, offers Level 1 qualifications mainly in construction skills. There is also a private training provider that offers level 2 training in Secretarial Services.

In most institutions, training courses that lead to national qualifications are based on regional occupational standards (ROS). They are quality assured through the CANTA QA guidelines for CVQ/NVO. To be certified, learners must successfully complete training and assessment of the occupational course studied.

3.2.1 Internal Assessment Practices

The SSDA's TVET assessment practices places much emphasis on continuous or ongoing assessment. This formative assessment approach, however, warrants the utility of instructor-assessor and internal verifiers who are affixed institutional staff members. They are required to conduct both continuous as well as summative assessments. This approach is further discussed in Section 8 of this report.

3.2.2 The Four-tiered Assessment and Validation System

The SSDA model for Quality Assurance of TVET is characterized by a four-tiered structure described in figure 2. Three of the four tiers are based in the training institution and the fourth by the SSDA. The tiers are described below and illustrated in figure 4.

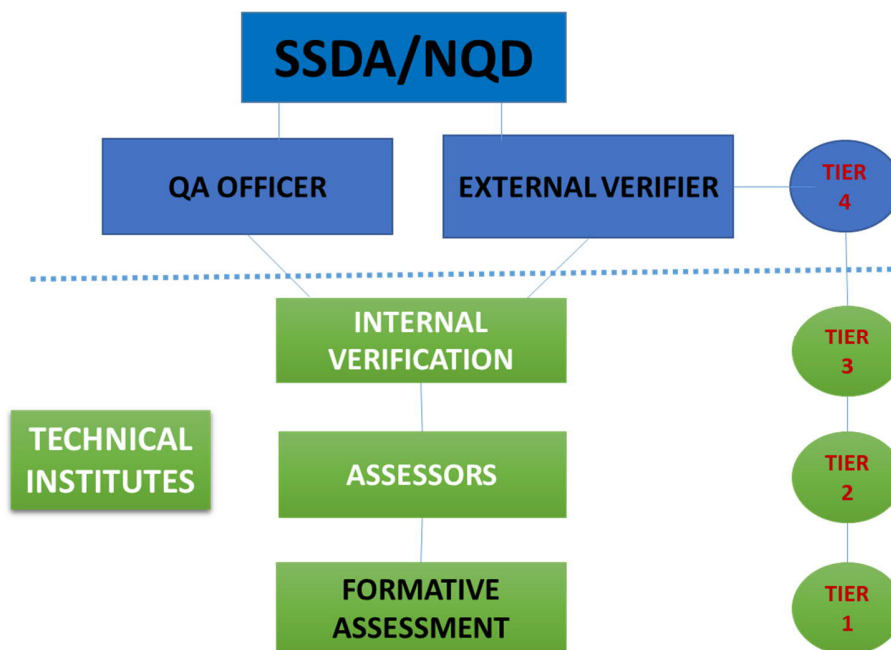
Tier 1 involves the internal formative and summative assessment done by instructor- assessors.

Tier 2 is the first level internal verification of the assessment. This is done by the internal verifier.

Tier 3 is the second level QA check of the internal verification done by the CVQ coordinator.

Tier 4 is the external verification. It is a QA check of assessment instruments used in summative assessments, and assessment records. This is done by the SSDA appointed external verifier.

Figure 4: Four-Tiered Quality Assurance System for Assessments - SSDA/NQD



3.2.3 The Instructor-Assessor

The policy of the SSDA is that the most suited person to assess learners' competence is the person who offers the training. Therefore, the Instructor-Assessor must:

- be trained in the competency-based instructional and assessment methodologies;
- be trained to the standards for assessment within the 5 units of competence of the CVQ in Assessment Level 4;
- be vocationally certified at least one level above in the occupation which is being delivered and assessed;
- possess technical/occupational competence in the areas covered by the qualifications being assessed.

The other persons besides the instructor-assessor who are assigned and operate within the assessment and validation system are monitored by the SSDA/NQD in accordance with the CANTA QA guidelines.

3.2.4 Internal Verifiers

The Internal Verification of the assessment is a quality assurance process conducted by a centre. The SSDA appoints Internal Verifiers within the TI staff. Internal Verifiers are usually experienced and certified Instructor-Assessors. The role and responsibilities of Internal Verifiers are taken from the CANTA QA Guidelines, 2015. Generally, there is one internal verifier for each occupational area within each TI. Broadly

speaking, their role is to ensure quality and reliability of assessments that are carried out by a TI within their occupational area. They do this by reviewing assessments, and through feedback and peer support to trainers/assessors.

3.2.5 External Verifier (EV)

External Verification is part of the QA process. The External Verifier focuses on the assessment instruments and checks for validity, reliability, applicability, consistency, and evidence sufficiency of the instrument. The SSDA appoints External Verifiers once the internal verification and relevant documentation are completed. External Verifiers are usually persons with practical industrial experiences. In some instances, EVs are retired internal verifiers or instructor-assessors. All EV retained by the SSDA are trained to evaluate the quality of the assessment instruments and how they are applied during assessment. EV also examines the sufficiency of evidence on which competency judgements are based. Each EV is required to make at least two (2) visits during the assessment process to conduct validation activities at the centres where s/he is appointed to work.

3.2.6 CVQ Coordinator

CVQ Coordinators are staff members of the TIs who are recommended, trained and assigned to the role of CVQ Coordinator by the SSDA/NQD. This position within the TVET assessment system was designed by the SSDA specifically for the TIs to strengthen the internal verification processes. The CVQ coordinator is a Lead Internal Verifier, who also ensures that all systems, documentation, and resources needed for assessment and validation activities are in place. CVQ Coordinators have experience as Instructor-Assessors and Internal Verifiers before becoming CVQ Coordinators. They are assessment leaders with good practical understanding of the entire CBET assessment, verification and validation processes.

3.2.7 Master Assessors

"Master" Assessors refer to persons who are certified to deliver the 12 units that make up the CVQ Level 4 Assessment training course for Practicing Assessors. Accordingly, a small, selected cadre of certified "Master" assessors are utilized by the SSDA to conduct its assessor and verifier training. Master Assessors may also be deployed in the TVET system to mentor and support newly deployed Assessors and Verifiers.

3.2.8 SSDA/NQD Quality Assurance (QA) Officer

The QA Officer is a SSDA appointee who establishes the link between the SSDA/NQD and the approved TI and other centres. As such, the QA Officer is required to monitor assessment and validation activities throughout the system. The QA Officer works with Internal Verifiers, External Verifiers and CVQ Coordinators to monitor and evaluate the quality of the entire process. This is done through periodic assessment and verification audits. Gaps, deficiencies, irregularities, problems, issues and concerns are identified by the QA Officer. Then, in collaboration with the Internal Verifier/CVQ Coordinator, the QA Officer designs appropriate interventions and responses in order to mitigate, decipher or address any systemic issues. The QA Officer also provides the External Verifiers with logistics and documentation for

their work and provides all the information submitted to the SSDA Board for vocational qualification certification.

3.3 Observation of the Quality Assurance Strategies for Assessment in SVG

The field visits to the SSDA/NQD office and four training institutes allowed for the reviewers' observation of assessment activities. Additionally, interviews and discussions were held with Assessors, Internal Verifiers and CVQ Coordinators and learners. All assessment activities observed were related to the SkYE sponsored programmes.

The field visit to the SSDA office enabled review of key records and data listed below. In turn these documents helped to structure the field visit observations and interactive discussions at the TIs:

- documented quality assurance policy and procedures which addressed centre approval audits;
- documented policy and procedures regarding assessment and certification process of learners for the four-tiered quality assurance system (see 3.2.2, figure 2);
- evidence of centre approval audits and approval of the TIs to conduct training and assessment activities per occupational area;
- samples of assessment instruments and completed records by Assessors. These reflected assessment activities which were conducted in unit clusters within the various occupational areas;
- samples of learner's portfolios of evidence as an indicator of continuous assessment and evaluation of learners' progress throughout the respective units of competence within an occupational area;
- Internal Verifier checklist and External Verifiers' reports;
- Assessor and verifier training manual;
- database of trained and certified Assessors, External Verifiers, Internal Verifiers;
- CBET Training Manual;
- reporting forms and completed reports by the Quality Assurance Officer of the SSDA/NQD.

These reports and assessment templates reflect the tiers that make up assessment, and the monitoring and evaluation of assessment. They are critical elements of the QA process to authenticate the certification process of the SSDA. Further, these records are needed to quality assure the SSDA's training for Assessors and Verifiers who will carry out the assessment activities and internal verification at the TIs.

3.4 Observation and Review of Assessment and Verification Procedures

Following the field visit to the SSDA office, visits were made to the four Technical Institutes.

3.4.1 Kingstown Technical Institute (KTI)

On March 11, 2022, one consultant met with a representative segment of the KTI staff. These included the Principal, the CVQ Coordinator, an Internal Verifier, and Instructor-Assessors. Matters related to the assessment and verification were described and discussed. The progression of the center-base system with the KTI confirmed the SSDA's four-tiered QA system in operation.

3.4.1.1 Issues identified

Several issues that impact on the quality of training were identified through interviews with key staff.

Factors affecting timely delivery of training and assessment

- Delays in the supply of consumables;
- The limited operational hours of the centre due to the policies of the Ministry of Education.
- Equipment shortages and malfunctions;
- The considerable number of programmes and clients the centre caters to.

Factors affecting costs of assessment for students and TIs

- Difficulties with preparing hard copy portfolios, because of cost of production
- Factors affecting student retention and progress
 - o Noticeable levels of attrition from programmes due to economic, literacy-numeracy, and other personal reasons;
 - o Maintaining learners' interest and motivation in some programmes;

3.4.1.2 Observation Assessment Activity

The consultant observed an assessment conducted for a CVQ Level 2 ICT programme. The activity followed the assessment guidelines and protocols of the SSDA/NQD by:

- o establishing the objective of the activity;
- o describing the performance task and other related information as per conditions for successful completion;
- o outline of the appeals process.

In concluding the assessment activity, the assessor provided the opportunity for interaction with the learners through self-assessment and oral questioning. The consultant met with one learner to discuss impressions of the training and assessment experience. Whilst this is not a representative sample, it is noted that the learner was satisfied with the training and assessment exercise and was confident that, if certified, she is likely to be employed in the business sector. Assessment documents were presented to the consultant for review.

3.4.2 Campden Park Technical Institute (CPTI)

The consultants visited the CPTI on March 12, 2022, and met with the Principal, an Internal Verifier and other members of the CPTI staff. Discussions were also held with learners involved in the Welding Level 2 programme. Matters related to the assessment and verification were described and discussed. Similar to observations at KTI, the progression of the centre-based system within the CPTI confirmed the SSDA's four-tiered QA system in operation.

The discussions and observation of assessments which were conducted confirmed the following assessment practices, as set out below:

3.4.2.1 Issues

The issues identified by respondents at CPTI were similar to those experienced by KTI and were as follows:

- the preparation of paper-based portfolios presented challenges for learners who perceived it to be time consuming and expensive to produce and compile;
- the procurement of training resources in a timely manner;
- attrition of learners in some programmes;
- literacy and numeracy challenges;
- limited operational hours of the centre.

3.4.2.2 Observation of an Internal Assessment Activity

The consultants observed an internal assessment activity conducted in Welding Level 2 NVQ. The assessment personnel present were the instructor-Assessor and the Internal Verifier.

The assessment activity involved two group of learners. One group was responsible for performing practical demonstrations whilst the other observed and asked questions. The learners in the group that performed the task were required to explain what they were doing including the task's underpinning knowledge. The group members took turns performing and explaining the steps in the task. The observing group was allowed to ask questions or raise issues with the performance at the end of the activity.

The assessment instructions were explained by the Assessor. This included an outline of the performance task, attention to the safety requirement, the time allotted and the appeals process. The assessment documentation was presented to the consultant for review.

The consultant held a post-assessment discussion with the learners. Learners expressed satisfaction with the programme. For some learners, the programme serves as a stepping-stone for seeking employment on cruise ships and oil rigs. For one learner, it was to advance service in his already established business.

The consultant also held discussion with the Assessor and Internal Verifier (also the acting centre principal). The programme was a customized course under the SkYE initiative leading to a Welding qualification, NVQ Level 2. The programme is quality assured using the SSDA QA Guidelines. In this programme, learners were not required to prepare an extensive portfolio of evidence. Instead, the evidence of trainees' competence was produced was documented during training and formative assessment. These records of

evidence were internally verified, and internal verification records are available for external verification, which is also reported.

3.4.3 Barrouallie Technical Institute (BTI)

A field visit to the BTI occurred on March 13, 2022. The visit began with discussions with the Centre Principal, the CVQ Coordinator and two Instructor-Assessors. Areas of concerns or challenged identified, included:

Factors impacting on learner progress

- attrition rates of learners in some programmes due to personal and economic challenges;
- although not a generic problem, consumable insufficiency in some courses affected the delivery of training, hence the pace of the assessment;
- numeracy and literacy challenges hindered the smooth progression of some programmes;

Factors impacting on assessment

- consumable insufficiency in some courses affected pace of the assessment;
- timely preparation and presentation of the portfolio of evidence.

3.4.3.1 Observation of an Internal Assessment Activity

The consultant observed an internal assessment activity conducted in Customer Service, a full Level 1 CVQ certification programme. The assessment was a summative assessment for the units constituting Telephone Operations. The CVQ Coordinator was also the instructor. The assessment activity followed the guidelines and practices outlined by the SSDA.

3.4.4 Georgetown Technical Institute (GTI)

The consultants visited the GTI on March 13, 2022 and met with the principal and staff of the institute. A fulsome discussion on several matters related to training and assessment was held. These included:

Factors impacting on learner retention and progress

- the significant attrition rate from some programmes due to factors, such as:
 - o transportation to and from training centre;
 - o non- availability of child-care services to facilitate the needs of single-mothers;
 - o financial problems experienced by learners;
 - o misunderstanding of the nature of the programmes;
 - o employment opportunities;
 - o restricted operational hours of the institution as stipulated by the MoE, which impacted the potential to expand and offer evening programmes;

Factors impacting on assessment of learners

- requirements of the portfolio preparation are such that they contribute to learners dropping out from training;
- the inadequacy in the supply of consumables for training and assessment activities.

3.4.4.1 Observation of an Internal Assessment Activity

The consultants observed an assessment activity conducted in specific units of competence in Electrical Installation CVQ Level 2. In addition to the Instructor Assessor, the Internal Verifier and the QA Officer from the SSDA/NQD were present to review and validate the assessment activity. The process as observed, adhered with the guidelines and practices outlined by the SSDA.

3.4.5 Summary of Assessment and Verification practices across the Technical Institutes in SVG

3.4.5.1 Qualification of Assessors

Only Assessors who were trained and certified in the five units of the Level 4 Assessment Qualification are registered and authorised to conduct TVET assessments. Whereas in the past, the SSDA/NQD required the intervention of consultants and/or support from other NTAs to conduct CBET and Assessor training, the SSDA/NQD has now developed sufficient capacity within the TVET system to provide both training and certification for the Assessor CVQ Level 4 programme.

Instructors who were trained, certified and registered Assessors were responsible for conducting the assessments of their learners in the SkYE programmes.

3.4.5.2 Evidence seen of assessments instruments as prepared by Assessors

These reflected the occupational areas, the level and the unit or cluster of units of competence being assessed, along with instructions to the learners, assessment templates and associated rubrics.

3.4.5.3 Evidence of the Review of Assessment Instruments by Internal Verifiers

The assessment tasks captured the units of competence being assessed. The various dimensions of competency were consistent with the instruments developed. The Internal Verifier's review ensured that the assessment instruments were sufficient to facilitate a fair judgment of candidates' performance. The review of assessment templates, instruments and methodologies employed were checked and verified by the CVQ Coordinator.

3.4.5.4 Evidence of the approval of the assessment instruments by the Internal Verifier and CVQ Coordinator

The SSDA in collaboration with the Technical Institutes and other privately owned enterprises, delivers customised short courses for NVQ unit certification in areas such as Welding, Tiling, Electrical Installation and Cosmetology. Whilst still being required to produce evidence of sufficient quality to reliably assess the standards, these customised short courses were exempted from the same level of preparation of the portfolio of evidence.

3.4.5.5 Records of formative assessment, internal verification and other training records are kept

Learners are supported to develop competencies through a series of teaching and learning tasks organized within units. These unit tasks enable learners to work towards a final assessment project which is externally verified. The QA requirements for these courses followed the same as for the full NVQ or CVQ. The outcomes of the final assessment along with the training, assessment and verification records and reports are then submitted for NVQ units claims and awards.

3.4.5.6 Conduct of the Assessments

- Assessors conducted performance-based or practical activities with learners. This included the integration or clustering of units and the requirement for learners to produce finished products. The assessment instruments included oral questions and written tests to be administered at the end of performance tasks;
- Assessors provided clear instructions to learners on the tasks requirements and the right to appeal the assessment outcomes and procedures and how to appeal;
- Assessors presented assessment templates with criteria and the associated rubrics/ grading or rating scales;
- Internal Verifiers checked the assessment for quality and observed the assessment process and in some cases asked questions of the learners;
- Assessors completed assessment templates affixed with the required signatures of the Assessor, candidate and the Internal verifier;
- Assessors designed and used innovative strategies to conduct performance tasks, as noted under Advantage of the SSDA/NQD Assessment Process - Best Practices (Section 3.7).

3.4.5.7 Assessment Review and Certification

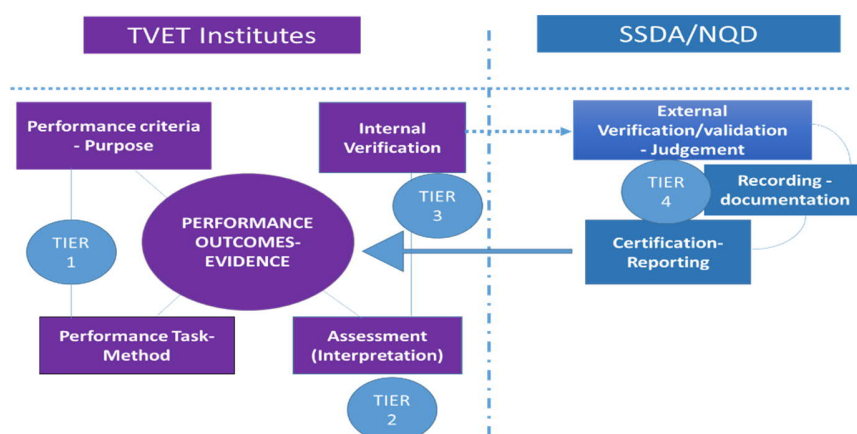
The consultants observed that:

- Samples of the assessment templates and assessment activities reflected practical demonstration and graded scripts that assessed underpinning knowledge. These and other relevant explanatory documents were submitted to the Internal Verifier and/or a designated CVQ Coordinator for review and authentication of the assessment outcomes;
- Templates were submitted to the SSDA/NQD's QA Officer for review and quality assurance checks. In some instances, the Quality Assurance Officer observes assessment activities, and provides a monitoring and evaluation report as part of the assessment reviews;
- Upon review of the assessment templates and assessment outcomes, the SSDA contracts the services of a trained, registered External Verifier assigned to the occupational area to validate the assessment instruments and outcomes;
- The validation process required External Verifiers to review and evaluate:
 - samples of learners' portfolios of evidence;
 - the internal assessment or continuous assessments records against the specification of the occupational standards specifications;

- samples of assessment instruments and learning outcomes to ascertain the reliability of assessment decisions made;
- external verification occurred twice throughout the training and assessment process
- Upon completion of the visits, the External Verifier submitted the respective reports and checklist to the SSDA with the appropriate adjudication on the assessment outcomes and decisions made;
- Upon completion of the qualification plan by learners, a list of learners deemed to be competent in the relevant occupational areas is submitted to the Board for review, approval and the granting of award for the vocational qualification competency. This is accompanied by the Internal and External Verifier reports and the QA Officer's monitoring and evaluation reports.

Figure 5 below, presents the SSDA/NQD's quality assurance process for assessment carried out by TIs in SVG.

Figure 5: Implemented QA Process for Assessment in TVET SVG



3.5. Analysis of the Assessment Process-SSDA/NQD -SVG Advantages

In SVG, the assessment and verification quality assurance framework is well established, documented and implemented. The framework is built on the following sub-structures:

- Training centre approval by SSDA facility audit mechanism;
- The use of Instructor-Assessor to provide a smooth flow between training delivery and ongoing internal assessment. The model's rationale ascribes to the TVET system that persons who work with the learners the most are best suited to conduct assessment activities. The benefits of internal assessment and verification as perceived by the SSDA are:
 - Cost effectiveness of the assessment process;
 - Well-structured centre-based assessment and validation system that easily facilitated assessment and validation activities throughout training;
 - All the elements necessary for assessment and validation (except for the external verification process) resided within the TIs. This made the assessment and validation process seamless, efficient, timely, responsive and easily managed;

- Assessment activities, instruments and the methodologies employed were consistent and standardised throughout the Tis;
- The layers for quality assuring the assessment activities (Internal Verifier - CVQ Coordinator - External Verifier - Quality Assurance Officer) allowed for a robust practice of validating the assessment process and the decisions made regarding learners' competencies.
- A well structured centre-based QA system for internal assessment executed by Internal Verifiers and coordinated and managed by the CVQ Coordinator;
- A fairly efficient external verification system to provide external QA checks on assessment instruments and approaches. The SSDA's appointed External Verifiers are tasked with evaluating, verifying and judging Assessors' decisions on learner's competencies;
- The SSDA's appointed QA Officer whose role is to periodically conduct external audits against the SSDA's best practice guidelines on the CBET assessments across training providers.

In addition to the advantages, a number of practices were deserving of commendation. These included the following:

- Master or Senior Assessors are used for Assessor and Verifier Training and to provide guidance and mentorship to newly trained and registered Assessors;
- A structured methodological approach of formative assessment activities, based on documented Portfolios of Evidence. The purpose of the portfolio is to document coursework assignments, individual class and group work, tests and projects. They reflect the progress made by each learner through each unit or clusters of units of competence within an occupational area, prior to their summative assessments.

The SSDA's guideline for portfolio development consist of two sections:

Section 1: Preliminary Information

Section 2: Course Content

- Research information
- Candidate class notes
- Students record of tests/Assignment
- Photos, Task Sheets, Checklist, reports etc.
- Artifacts
- Student Reflection on the course

It must be noted that between 50-60% of the content of the portfolio represents class assignments, research information and written test papers.

- Innovative assessment strategies were employed by some Assessors. One case in point was observed at the Barrouallie Technical Institute. The Front Office assessor conducted a unit assessment on 'Communicate on the Telephone' through role play as the method of assessment. The Assessor tasked the eight (8) learners with eight (8) activities; one for each learner. The collective performance task required Front Office staff to respond to a hotel guest's query and

dissatisfaction with quality of the meal delivered to his room by room service. The response required all the learners to work together to successfully resolve the guest's complaint. This assessment activity required learners to act in the different positions and function of hotel workers under the circumstances. This approach was distinct and unique. In one exercise the assessor was able to capture and assess learners through their abilities to demonstrate the practical competencies, underpinning knowledge, professional attitudes and communication skills outlined by the unit.

3.5.1 Disadvantages and Gaps Identified-Assessment -SVG

The assessment process and strategies as established and implemented by the SSDA however, was not without some disadvantages and gaps, which are discussed below.

1. It is mandatory for Portfolios of Evidence to be compiled by learners under the supervision of their instructors. However, while the portfolio is understood to be a useful tool for verifying continuing internal assessment, and while it aids the veracity of the internal QA process, its value to the certification process is sometimes overshadowed by the overarching value and weight placed on the final course assessment exercise for certification. Furthermore, some instructors who were interviewed questioned the efficacy of the portfolios. They explained that some learners perceived it as a disincentive for continuing some programmes, given how time-consuming, expensive and challenging the process was.
2. The majority of training and assessment activities were done within the confines of the Technical Institutes, with rigid operational hours. As a result, the Technical Institutes are restricted in any attempt to accommodate learners who, for example, are employed but need upskilling, reskilling or to have their prior learning competencies recognised through PLAR. Under the rules of the Ministry of Education, the operational hours of the Technical Institutes do not allow for expanded hours of operation to cater to clients who are only available to participate in evening initiatives.
3. Normally, and outside of special externally-funded training and assessment initiatives, the full-time occupational areas offered in the four centres are more identical than diverse.
4. If the SSDA resorts to its normative operations under "public-funded" training and focuses primarily on the limited areas offered in the TIs, this is likely to restrict the system from addressing the needs of other critical occupational areas required by the varying labour-market demands. Further, restricted TVET offerings will eventually lead to an over-supply of graduates in specific skill areas at lower or entry levels, rather than the higher skills levels. The result will be low demand for graduates with qualifications in similar occupational areas.
5. There was no evidence of systematic moderation activities being conducted. Moderation involves giving feedback to assessors to help align marking and assessment strategies/judgements. Although meetings were held between Assessor, Internal Verifier and CVO Coordinator at each TI, there was no evidence of a centralized coordinated moderation activity which involved the functioning assessment personnel.

6. The activities of the SSDA/NQD are constrained by human resource levels, including its technical staff. There is only one Quality Assurance Officer. Consequently, there are no established procedures for specific visits to be made to training providers to monitor and evaluate assessment activities as part of the quality assurance process. The only external observations of assessments are carried out by external verifiers. The SSDAA/NQD's QA officer only carries out documentary reviews of reports submitted to them by external verifiers and the TI assessment team.
7. Except for the practice of electronic portfolios of evidence which were in all cases saved on external drives by learners, there was no evidence of the SSDA/NQD coordinating or delivering online assessment activities.

3.6. Risks and Risk Mitigation Strategies

Having identified both best practices as well as some gaps during the quality assurance review, risks noted in the assessment system, the potential impact of the risks, and mitigation strategies to prevent or reduce the occurrence of the risks were summarized in the table below.

Table 3.7: Risk Register SSDA/NQD- SVG

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY
Unavailability of contracted / assigned EV to validate assessment outcomes	Delays in completion of the assessment activity. Attrition/drop out of learners in completing training and assessment process without any valid qualification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Establish a cadre of Master EVs similar to Master Assessors → Coordinate Master EVs according to industry sectors rather than specific occupations such as Construction, Hospitality, and Information Technology etc. → The services of Master EVs can be utilised to mitigate against any delays in the verification process.
Limited variation in the types of assessment strategies employed by the SSDA/NQD	Assessment and recognition practices of the SSDA/NQD may exclude a significant cohort of skilled citizens without any formal recognition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Robust implementation of the procedures established for PLAR → Engagement of employers to certify and recognise employees through on the job training and certification. For example, in close proximity to the Campden Park TI is a major port facility. The SSDA/NQD could engage the operators to certify employees in Stevedoring Levels 1-2 and Port and Logistic Operations.
Emphasis on CVQ qualifications	Inhibits the practice of customising National Vocational Qualifications specific to industry nuances of SVG and excludes some individuals from the skills credentialing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Development and/or expansion of NVQ programmes → Develop customized job NVQ certification programmes, short courses, to be flexible and responsive to differing profile and needs of potential clients/learners. → Implement routine tracer surveys, to evaluate any differential employment rates for different quals. → Implement employer satisfaction surveys to inform qualification choice.

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY
Restricted operational hours of TIs	Unnecessary duration of training programmes for some potential learners/clients.	→ Expand provision of short, customised evening courses leading to job NVOs, to facilitate both full and part -time employees, as well as single mothers in need of skill credentialing.
Limited practice of moderation activities	Inhibits opportunities for continuous improvement in assessment instruments and validation process, and undermines reliability of assessments within an institution.	→ Conduct systematic moderation activities (at the end of each training cycle), with Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers, in cohorts of specific occupational areas, to review effectiveness of assessment instruments and reliability of assessment judgements and to make and implement recommendations for continuous improvement.
No implemented procedures regarding the timeframe for visits by QA Officer	Could inhibit opportunities for enhancing the quality of assessment activities as well as resolving assessment issues expeditiously	→ Revise Policy and Procedures to reflect the objectives of visits to be made by QA Officers and the frequency. → Establish and implement procedures to conduct formal assessment audits annually for each TI, utilising the QA Officer and Master Assessor(s).
Lack of clarity and/or consensus about the efficacy of the portfolios of evidence	Hesitancy of learners to complete the process	→ Clear procedures regarding its contribution to assessment outcomes → Simplification of the process

4 Findings - GNTA: Grenada Desk Review and Field Visit

4.1. Overview

According to the TVET Policy Review Grenada (2020), the Grenada National Training Agency (GNTA) is "a corporate body managed by the Grenada Council on TVET (GCTVET) with a mandate to develop, implement and maintain a national TVET plan. The plan is designed to create a workforce that is competent, certified, innovative, enterprising and entrepreneurial for local, regional and international markets".

The GNTA was accredited by CANTA and COHSOD of CARICOM to award the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) in 2015. As the apex body responsible for TVET in Grenada, it has a staff complement of approximately fourteen (14) persons, inclusive of Quality Assurance and Standards Development Technical Officers and a Marketing and Communications Officer. The GNTA coordinates and provides assessment activities for TVET-related institutionally-based training, enterprise-based training (EBT), community-based training (CBT) and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Learners who are assessed as occupationally competent are awarded certification for NVQs, CVQs or Statements of Competence.

The quality assurance review of the assessment system and practices of the GNTA started with a desk review on February 25, 2022. This was followed by a field visit on March 14-18, 2022. The field visit entailed meetings and discussions which were held with the GNTA Quality Assurance team. Additionally, the consultants observed practical assessments and conducted meetings and interviews with Centre Managers, Instructors, Assessors, External Verifiers and learners at training providers delivering training funded by SKYE. The centres visited were:

- LaBoucan Centre
- Centre for Development and Certification Training (CDACT) - *Interview only with Director at place of employment*
- New Life Organisation (NEWLO)
- Faith Organisation for People's Development (FOPD)
- Centre for Enhancing Educational Performance (CEEP)-Tech World

4.2. Training and Assessment System

4.2.1 Centre Approval

The quality assurance policies and guidelines for TVET training and assessment in Grenada necessitates that the GNTA conducts a centre approval audit. Based on the audit, successful centres are approved to deliver training and assessment for the award of qualifications. The approval criteria and the description of evidence required for the facilities audit are adopted from the CANTA QA Guidelines for CVQ (2015). The

audit is usually carried out by a trained and certified quality auditor. The audit ensures that appropriate and adequate facilities and procedures are available for training and assessment activities for the various programmes offered to the Grenadian public. It must be noted that once an institution adds a new occupational area, it had to re-apply to the GNTA for centre approval for that particular programme.

TVET programmes are accessed primarily through public and private training providers. However, the GNTA had successfully partnered with a number of enterprises to facilitate on-the-job training and assessment initiatives that lead to the award of vocational qualifications at various levels.

Two of the centres visited had GNTA Centre Approval certificates framed and mounted on the walls of their institutions. The Centre Approval certificate had the list of the occupational areas for which the centre had received approval status.

4.2.2 Occupational Standards Development

The GNTA is actively involved with the development of occupational standards for its local industrial base. Hence, TVET training initiatives are predicated on both national as well as regional occupational standards (NOS and ROS). Learners who successfully complete training programmes must be assessed as competent to be issued full CVOs and NVQs qualifications by the GNTA. Additionally, learners receive Statements of Competence for the occupational units they successfully completed, either in an NVQ or CVO qualification.

4.2.3 CBET Philosophy and Training

All practitioners in the Grenada TVET system are agents of the Quality Assurance mechanism and are required to be trained in the roles and function to be performed. This Quality Assurance training is grounded in the foundational philosophy of CBET to ensure that learners have the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) that meet the needs of the workplace. Hence, the training strategy employed by the GNTA focuses on what is crucial for learners to be able to do successfully at the end of the learning experience.

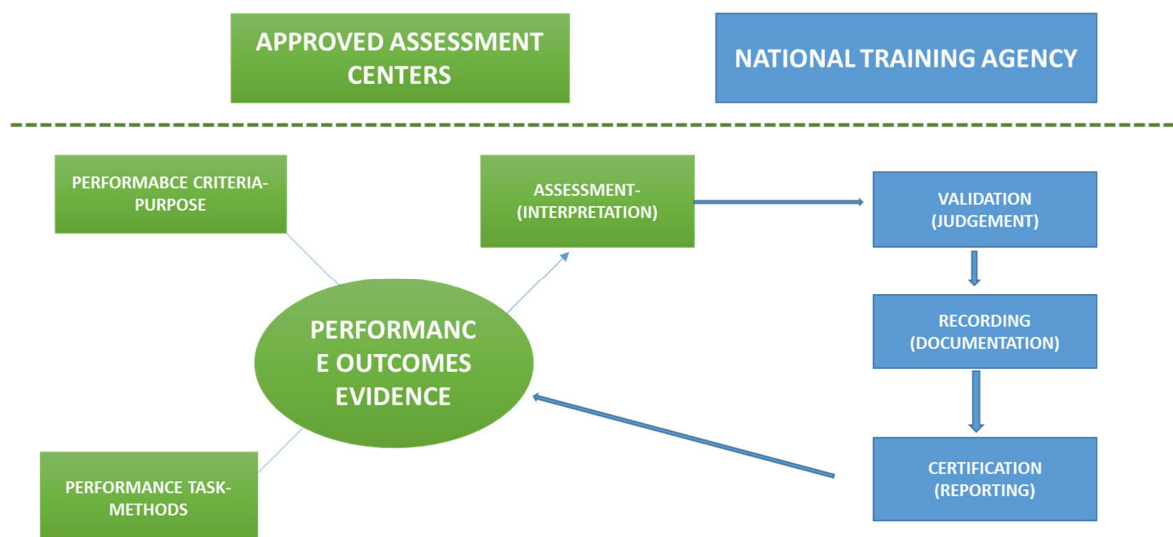
The GNTA conducts training in the following areas:

- a. CBET Instructor Training
- b. Assessor Training
- c. Verifier Training
- d. External Verifier Training
- e. Quality Auditor Training

4.2.4 Monitoring and Validation of Assessment

The GNTA monitors and validates all assessment and verification systems leading to the award of NVQ or CVO. Assessment monitoring is carried out by the GNTA's QA office. External Verifiers carry out the Validation of assessments. The GNTA also provides the guidelines and policies for the interpretation, judgment, recording and reporting of assessment outcomes. Figure 6 depicts a graphical representation of the assessment process flow, as coordinated by the GNTA.

Figure 6: Assessment Process Flow - GNTA



4.2.1 Assessors

The quality assurance procedures of the GNTA require Assessors to:

- possess industrial training in the areas of the assessment. The training must be at least one level above the level that is being assessed;
- be trained and certified in 5 units from the CVQ Assessor Level 4 qualification / programme namely: i) plan assessment, ii) conduct assessment, iii) review assessment, iv) develop assessment tool, and v) develop assessment procedures;
- be short listed, approved and registered by the GNTA to conduct assessment activities on its behalf.

The responsibilities of Assessors included:

- designing assessments that conform to the GNTA's Assessment Guidelines;
- preparing assessment instruments and approaches that are valid, reliable, fair and practicable;
- ensuring that the assessments were based on the appropriate competency/occupational standards;
- the conduct of assessment in keeping with GNTA's quality assurance process and principles;
- developing and using of appropriate assessment instruments;
- cross-referencing evidence with the occupational standards to ensure comprehensive assessment;
- recording evidence and assessment decisions in a consistent manner;
- ensuring the assessment conditions are conducive to assessment validity and reliability;
- participating in co-assessment and re-assessment exercises;

- submitting completed templates and reports to the Approved Training Centre and GNTA.

4.2.2 The Internal Verifier

The functions of a GNTA-appointed Internal Verifier (IV) as well as those of the External Verifiers (EVs) are also part of the assessment Quality Assurance process.

The GNTA requires Internal Verification be carried out at the training or assessment centre by an NTA-approved Internal Verifier, who is usually a staff member of the training institution. Internal Verifiers are responsible for conducting the relevant quality assurance checks on the assessments. Internal Verifiers are also responsible for ensuring that the standards of assessments applied by assessors are consistent, accurate and adequately maintained.

4.2.3 The External Verifier

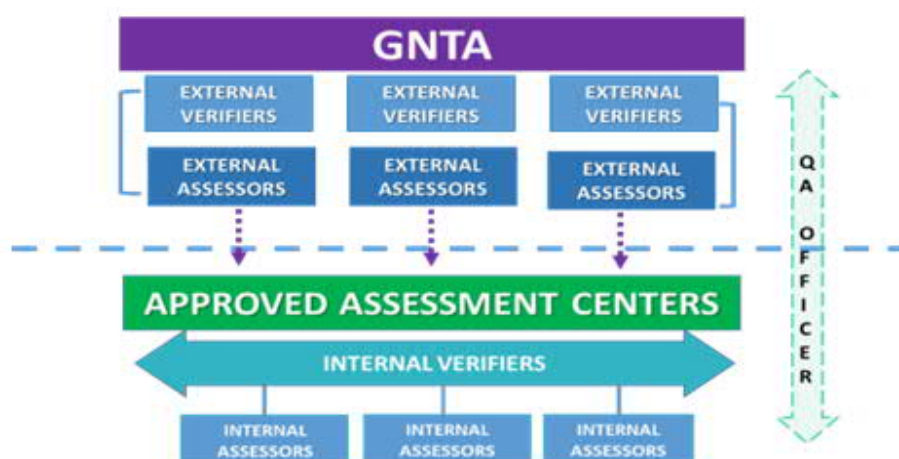
The External Verification of assessments is the responsibility of the NTA. This function is performed by industry experts who are trained by the NTA. External Verification involves a sampling plan to randomly assess learners' performance and other evidence to judge reliability of assessment and decisions made by Assessors. External Verifiers are also required to check assessment records to confirm that assessments are fairly conducted and comply with national and regional occupational standards. To be registered by the NTA, External Verifiers must be a pre-trained Assessor with experience in planning, conducting and reviewing assessments.

4.2.4 The QA Officers - Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) also form part of the quality assurance of assessment process. M&E is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Technical Officers of the GNTA. The quality of the assessment and validation activities are reflected through a QA checklist that is specifically designed for that purpose. Procedurally, the QA Officers are required to visit approved centres at strategic intervals during the training cycle. QA Officers review and identify gaps, then report on the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the assessment and verification strategies.

Figure 7 below is a graphical representation of the assessment and validation model for TVET in Grenada.

Figure 7: GNTA Assessment & Validation Model



4.3. Observation of the Quality Assurance Strategies for Assessment in Grenada

The field visit to the GNTA's office served to verify the information provided during the desk review. Field visits were made also to five (5) TVET training institutions. Practical assessment activities were observed at three (3) of the training centres. In addition to the observation of assessment activities, discussions were held with Centre Managers, Instructors, Assessors, External Verifiers and learners. QA personnel from the GNTA participated in one of the field visits to an approved centre.

The opening meeting with the GNTA's assessment team provided the relevant records and data. These were used to guide and inform the approach the consulting team adopted for its observations and discussions during training centre field visit. This information and data included:

- documented quality assurance policy and procedures for centre approval audits, and the entire assessment and certification process;
- evidence of centre approval audits and the approval of two centres¹;
- evidence to corroborate the role and work of the Internal Verifier

It is the policy of the GNTA that all assessments must be internally verified. If an approved training centre does not have an Internal Verifier, the GNTA is required to appoint an Internal Verifier for the centre. Nonetheless, the review team only witnessed Internal Verification activities in progress at NEWLO.

- samples of assessment instruments and completed records by Assessors. These reflected assessment activities that were conducted by clustering units of competencies within the various occupational areas;

¹ For the purpose of this review, the consultants examined the evidence compiled during the NTA's centre approval for the respective SkYE programmes delivered by NEWLO and LaBoucan only. However, all other providers as previously listed at Section 4.1 of this report are also centre approved by the GNTA for the respective programmes which they offered;

- samples of learners' portfolios of evidence, either paper-based or electronic, coordinated and assembled to show evidence of learners' progression through the units of competencies within a course. This documented records of continuous assessment and verification. Included also were artifacts, projects, samples of class assignments, tests etc., all attesting to the unit-by-unit competency achievements as learners journeyed through the occupational area of study.

Other documentation perused by the team included:

- External Verifiers' reports;
- Internal Verifiers' reports (NEWLO only);
- Assessor and Verifier training manual;
- Database of trained and certified Assessors and External Verifiers;
- CBET Training Manual;
- Reporting forms and completed QA reports;
- Records on certified candidates, Assessors, and Verifiers.

4.4. Centre Visits: Observation and Review of Assessment Procedures

The visits provided the opportunity to interact with institutional personnel, including Centre Managers, Assessors, Internal Verifier (NEWLO only) and learners. The consulting team observed assessment in progress and gathered information through the discussions and interviews held in each centre.

4.4.1 LaBoucan Centre

The Laboucan Centre is approved by the GNTA for the SKYE programme it offers. The institution offers two (2) programmes, Allied Health Care CVQ Levels 2 and 3 and Community Cultural Performance Level 2.

The La Boucan Centre uses the cultural and performing arts as an alternative educational and training model to assist learners with numeracy and literacy challenges. For the Community Cultural Performance Level 2, the summative assessment of the competencies involves teamwork to produce and stage a cultural performance product.

4.4.1.1 Challenges and Constraints

The main challenges and constraints identified at LaBoucan relate to the assessment process. These were identified as follows:

- Given learners socio-economic profile, the provision of financial assistance to learners so that they can regularly attend training became problematic. For example, under the SKYE training initiative, paying a stipend to young mothers who were learners proved to be an incentive for attendance and participation in the training.
- There was significant delays between the training activities and the assessment activities. For example, finalised contracts and payment arrangements with External Assessors and External Verifiers was a source of many delays. Another issue was that External Assessors and External Verifiers were full-time employees (in the case of the External Assessors, many worked full-time as

instructors with other TVET institutions and secondary schools). This resulted in many conflicting commitments which also caused delays. If External Assessors are not paid expeditiously by the training provider for services rendered it is likely to create significant gaps between training and the assessment exercise.

Despite these challenges, the GNTA and the centre are working together to standardise the processes in order to improve system efficiency.

4.4.2 Centre for Development and Certification Training (CDACT)

CDACT is an approved training provider that offers Housekeeping and Food and Beverage Service qualifications. Discussions were held with the owner and Director of the institution, specific to the programmes CDACT offered. The Director identified some of the constraints to the assessment process as is specified by the GNTA as follows:

1. There was an urgent need for curriculum and learner guides to assist with delivery of training. The exclusive use of occupational standards as a training delivery tool was not always user-friendly according to the director².
2. The rigorous preparation of the portfolios as a continuous assessment requirement has proven to be challenging and tedious to complete for some learners. Accordingly, the portfolio of evidence process can demotivate rather than encourage learners.
3. Programme Instructors who are not yet formally trained in CBET and TVET should be allowed to participate in the process while the GNTA provides gradual, on-the-job training so that the "trainee-TVET instructor" can build capacity and competency as instructors over time.
4. Learners who are recruited to any TVET programmes, should at a minimum, possess basic academic qualifications as a prerequisite for entry.

4.4.3 New Life Organisation (NEWLO)

NEWLO TVET Centre operates under the stewardship of the Catholic Church through subventions from Grenada's Ministry of Education. This is the largest TVET provider on island. The population is in excess of four hundred (400) learners, between the ages 17-35 years. It offers a range of TVET programmes, including:

- Cosmetology
- Food Preparation
- Food & Beverage Service
- Bartending
- Housekeeping
- General Construction

² In many competency-based systems Qualification Authorities use occupational standards to inform assessment and qualification design, whilst Training Providers and/or Ministries may design curricula that set out the teaching and learning activities that ensure students gain the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the qualifications/occupational standards, what the director points to here, is that the design of both tools has not always been possible within this context, and that instructors struggle to use the standards.

- Plumbing
- Fashion Design
- Masonry
- Electrical Installation and Electronics
- Early Childhood Care
- Geriatric Care
- Integrated Technology/Computer (IT)

According to the Internal Verifier and Instructors, the Adolescence Development Programme (ADP), which focuses on life skills and basic numeracy, are at the foundation of all training activities at the centre. Trained Assessors who are also instructors, are not allowed to assess their own learners. However, where there is more than one Instructor who are also Assessors, the assessments are rotated between differing groups of learners.

As part of this review, an assessment activity was observed in Fashion Design Level 2. The Assessor, in this case, was external to the institution. Both the IV and EV were present for the assessment. Observation of the assessment reflected the following:

- Explanation and instruction for the performance task;
- Explanation of right to appeal process;
- Assessment templates with instructions, assessment criteria and associated rubrics / grading or rating scales;
- Description of the clusters of units of competence being assessed;
- Oral assessment instruments used to assess underpinning knowledge and communication skills;
- The observation checklist with a detailed set of criteria to evaluate each learner's performance;
- EV and IV reviewing the assessment exercise using their respective validation and reporting checklists;
- Assessment templates completed by affixing the required signatures of the Assessor, Learner and the IV;
- Adequate workshop space with tools, equipment and materials for training and assessment;
- Learners expressed high levels of satisfaction with both the quality of the training programme and the assessment activity.

The information confirmed that NEWLO has a well-established system of training and assessment defined by the quality assurance guidelines of the GNTA. The internal quality assurance mechanism at NEWLO is quite strong. Nonetheless, some gaps are recognizable. As these relate to gaps within the GNTA approach, they are discussed later, in Section 4.6 of this report.

NEWLO was the only training centre visited in Grenada that had a functional Internal Verifier. The IV showed adherence and compliance with the functions of internal verification process mentioned in Section 4.2.3.

The GNTA initiated online training and assessments amidst the intense periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, using the Moodle platform. However, many learners who did not have access to internet and/or the

required devices experienced difficulties using the online platform. This problem inhibited participation in e-based training and assessment activities. Consequently, some learners were not adequately prepared for assessment. This was mitigated with refresher training activities that were done prior to assessments.

Despite the challenges, the GNTA plans to partner with training providers to pursue the widespread use of online e-learning resources to facilitate programme delivery and assessments and plans to upload the Moodle app to the e-platforms systems of institutions that are within its jurisdiction.

4.4.4 Faith Organisation for People's Development (FOPD)

The Faith Organisation for People's Development is a community-based training centre. The centre provides vocational training primarily to unemployed adults. It also provides Early Childhood Care services to its community. During the visit, discussions were held with the Centre's coordinator, the Instructor and the Assessor for the Fashion Design Level 2 programme.

The following information was provided through the discussions as well as the assessment activity that was observed:

- The GNTA approved the FOPD centre to train and assess for vocational qualifications in Fashion Designing and Food Preparation and Cookery Level 2.
- There was no Internal Verifier attached to the programme. The Centre Manager was responsible for coordinating training and assessment activities. The Centre Manager has communicated to the GNTA a desire to be trained in CBET and the Level 4 Assessor qualification. A response was not yet received from GNTA up to that point in time .
- The evidence checklist used by the assessor to assess learners' competence was presented and perused. This checklist outlined all the activities of the performance outcomes that learners were required to demonstrate in order to be assessed as competent for the Fashion Designing Level 2 qualification.
- The programme included a participant who had a speech impaired disability. All the relevant pre-assessment measures were implemented to enable the learner to participate in assessment activity. The programme's instructor was also present at the activity to render special assistance, as it was needed.
- The Assessor explained that given the assessment's performance task had lasted 3 hours, the written assessments would be done two (2) days after the the day of the practical assessment task.
- The Assessor employed a number of creative and innovative strategies to conduct the practical assessment. Learners were required to collaborate and work as a team to organize and plan an impromptu response to a health and safety industry simulated scenario. The scenario was set in a Garment Production facility and involved the changing from one outgoing shift of workers to an incoming one. The incoming shift of workers was played by the collective group who met the work area untidy, littered with left over work materials and disorganized workstations. The learners were required to collectively perform the relevant housekeeping and organizational duties. The assessor asked oral questions relating to the health and safety regulations requirements that were engaged by the exercise.
- Learners, many of whom included single-mothers, expressed enthusiasm for the training opportunity and indicated intent to use their competencies towards establishing small enterprises or to seek employment.

4.4.5 Centre for Enhancing Educational Performance (CEEP) Tech World

CEEP is a GNTA approved centre for ICT related programmes. At this centre, the consultants observed an assessment activity and held discussions with the Assessor and Centre Coordinator.

The Assessor introduced the the assessment activity by explaining the assessment process and protocols to candidates. The assessment documents and instruments were presented and explained. These included the performance task sheet, the appeal process, the assessment agreement form, the constituents of the assessment form, oral questioning scripts and the written test.

A Centre Coordinator was present at the time of the assessment. There was no external verifier present for the exercise. Further, there was no evidence to indicate that an Internal Verifier was working with the institution.

The consultants noticed a folder with a notation that drew attention to the missing assessor's signature and date, and for the completion of the performance checklist. The assessments were done during February - December 2021.

4.5. Analysis of the Assessment Process

4.5.1 Overview of Findings

The QA review exercise confirmed that the GNTA operations are guided by strong policies, guidelines and practices that are grounded in the CBET philosophy and CANTA's CVO guidelines. There is a system for centre approval. There are coordinated and managed systems for training, assessment, validation and documentation of activities. There is a CBET training system for Facility Auditors, practicing Assessors and Verifiers. There is a quality assurance system that monitors, supervises and promotes the progressive enhancement of TVET activities within the TVET institutions and in other training and assessment providers. And there is a robust certification process for the award of CVOs and NVQs by the GNTA.

4.5.2 Advantages of GNTA's TVET Model for Assessment and Validation

The following are the advantages of the assessment and validation processes in Grenada:

- The GNTA's commitment to invest in updated national TVET Policy (2020 TVET Policy) to regulate, guide and standardize its operating procedures and practices
- The GNTA has different modalities for assessment, suited to different sites of learning. These include:
 - Institutional-based assessment and verification
 - On-the-Job Assessment
 - Prior Learning Assessment
- The GNTA publishes and communicates its policies, procedures and guidelines for the implementation of all assessment activities leading to the award of NVQ, CVO and Statements of Competence. These quality assurance procedures include the approval of centres, the training and certification of instructors, Assessors, Verifiers and Facility Auditors as well as a robust validation mechanism to ensure that learners who are judged to be competent have met the specifications of occupational standards.

- The GNTA has initiated investments to provide e-learning and assessments throughout the TVET system.
- The GNTA has conducted tracer studies that measure graduate destinations and employment outcomes, and employer surveys to gather information on satisfaction levels of employers with the quality of certified NVO/CVO graduates they employed.
- Provisions and reasonable adjustments were made, to include persons with disabilities, in the training and assessment process.
- The practice of the video recording the assessment activities to facilitate the validation and verification by both External Verifiers and QA personnel from the GNTA is noteworthy and deserving replication in other jurisdictions.

4.5.3 Identified Gaps in GNTA's TVET Model for Assessment and Verification

Despite the many strengths of the Grenada TVET model, there are a few gaps, issues and concerns that came out of the exercise that should be raised here:

- Any TVET system that utilizes independent assessors for assessment is likely to experience challenges with delays and bottlenecks in the process. There are two examples where this was evident in Grenada.
 - At NEWLO, assessment templates were seen in the IV's office which were not completed by some Assessors. In some instances, a minimum of three (3) to a maximum of six (6) months had elapsed and the records by Assessors were incomplete. This inhibited the process of submission to the GNTA for review which triggers the EV's validation of learning outcomes as reflected on the assessment templates.
 - At Tech World, some ITC related assessment templates were not completed by the Assessor. The timeframe of the assessments conducted was February-December 2021. During the closing meeting with the QA team of the GNTA, it was explained that the significant time-lapse for the completion of the assessment templates was due to non-payment to the assigned Assessor by the institution.
- While the portfolio is understood to be an account of the progressive internal assessment and verification of the course delivery process, its ascribed value or impact on final judgement for occupational competency remains unclear. For example, there are no defined implications for incomplete or missing portfolios on the certification requirements. This suggests that there are no criteria which determines the portfolio's contribution to final judgement on learners' occupational competence. Further, the guidelines for the portfolio preparation does not require any rational and systematic progression from one unit of competence to another. Hence, the portfolio falls short in presenting an adequate picture of learners' development over the training and assessment cycle. Some instructors appeared unsure about efficacy of the portfolios. This is in light that some learners perceived that the portfolio in its current form, imposes financial, time and academic challenges on some learners which contribute to some programmes' attrition rates.
- The QA procedures and guidelines for the monitoring and evaluating of assessment and verification activities are not clearly documented. Hence, no QA visit plan that outlines a systematic approach to the QA Officer's field work was observed. In the absence of QA field visit schedules and objectives, field work of the QA Officers may appear haphazard, and emergency driven.
- TVET moderation exercise was not held by the GNTA for the past three or more years. This is a requirement outlined in CANTA's Quality Assurance Criteria and Guidelines. Accordingly, moderation is one of several quality check of assessments that should be periodically carried out by institutions and the GNTA to determine the consistency in the assessment system so that

assessors for similar set of competencies/units of competence arrive at similar decisions. With the prolonged absence of moderation of the assessment and validation, the GNTA is stymied from adequately responding to the emerging gaps, issues and concerns that affect its assessment, verification and validations system.

- The GNTA has demonstrated the capabilities and capacities to certify learners through different assessment modalities like PLAR, on-the-job assessment etc. The recent push to develop partnerships with private sector establishments to create a space to provide non-traditional assessment opportunities is highly commendable. However, at present, the GNTA focuses significant resources to cater to the needs of the traditional centre-based, full-time programmes for CVQ and NVQ certification. It can be argued though, that if the national spectrum of training and assessment remains for too long only on this institutionalized traditional approach, then GNTA's system runs the risk of being too unresponsive to the qualification needs of a significant number of potential opportunity-seeking clients; especially when those needs can only be adequately and efficiently met outside of formal institutionalized training and assessment modalities. This is particularly so for the new and emerging occupations.

4.6. Risks and Risk Mitigation Strategies

The QA review found that the GNTA has a robust quality assurance system for training, assessment, verification, validation and certification for the national TVET system.

The QA review also made it evident that the GNTA has documented policies and guidelines for the assessment and validation practices that are implemented within all approved Training Providers. However, given the significant delays and other related issues experienced with the timely completion of some assessment and QA activities, the GNTA risks being viewed as non-receptive or sluggishly responsive to the needs of its stakeholders. These delays also impact on learners' progress through summative assessment, as well as their certification.

The following (as seen in Table 4.7) are some of the risks noted in the assessment system, the potential impact of the risks identified and mitigation strategies to prevent or reduce the occurrence of the risks. These risk identification and mitigation strategies are intended to serve as a continuous improvement toolkit in enhancing the robustness of the quality assurance mechanisms for TVET and the attendant assessment, validation and moderation activities.

Table 4.7: Risk Register GNTA and Approved Centres

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY
Independent Assessors are contracted and assigned through the GNTA. Centres are required to pay the relevant fees to Assessors. Many of the assessors utilised are instructors at other institutions, with full-time employment. This makes scheduling challenging, and Training Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delays in the assessment process - Attrition/drop out of learners without receiving any formal qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Train more individuals as Assessors especially persons from industry → Expand the pool of Assessors for occupational areas → Explore quality assurance mechanisms to create a hybrid system of both External and Internal Assessors, so as

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY
must have resources to pay independent assessors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of confidence in the assessment process by stakeholders 	to make the assessment process flexible and more responsive to stakeholders' needs
Individuals not trained and designated as Internal Verifiers in all training centres.	The absence of designated trained IVs could possibly compromise the quality of the assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Establish procedures where it was mandatory for all approved centres to have a trained and designated IV → IVs are trained in the Assessment qualification and as such they are conversant with the reliability and validity of assessment instruments and strategies.

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY
Lack of established and implemented procedures for the frequency of visits to centres by the GNTA QA Team to conduct monitoring and evaluation of assessment.	Compromise the quality of assessments and responsiveness in resolving delays or challenges in the assessment process.	→ Establish and implement visitation cycle by the GNTA, to visit and monitor assessment activities in each centre
Payments of assessors and External Verifier fees are not made on time	Significant delays in the assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Centres to get the requisite costing prior to training → Establish procedures for example, a 50% deposit to retain Assessors and 50% payment upon completion.
Absence of moderation activities.	Inability to identify innovative, flexible and responsive assessment strategies, to meet need of learners and training centres.	Moderation activities to be conducted as per established procedures of the GNTA.
Lack of clarity or consensus about the efficacy of the portfolios of evidence	Hesitancy of learners to complete the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Clear procedures regarding its contribution to assessment outcomes → Simplification of the process

5 Findings - SLCTVET: St Lucia Desk Review and Field Visit

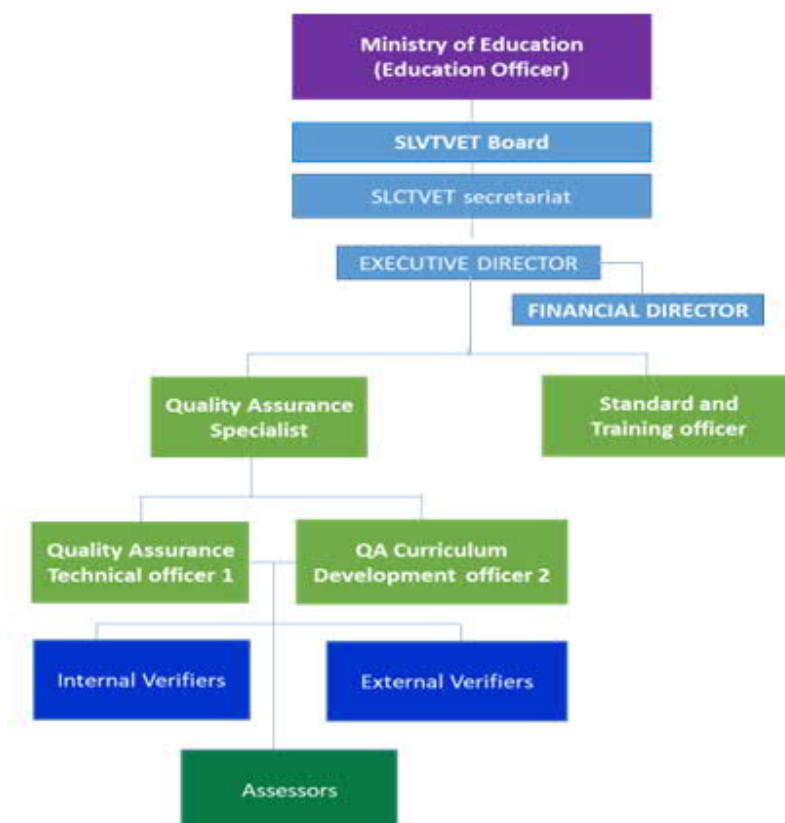
5.1. Overview

The St. Lucia Council for TVET (SLCTVET) was established by an Act of Parliament in November 2007. It was charged with the responsibility to coordinate and monitor formal, informal and non-formal TVET programmes in St. Lucia. The SLCTVET reports to the Ministry of Education Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development.

The TVET Council is a tripartite body comprising of government, employers and trade unions. These bodies derive benefits from TVET programmes as well as help to implement strategies. The SLCTVET advises the Minister of Education on TVET policy.

As the apex body with responsibility for TVET in St. Lucia, the SLCTVET experiences challenges in adequately funding and resourcing its operations. Notwithstanding, it has a small technical staff, to provide oversight for TVET in St. Lucia. The current functionaries of the St. Lucia Council TVET is shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Functionaries of the St. Lucia Council for TVET



The SLCTVET is an affiliate of CANTA. In 2013, it received accredited status to award the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ).

The SLCTVET has successfully developed National Occupational Standards and has awarded NVO certification based on the standards developed. A cadre of Assessors and Verifiers are available to conduct assessments, verification and validation work for the awarding of NVOs or CVQs.

The review of the assessment system and quality assurance and certification practices of the SLCTVET commenced with a desk review on February 25, 2022. This was followed by field visits between April 1-7, 2022. As part of the field visit, the review team held meetings and discussions with the SLCTVET team as well as the SkYE Country Coordinator.

The consulting team did not carry out observations of assessment activities during SkYE-funded training in SVG. However, the Country Coordinator facilitated visits to five (5) approved centres. Discussions were also held with Centre Managers and staff, Internal Verifiers (where those existed) and interviews conducted with both Assessors and External Verifiers. The approved centres visited as part of this review were:

- School of Art and Design
- National Skills Development Centre (NSDC)
- Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education (CARE)
- Munroe College
- National Enrichment Learning Programme (NELP)

5.2. Training and Assessment System

Vocational training and assessment learning to national qualifications are delivered by a number of public and private TVET providers across the island. As part of its remit, the SLCTVET conducts centre approval audits to ensure requisite facilities and procedures are available to accommodate training and assessment activities for the various TVET programmes. The SLCTVET assessment process is based on Regional Occupational Standards leading to the awards of CVQs. National Occupational Standards (NOS) were also developed through the SLCTVET Standards Officer to award NVO certification.

5.2.1 Training

The training and certification of Assessors and Verifiers is a critical element of the SLCTVET's TVET strategy. Under the St. Lucia TVET model the training of Assessors and External Verifiers is outsourced to external training agencies unlike the TVET apex bodies in SVG and Grenada. However, all TVET system training is based around the CBET philosophy and approaches and quality assured using the CANTA's QA Guidelines for the CVQ, 2015.

5.2.2 External Verification and QA Process

Like Grenada, Independent Assessors who are external to the approved centres were contracted to conduct assessment activities. According to SLCTVET's procedures, Internal and External Verification are requirements for the quality assurance of the assessment process. The roles and functions of Internal and External Verifiers are similar to those that in the other countries reviewed. One notable difference,

however, is the requirement for External Verifiers to be present at all assessment activities to validate the process. This is a pre-requisite because there are several small or sole training providers that do not have access to internal verification facility within their organisation. Likewise, the SLCTVET's Quality Assurance Officer is the sole officer who has to quality assure all assessment and verification activities within all TVET providers within the SLCTVET's jurisdiction. Given the resource challenges of the SLCTVET, at the time of the review field visits, the QA Officer was temporarily funded by the SkYE Project. SkYE support to this post ended in March 2022, and the government of SVG continues to fund the role.

5.3. Observation of the Quality Assurance Strategies for Assessment in St. Lucia & Centre Visit

Information provided during the desk review phase was substantiated by the SLCTVET's office during the field visit. Field visits were made also to five (5) TVET institutions. No practical assessment activities were observed during these visits because assessment activities had only just resumed post Covid-19. Nonetheless, discussions were held with Centre Managers, Instructors, Assessors, External Verifiers and a few learners. QA personnel from the SLCTVET participated in the centre-based field visits and helped to provide clarification to some of the queries on assessment processes.

In addition to documented policy and procedures, the quality assurance mechanisms for TVET assessment were like those in other jurisdictions in the Eastern Caribbean (EC). However, except for large institutions (for example, NSCDC), the presence of Internal Verifiers was not evident. The following are some of the findings, data and information captured by interactions with Centre Managers, Staff Members, Assessors, Verifiers and learners.

5.3.1 School of Art and Design (SAD)

The institution offered SkYE-funded training in three (3) occupational areas of Computer Graphics, Multi-Media Animation and Ceramics. Listed below are some of the findings:

- The Centre Manager was very conversant with policy and procedures by the SLCTVET, especially in relation to the contracting of the Assessor and the assignment of the External Verifier. The Centre Manager verified that both Assessor and External Verifier were always present for the assessment activity.
- Training programmes were delivered and assessed in unit clusters. In effect, this training and assessment plan customized the course structure so that both training and assessment activities were conducted seamlessly. It was perceived that this arrangement better fits the needs of most learners, kept learners' motivation levels high and made the assessment process more comprehensive and manageable.
- The seamless approach to training and assessment reduced attrition, mitigated delays in the assessment and certification process and expedited the payment process for Assessors and External Verifiers.
- Electronic or digital portfolios were used for documenting formative or continuous assessment activities. Samples of these were viewed by the consultants. At the completion of assessment and

verification activities, the relevant documentation are submitted to the SLCTVET for review and validation.

5.3.2 National Skills Development Centre (NSDC)

The National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) is one of the largest TVET providers in St. Lucia, and leads in the award of vocational qualifications on the island. Consequently, the SLCTVET and the NSDC are strategic partners.

The NSDC was centre-approved by the SLCTVET for some of its programme offerings. Such programmes include Cosmetology (inclusive of short -job courses of Hair Design, Nail Technology, Make-up Artistry etc.), Food & Beverage Services (Bartending, Bread & Pastry Making etc.), Early Childhood Care, Office Administration and Electrical Installation.

Listed below are some of the issues raised based on discussions with the Centre Manager, the Financial Controller and the Training Manager, who acted also as Internal Verifier.

- Significant number of learners who attended the institution were at-risk/vulnerable youths. Others were drop-outs from the formal education and training system in St. Lucia.
- Under the circumstances mentioned, the institution, as a strategic imperative, focuses on soft skills training by using an adult literacy software. As part of its recruitment and admission programme, the institution administered diagnostic entrance testing and conducted interviews. This was to identify any behavioral challenges which potential clients may have.
- The assessment process for vocational qualifications is guided by quality assurance requirements of the SLCTVET. These include the contracting of Assessors for the assessment work and put into effect the internal and external verification processes.
- The untimely payment to Assessors for the conduct of assessments resulted in delayed assessment activities. This was a major challenge that the SLCTVET needed to confront³.

5.3.3 Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education (CARE)

Two (2) locations that were operated by the CARE were visited during the review. At the first location, the consultants observed a learner with disabilities participate in a training activity. In addition, the consultants witnessed training activities for programmes in Food Preparation, Carpentry, ITC and Electrical Installation/ AC Maintenance and Installation (the latter is a customized course).

A Centre Coordinator explained that during assessment activities, varied reasonable adjustments were provided to learners with disabilities. This included allotting extra time, as well as other provisions to allow the physically challenged learner to complete assessment activities. Instructors confirmed that Assessors are externally contracted to do summative unit cluster assessment and External Verifiers are required to observe and evaluate each assessment activity.

The Instructors explained that some learners experienced major challenges in compiling the paper-based portfolio of evidence. However, this appeared not too challenging for learners attending the ITC related programmes who prepared electronic portfolios. This activity was observed by the consultants.

³ Training Providers pay SLCTVET to have the assessments done. The SLCTVET pays the assessors.

At the second location, within the proximity of an industrial zone, the Director of CARE provided a brief overview of the vision to consolidate the operations of both the main campus and its satellite. The second location had more available space. The training workshops that were visited had the requisite physical facilities. Discussions with a female Carpentry Instructor confirmed that SLCTVET's guidelines and procedures for quality assurance were adhered to. This included the presence of External Verifiers for each assessment activity. She reiterated the challenges associated with the preparation of the portfolios of evidence.

5.3.4 Munroe College

The field visit to Munroe College focused primarily on SLCTVET's administrative requirements and arrangements for assessments and verification. The College's administrator indicated that these were not clearly defined. However, the College's administrator did commend the efforts of the SLCTVET's QA Officer for the assistance rendered thus far. Nonetheless, it was still the view that the SLCTVET needed to give added attention to such matters and be a bit more responsive to the expressed needs of stakeholders. Successful graduates of the SkYE-funded programmes are awarded the Munroe College Certificate of Completion, which is quality assured by the institution's internal quality assurance mechanism.

5.3.5 National Enrichment Learning Programme (NELP)

The field visit to the NELP focused specifically on the challenges which the Director and staff were experiencing with assessment of TVET programmes. This was in relation to the Customer Service Level 1 programme it offered. Present also at the meeting were staff from the centre, the Quality Assurance Officer-SLCTVET and the SkYE Country Coordinator. The following were the challenges and bottle-necks being experienced:

- It was perceived that the duration (5 hours) of the summative assessment activities for unit clusters was too lengthy.
- There were significant delays between the completion of training in units of competencies and the assessment activity by a contracted Assessor.
- Delays in training and assessment demotivated learners, some of whom dropped out of the programme prematurely.
- Dissatisfaction in the logistical arrangements for training and assessment.

5.3.6 Oaktreez - Telephone interview

A telephone interview was conducted between the Training Operators and the consultants to discuss assessment challenges related to the NOS that was developed for the CVQ in Events Management. The course instructors drew attention to the significant delays between the completion of training and the summative assessment activity. This was due to the lack of an Assessor in the area. Further, the occupational standard which was developed in St. Lucia, was not yet approved regionally. This meant that a CVQ qualification could not be awarded to learners. Given the delays between the completion of the training and the assessment, many of the learners lost interest in the programme and were generally resistant to the recommendation to do refresher courses, followed by assessments for certification.

However, after some discussions the Training Operators accepted the suggestion of the Consultants implementing this review, to design a strategy to accelerate the assessment and certification of learners who had already completed the programme. According to the SLCTVET, a trained and certified Assessor was identified. The challenge was to re-call all of the learners so that a 'fast-track assessment' of all the units of competence could be done. This requires cooperation between the SLCTVET and Training Provider. The idea was aimed at the award of an NVO given that the occupational standard was already endorsed by the local industry. Meanwhile, the work can continue for the regional endorsement of the Event Management occupational standard.

5.3.7 Discussions with Assessors

To gather data on the quality assurance mechanisms for TVET in St. Lucia, the SKYE Country Coordinator arranged a number of telephone interviews with trained and certified Assessors. As outlined below, the following were some of the opinions expressed:

- Most assessment involved the clustering/integration of units of competence. Practical demonstrations, written tests, and oral questioning were the typical assessment approaches utilized.
- External Verifiers were present at most, if not all, assessments to validate the process.
- Some Assessors believed that the noteworthy delays between training and assessment necessitated refresher courses as a pre-assessment activity.
- Delays in assessment and employment opportunities contributed to the attrition rates experienced by some training programmes.
- There was a need to transition from paper-based to digital portfolios.
- Some Assessors were of the opinion that many of the instructional staff did not have the required competencies to supervise the development of portfolios.
- Training programmes needed consistent monitoring from the SLCTVET to facilitate the progressive professional development of TVET instructional personnel.
- One Assessor opined that some Assessors were failing to adequately review the Occupational Standards to ensure that all requirements were covered in preparation for assessment.
- The SLCTVET needed to urgently review and update its policies, procedures and guidelines for assessment.
- The SLCTVET needed to improve its monitoring and evaluation systems for assessment.
- Payment delays for practicing Assessors severely hampered the timely conduct of assessments. This is especially noticeable for those Assessors who incurred high travelling costs to and from assessment venues.
- The SLCTVET needs urgently to recruit, train and certify as Assessors a larger number of persons with industrial background so as to improve quality and expand the pool of trained and certified Assessors.

5.4 Analysis of the Assessment Process-Advantages - St. Lucia

Some of the strengths of the assessment practices for TVET in St. Lucia included the following:

- The requirement that External Verifiers to be present for all assessment activities. This guarantees the QA validation of assessments activities.
- SLCTVET's internal capacity through its Standard and Training Officer, to develop National Occupational Standards (NOS), thereby expanding and enhancing its responsiveness to local industrial needs and demands for customised NVO to aid national development.
- NSDC's sensitivities to the needs of industry and its clients by developing initiatives and interventions to cater for soft skills development as well as tackling the challenges of adult literacy and basic education.
- Through the QA Technical Officer and / Curriculum Officer, the SLCTVET is in the process of developing curriculum and other learning support material to complement the occupational standards for the delivery of TVET.
- The use of electronic/digital portfolios of evidence.

5.5 Identified Issues with the Assessment Process: Gaps Identified-St. Lucia

The system of TVET supervised and managed by the SLCTVET has numerous strengths. Nonetheless, there are some issues that must be raised and some gaps that were identified as follows:

- Learners perceived that some programmes were too lengthy. This is critical since this issue contributed to low motivation, loss of interest and attrition.
- The approach and methodology to the preparation of the learners' portfolios of evidence was viewed as an undue encumbrance by some learners.
- The time-lag between training activities and assessments contributed to inefficient use of resources / increased costs for training providers. This was demonstrated by:
 - the need for refresher courses for assessment purposes.
 - learners dropping out of programmes with no vocational credentials.
- Delays in payments to assessors inhibited the timely conduct of assessment activities, which in turn affected the credibility and integrity of the TVET system.
- Poor communication between the SLCTVET to training providers in relation to the training and assessment procedures and guidelines. This issue was especially concerning for newly established training providers.
- The perception that the SLCTVET lacks sufficient responsiveness, agility and flexibility of the assessment process and to the needs of stakeholders.
- The SLCTVET's may need to update the policies and guidelines used to monitor, review and quality assure the assessment and verification practices of the Training Providers within its jurisdiction.
- The SLCTVET's difficulties in fulfilling its mandate to regularly and appropriately moderate the national TVET assessment system.

5.6. Risks and Risk Mitigation Strategies

The evidence collected through discussions and interviews reflected that despite the resource constraints of the SLCTVET, established procedures were implemented to quality assure the assessment processes leading towards CVO/NVO certification of learners. However, there was a perception that the assessment processes as required by the SLCTVET are slow and insufficiently flexible in responding to the needs of training providers as well as learners who have completed training.

The following (as seen in Table 5.7) are some of the risks noted in the assessment system, the potential impact of the risks identified and mitigation strategies to prevent or reduce the occurrence of the risks. These risk identification and mitigation strategies were intended to serve as a continuous improvement toolkit in enhancing the robustness of the quality assurance mechanisms for TVET.

Table 5.7: Risk Register SLCTVET & Approved Centres

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY
Delays in payment to Assessors and External Verifiers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delays in the assessment process - Attrition/drop out of learners without receiving any formal qualification. - Lack of confidence in the assessment process by stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Effective communication to training providers by SLCTVET of the requirements for assessment, inclusive of payments to Assessors and External Verifiers. → Training providers to adequately budget and contract the services of Assessors at the commencement of training for each new intake of learners → Establish and implement methods with training providers, to recall learners without receipt of Vocational Qualifications for a "fast-track" final assessment activity to recognize prior learning.
Requirements of portfolios of evidence perceived as disincentive to some learners	Disinterest by learners in completing portfolios as a critical component of the formative / continuous assessment process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Capacity-building of Instructors to enhance their capabilities, to guide learners to complete the portfolio of evidence. → Transition to electronic and digital portfolios.
The time-lag between training activities and assessments impacted: the need for learners to be re-engaged in refresher courses	Disinterest and discontinuation of training programmes by learners Learners discontinuing training programmes without receiving any formal recognition / qualification.	→ Seamless assessment strategy to facilitate final assessments after specific unit clusters
Dated TVET Policy and operating procedures of the SLCTVET	Unavailability of current and relevant information to appropriately guide stakeholders, especially training providers with newly established TVET programmes.	Guidelines enable greater flexibility allowing SLCTVET to be more agile and responsive to training providers. Update and communicate the requirements of training providers to be compliant with the quality assurance mechanisms of the SLCTVET.
Absence of evidence regarding moderation activities being practiced	Lack of continuous improvement in assessment and validation strategies employed by Assessors and External Verifiers.	Implement moderation activities according to established procedures and guidelines, to facilitate continuous improvement in the assessment and validation methodologies.

6 Findings - DTVETC: Dominica Desk Review and Field Visit

6.1 Overview

The Dominica TVET Council was legislated into existence in 1997 but was convened in 2010. The TVET Council, which reports directly to the Ministry of Education, is comprised of a ten (10) member board. However, the Secretariat is still emerging and has only two staff members employed. These are the Director and an Administrative Assistant. Unlike the other three (3) NTAs in the Eastern Caribbean, which are actively engaged in the awarding of vocational qualifications, the Dominica TVET Council is yet to award vocational qualifications.

Nonetheless, the Dominica TVET Council function is intended to be the apex body and it has the mandate to lead and manage TVET in Dominica. As such, it is engaged in several initiatives, including:

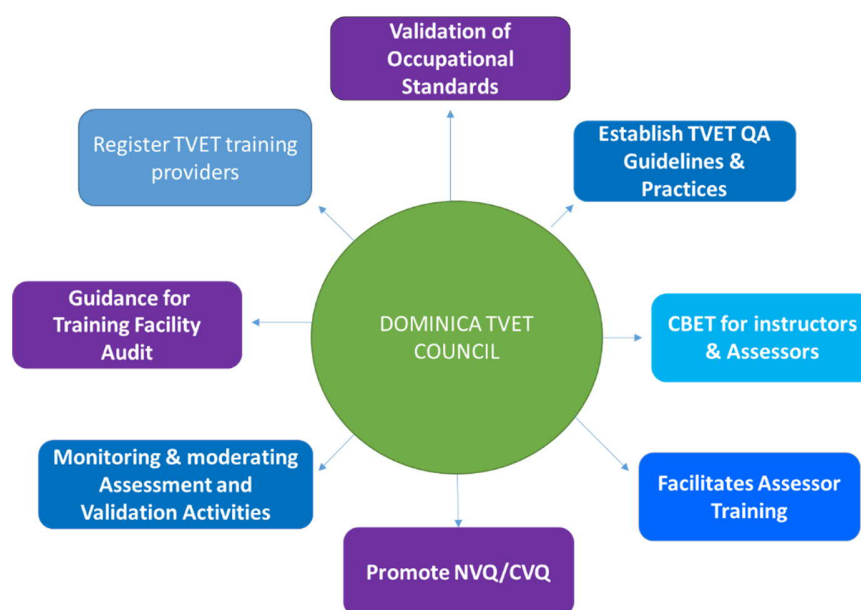
- Coordinating the training of a cadre of Assessors as well as some Master Assessors through partnerships with other NTAs and collaboration with various consultancies and projects.
- Drafting a policy document establishing guidelines and procedures for the quality assurance of the TVET assessment system as well as for the Council's operations.
- Providing guidance to TVET training providers on the utility of CANTA's approved regional occupational standards to validate the supervision of training and assessment activities.

Building on past interventions, the SkYE Project provided technical support to the Dominica TVET Council and the Training Providers to:

- adopt and use Regional Occupational Standards (ROS) for training and assessment;
- provide CBET training for Instructors and Assessors;
- develop a draft Quality Assurance Manual for the TVET Council.

Figure 9 below, provides a graphical representation of some of the enabling mechanisms which the Dominica TVET Council already has and intends to pursue to guide the training and assessment initiatives as practiced throughout other CANTA member countries.

Figure 9: Services provided by the Dominica TVET Council



In keeping with the methodology used across this study, the review started with a desk review of the system for QA of TVET in Dominica on February 28, followed by field visits held March 21 – March 23, 2022.

The desk review and the field-visit meetings with the TVET Council and the SKYE Country Coordinator confirmed that in the absence of NVQs, centre-based certificates are being awarded to graduates of the TVET programmes funded by SKYE. However, as those programmes are directed by CANTA's Quality Assurance Criteria and Guidelines for training and assessment for the CVQ (2015), the SKYE training providers can be considered to be on a developmental pathway towards delivering NVQs and CVQs. For example, the assessment process templates used for those programmes were adaptations from CANTA's assessment template prototypes. These included, among others, the performance criteria checklists and the portfolios of evidence template used to document the continuous assessment, and Internal Verification evidence and information.

The findings reported in 6.2 below are based on discussions held with the TVET Council and SKYE Country Coordinator, as well as interviews held at training sites with various personnel including learners. The training and assessment activities that were observed contributed to the information.

Training locations visited and the occupational areas/skill programmes each offered are listed below:

- Business Training Centre: Microsoft Specialist, Excel, Word certification
- Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT) - Entrepreneurial Development programme
- Adult Education Division (AED) - two (2) locations - Customer Service and Electrical Installation
- Youth Development Department (YDD) - two (2) locations - Building Maintenance and Stonewall Construction
- Centre Where Adolescents Learn to Love and Serve (CALLS) - Food & Beverage Service (Bartending) and Fisheries

6.2 Findings of Visits to TVET Centres: Dominica

Most of the training activities that were witnessed by the consultants were coordinated by either the AED or the YDD. In some instances, high school facilities were utilized in the evenings, outside normal school hours. Partnership arrangements were established with the respective schools to facilitate training and assessment activities for the learners who were enrolled in the programmes.

6.2.1 Adult Education Division (ADE) & Youth Development Division (YDD)

At the AED and YDD training locations, both the Programme Instructor as well as a Programme Coordinator were present for the training activities.

Some of the practices observed, from visits to the training sites are listed as follows:

- Training was being delivered based on units of competence from ROS.
- The Programme Coordinator had a checklist which served as a monitoring and reporting instrument, used to monitor training delivery.
- Training activities observed for Building Maintenance and Stonewall Construction indicated that performance of practical tasks involved real-work scenarios. A derelict building was being re-constructed/refurbished by the learners. This constituted the Building Maintenance training activity. A retaining stone wall at a recently established building was being constructed by learners under the instruction, guidance and supervision of the instructor. Both Instructors indicated that they were industry-based professionals. The Instructor for the Building Maintenance programme showed that he provided work experience opportunities for the learners at his own enterprise. However, neither of the two (2) Instructors had any reporting nor recording assessment templates whereby they could capture the continuous assessment evidence that was generated as learners progressed through the related units of competence. Both Instructors opined that they were uncertain of what were the requirements they needed to have for capturing the evidence of learners' progress. The instructors were enthusiastic about opportunities to be trained as Assessors and/or External Verifiers by the TVET Council. All the learners interviewed were confident they would gain employment upon completion of the training and were all satisfied with the training opportunity they received.
- Both the Programme Coordinator and one Electrical Installation instructor who delivered training at one of the AED locations had templates which were similar to performance criteria checklists used for assessments for CVQ qualifications in other jurisdictions. The performance checklists were used as evaluation tools for each learner to record their progress through each unit of competence. Provided also, were portfolios of evidence, which some of the learners were still compiling.

6.2.2 CALLS - Centre where Adolescents Learn to Love and Serve

At CALLS, portfolios of evidence were compiled to capture continuous assessment and verification. Assessment templates were used by instructors to capture evidence from assessment tasks, practical demonstrations and written assessments. One of the instructional staff member at CALLS received both CBET and Assessor training. Consequently, she performed the functions of the Internal Verifier, as well as that of training and assessment coordinator. In so doing, she provided the oversight required for all final assessment activities developed by the Instructional staff. Learners were assessed by instructors at the completion of the training and a centre-based certificate was awarded to learners who were deemed competent.

6.3. Discussion and Suggestions on Quality Assurance Strategies for TVET Assessments - Dominica

The discussions and observation of the training activities verified that Training Providers utilized some aspects of CANTA's Quality Assurance Guidelines to monitor the quality of vocational training and assessment in Dominica.

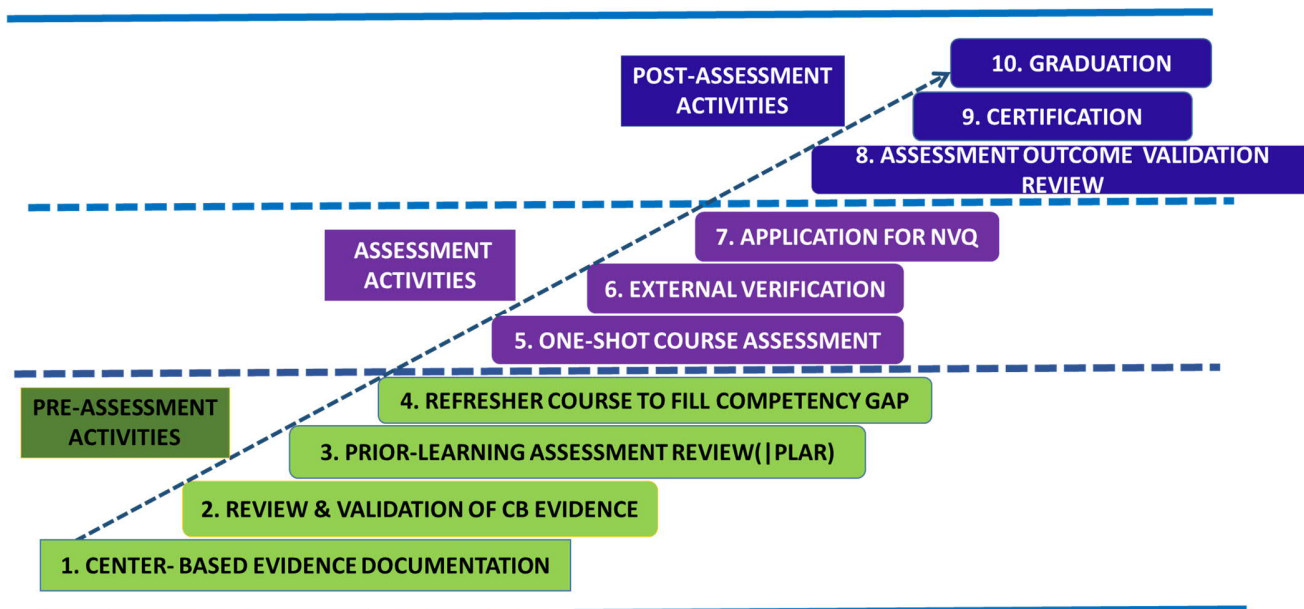
The database of the TVET Council records over eighty (80) names of persons who were trained and served as Assessors/Master Assessors and External and Internal Verifiers.

The strong CBET training practices observed and the large numbers of trained assessors and verifiers available establish the pre-conditions and potential for the TVET Council to organize and coordinate special assessment activities for the award of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ).

Special assessment for trained candidates leading to a national vocational qualification award was an idea that attracted significant enthusiastic support from the management and staff of the training providers. They believed that this idea was worth exploring since it will allow the system to address the large backlog of trained SkYE learners who have exited many TVET programmes with no recognizable certification. In executing the idea, the Dominica TVET Council will need to take the lead in conceptualizing, planning, organizing and implementing the special assessment activity for certification. This may, if necessary, require limited external inputs to assist with the conceptualization, planning and implementation of this certification intervention. The basic concept would be to use instructional staff at all the training sites to conduct a fast-track final assessment of all learners who are presently enrolled or would have previously completed the SkYE sponsored training programmes but without recognition provided by a national vocational qualification. The assessment instrument design will need to represent all units of competence and comprises practical, oral and written evaluation assessment elements. The validation process to quality assure the assessment activities would involve the contracting of a select core of individuals from the trained and certified Assessor/Verifier database. This will include Master Assessors to observe and report on all the assessment activities.

Figure 10 below, depicts a graphical representation of the proposed processes which would lead to the recognition of learners' competencies with an NVQ.

Figure 10: Proposed NVQ-Fast-Track Assessment Process - Dominica



6.4 Closing meeting with the Dominica TVET Council

During the closing meetings with the Dominica TVET Council, which included the presence of a Master Assessor and former Chair of the Council, the proposal was endorsed, and it was posited that collaborative efforts would need to be established between SkYE and the TVET Council to make the proposal and the commencement of the award of NVQs in Dominica a reality.

7 Evidence Validated by the Quality Assurance Review

The Review of the CBET assessment, verification, validation and certification practices has described how the NTAs located in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and St. Lucia quality assure the assessment processes leading to a CVQ and/or other Vocational Qualifications in their own jurisdiction. Dominica, which was yet to establish and implement a fully operational TVET system, provided some evidence of the adoption of CANTA Guidelines by training providers to align their training and assessment activities and practices to the regional QA framework. The Dominica TVET Council is not yet in a position to perform its mandate to quality assure assessment and deliver national certification.

Table 7.1 Summary of quality assurance practices in each jurisdiction

Key: SVG: St. Vincent & the Grenadines; Gre: Grenada; SLU: St Lucia; Dom: Dominica; U: Unsure	SVG		GRE		SLU		DOM		
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	U
1. Listing of Qualified Assessors	✓		✓		✓		✓		
2. Assessors have completed the required mandatory units of competence in Assessor Training.	✓		✓		✓				✓
3. Assessors are Internal -Instructors	✓			✓		✓	✓		
4. Assessors are External - have to be contracted and remunerated		✓	✓		✓			✓	
5. Active assessors- NTA and Training Centre have requisite evidence of experience and qualifications in the occupational area(s).	✓		✓		✓		✓		
6. External Verifiers Listing	✓		✓		✓		✓		
7. External Verifiers have completed the required mandatory units of competence in Assessor Training	✓		✓		✓		✓		
8. External Verifiers- NTA and Training Centre have requisite evidence of experience and qualifications in the occupational area(s).	✓		✓		✓			✓	
9. NTA has records - samples of assessment instruments from various training centres.	✓		✓		✓				
10. Evidence of continuous visits by the QA Officer(s) to monitor and evaluate training and assessment activities in approved centres	✓			✓	✓			✓	
11. NTA has evidence of robust practice of monitoring and evaluation of assessment through external verification to quality assure assessment outcomes	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	
12. NTA has evidence of moderation activities conducted with stakeholders (assessors, external verifiers, instructors, etc.)		✓		✓	✓			✓	
13. Assessors are able to provide relevant records of planning, conducting and reviewing assessment.	✓		✓		✓				✓
14. Evidence provided by assessors to demonstrate appropriate use of integrated assessments.	✓		✓		✓				✓
15. Evidence provided by assessors to demonstrate appropriate combination of assessment strategies in determining learner's outcomes.	✓		✓		✓				✓
16. Assessors have records of assessments and the Centre, has evidence of records of assessment records and outcomes, submitted to NTA.	✓		✓		✓				
17. Assessors can provide implemented practices of corrective actions recommended	✓		✓		✓				
18. Feedback provided by learners through formal and informal discussions, reflect that assessors appropriately explain the assessment processes.	✓		✓		✓				
19. Feedback provided by learners through formal and informal discussions, reflect that they perceive the assessment processes to be equitable and fair.	✓		✓		✓				
20. The NTA has the requisite expertise, knowledge and resources to offer vocational qualifications for either NVQ, CVQ, Statements of Competence or all.	✓		✓		✓				
21. NTA has the requisite expertise and other requirements to establish and implement, the corrective actions, identified in this report	✓		✓		✓				

8 Issues, Analysis, Recommendations

The primary objective of the consultancy was to review current TVET quality assurance (QA) processes and practices for assessment and verification as conducted in approved training centres, and competency claim validation by NTAs. Further, the Review compared the approaches to CBET, assessor and verifier training across the territories. The purpose of the Review is to share best practice from the region and offer recommendations for improvement within the context of the CANTA system. To accomplish this task, the Review set out to identify and scrutinize system gaps and other challenges in the training and assessment systems. If these gaps and issues are appropriately and adequately addressed and effectively mitigated, it will enhance the functions, roles, and responsibilities of the each NTA to address and expeditiously respond to the needs and demands of the TVET system for which each has jurisdiction.

The major issues and gaps identified are listed, and then discussed in more detail below.

1. Assessment Delays
2. The insufficiency of staffing levels for the NTA's Quality Assurance function
3. Challenges associated with the use of External Assessors for Summative Assessments
4. Limited availability of Assessors and Verifiers
5. Slow responsiveness of NTAs to mitigate and address issues of inefficiencies and weaknesses within its assessment and verification system
6. Post-enrolment disinterest of learners
7. Certification of learners who missed the assessment and verification process
8. The need for updating of NTAs/CANTA policies and procedures.

8.1 Assessment delays

8.1.1 Analysis

In the Grenada and St. Lucia TVET models, External Assessors are contracted by training providers on the recommendation of the respective NTAs. However, some of the training providers experienced difficulties interacting, interpreting and applying the assessment guidelines as was stipulated by the NTA. This contributed to delays in some assessment activities.

8.1.2 Recommendation

A robust communication strategy between the NTAs and the training providers, especially new and emerging ones seems critical to redeeming this issue. Effective communications between the NTA and the training providers will strengthen the professional relationship between these critical entities. This will also facilitate continuous capacity building in TVET. Further, it will provide the operational synergies between the training providers and the apex bodies that are required for successful and timely programme delivery, assessment and certification of learners.

8.2 Gaps in the NTA's Quality Assurance Mechanism

8.2.1 Analysis

Quality assurance has become an increasingly important aspect of TVET planning and practice. The quality assurance system in any qualification endeavor helps institutions and programmes gain confidence in the quality of the vocational qualification, and reliability of the certificates awarded. In addition, the QA mechanism is key to gaining public trust in the work and functions of national training institutions. Hence, all TVET systems and institutions must ensure that its system of quality assurance is robust, adequate, effective and sufficient.

Across the four territories, the day-to-day business of quality assurance resides with one or two Quality Assurance Officer/s, usually located within the NTAs. Albeit there are resource challenges, the insufficiency of this critical function has serious impacts on the TVET assessment and verification systems. The following concerns are related to this issue:

- a. The functions and roles of the QA Officer are not well defined as they relate to monitoring and evaluation of the assessment and validation systems within the training centres.
- b. The visits of the QA Officer to training providers are infrequent and unsystematic. This is especially problematic for new and developing training providers. New training providers are prone to experience technical challenges as they attempt to find speedy rejoinders to the bottlenecks and delays affecting the TVET system. Further, these institutions invariably find it difficult to cope with new and unfamiliar assessment procedures and are unable to competently cope with the challenges and constraints they may impose.
- c. The need for documented QA procedures and guidelines that outline strategic planning requirements, as well as the critical performance indicators for QA undertakings. These requirements are often overlooked or are obscured.

8.2.2 Recommendations

NTAs need to invest in the development of a QA Guide specifically for training providers that addresses quality assurance in training, assessment and validation. Where there are existing generic policies and guidelines on assessment, these should be developed and adapted to address the technical and practical needs of training providers. In all cases, such a guide should, among other things:

- outline the roles and function of the NTA's quality assurance officer or personnel;
- identify performance indicators for the QA work for both inter-institution and the NTA's QA office;
- outline a QA progression plan for assessment and validation readiness for training providers;
- provide an assessment and validation toolkit;
- outline a technical and practical support QA mechanism for new and developing training providers, to include an interactive platform, where issues and concerns associated with assessment readiness can be raised and adequately addressed in a timely manner.

It must be noted that any such guide, in and of itself, is not a panacea to pressing QA problems, deficiencies or gaps. The content of the guide must provide focus and be the driving force for strategic action. It must

be viewed exclusively in that light, otherwise it becomes just another TVET administrative academic exercise.

QA, as it specifically pertains to TVET assessment and validation, may need to be further elevated in NTAs' priorities. This is a commitment that should be manifested in new, creative and sustaining interventions and or investments. This will allow the QA office to become better responsive to the demands of the emerging TVET systems across the sub regions.

8.3 Challenges associated with the use of External Assessors for Summative Assessments

8.3.1 Analysis

Where instructional staff of the government-run Technical Institutes are trained and certified as instructor-assessors, they are required to conduct both internal (continuous) and summative (course assessments). In contrast, external assessors who are contracted by training providers on recommendation of the NTAs, are generally required to do summative assessments only. Both modalities of assessment arrangements are globally acceptable. However, external assessment can generate significant challenges to the TVET system if not carefully managed and financed. Some of these challenges are evident where external assessment practices and methods are deficient in the necessary pre-delivery QA checks and balances. They are evident where they exclude or minimize the realities of the internal training environment and learner-instructor relationships. They are evident also where there are difficulties with funding arrangements or cash flow issues.

The evidence shows that there are two basic rationales for using external assessors. One has to do with the mitigation of internal biases in the assessment. The other with system credibility concerns, mitigated through the incorporation of industry-based personnel as assessors. Both are valid reasons. But they can generate other issues of concerns. For example, while it is argued that external assessment minimises biases in assessment outcomes, it can be argued also that external assessments can be prone to quality assurance, communication and logistical issues which may also affect assessment outcomes.

The review of evidence reflects that the following issues as seen below, can be attributed to the external assessor assessment model.

1. Discontent between the external assessor and the training provider for example, seen in some instances during the Review, the training provider may question the quality of the assessment instrument and the duration of the exercise itself.
2. Poor communication or lack thereof between the training provider, the External Assessor and the QA Officer. This can result in:
 - a. poor logistical and resource planning for the assessment;
 - b. significant delays between training and assessment;
 - c. attrition of learners from the programmes without completion and/or certification due to the assessment delays;
 - d. negative impact of the relationship between the NTA's QA Officer, the external assessor and the training provider;

- e. The external assessor modulating the concerns of the training provider on the premise that accountability for the assessment was due to NTAs and not the training provider, even though it was the latter who is expected to pay for the assessment services.

These issues and challenges reflect existing gaps and deficiencies within the QA mechanism. These are further exacerbated by the lack of assessment moderation activities which are needed to build coherence, agreement between assessors and credibility of assessment. In fact, the evidence suggests that all the NTAs place little emphasis on the practice of assessment audits and moderation.

8.3.2 Recommendations

1. The NTA which has jurisdiction over the quality of assessment should, through its QA department, periodically conduct assessment quality audits (particularly of summative assessments) against the assessment QA guidelines and policies established by CANTA. The main objectives are to:
 - a. ensure the quality and consistency of assessment of candidates for vocational qualification awards
 - b. maintaining the integrity of the assessment process
 - c. build trust in the assessment system.

The assessment quality audit should seek to answer the following questions:

- o How valid are the assessment instruments?
 - o What is the trustworthiness and consistency of assessment decisions?
 - o To what extent is the application of assessment instrument compatible with the assessment environment?
 - o What is the consistency of the quality of assessment practices over time?
 - o Is the evidence sufficient?
2. Following each assessment, a QA audit and moderation exercise should be conducted according to CANTA's QA assurance guidelines and principles for moderation.

The two main objectives of the moderation exercise should be to:

- i. Discuss the QA assessment audit report to consider the findings in relation to:
 - The consistency of assessment activities with the occupational standards
 - The authenticity of evidence in relation to the validity and reliability of assessment decisions
 - The consistency and reliability of assessors' judgements
 - The sufficiency of evidence needed to make consistent and reliable judgements
- ii. Discuss issues in the application of assessment principles in relation to:
 - Evidence Sufficiency
 - Validity
 - Reliability
 - Fairness
 - Consistency

The approach to conducting the post-assessment-audit and moderation exercise will depend upon the circumstances within each territory. Irrespective of the approach adopted, the exercise should consider the assessment quality of both internal and external assessment approaches. The internal audit and moderation approach may not be applicable for small training providers with one internal verifier and one or two internal assessors.

However, it is recommended that large and well-established training providers with different departments and with multiple instructors, assessors and internal verifiers do internal audits and moderation exercises. It is also recommended that the NTA facilitates national external assessment audits and moderation activities. This activity must bring together all assessment stakeholders and practitioners to present a national perspective on the state of the assessment system within each country and to address issues that are of national concern thereto.

8.4 Limited availability of Assessors and Verifiers

8.4.1 Analysis

Concerns about the availability of assessors and verifiers differs across the territories. Where assessor and internal verifiers are staff members of government or privately owned or TVET institutions this problem is not felt to be as acute.

However, where training providers are either statutory entities or privately owned and operated businesses this can be a problem, given that responsibility for the provision of assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers is external to the training providers, and assessors and verifiers are contractually assigned to training providers by the NTA. This arrangement inevitably presents availability, sustainability, logistical, quality, and other challenges. Three such challenges are outlined below:

- Not enough persons are recruited and trained as external assessors;
- There are delays in the verification exercise due to scheduling and personal issues;
- The absence of refresher training for certified assessors due to unavailability of assessors. The system maybe be compromised if outdated assessment methodologies, practices and knowledge are still applied to the assessment and validation of learning outcomes.

8.4.2 Recommendations

1. Continue to expand the cadre of assessor and external verifiers. Emphasis should be placed on recruiting and training persons with industry, as well as educational and training experiences and backgrounds;
2. Recruit, train and certify persons as industrial sector assessors and verifiers. This will allow for the assessment and verification across a cluster of industry trades within the sector. For example, a person trained and certified as an external assessor within the General Construction sector can provide assessment and verification services in areas such as Carpentry, Masonry, Plumbing, tiling etc. This will mitigate the problem of time lapse between training, assessment and verification due to the unavailability and insufficiency of assessment and verification personnel.

Besides the aforementioned moderation exercise, the NTA should conduct refresher courses for practicing assessors and verifiers (for example, every two years upon certification and registration) to enable currency, relevance and innovative awareness for determining and validating learners' outcomes.

8.5 Slow responsiveness of NTAs to mitigate and address issues of inefficiencies and weaknesses

8.5.1 Analysis

Irrespective of the bottlenecks and challenges that are experienced by some training providers, the NTAs should be the entity that pro-actively acts to provide the guidance, contingency measures and problem-solving strategies to support the training providers that are under their jurisdiction. NTAs should lead the responses to these challenges. However, there is a perception that NTAs lack the required responsiveness, agility, and flexibility to manage these critical problems and issues. It remains questionable whether there is enough timely support given to training providers by NTAs that enable these TVET centres to effectively manage and confront the overarching systemic delay and other challenges imposed by the assessment and verification processes.

8.5.2 Recommendations

1. The NTAs should pro-actively forge closer relationship with training providers to encourage approachability and improve communication between both entities.
2. Adapt a “hold-hand” approach, where this is appropriate, in providing the guidance training providers need to tackle the challenges of assessment and verification, especially for new and emerging training providers.
3. Provide the guidance for the commissioning of other TVET assessment strategies, methods and practices that are designed to provide alternative pathways to assessment, verification, validation and certification (PLAR etc.). Additionally, it ought to provide redress to the challenges of assessment and verification delays and demands.
4. Provide guidance to training providers for employing fast-track assessment initiatives and interventions to improve responsiveness to the needs of learners. This is especially critical where the risk of pre-completion attrition of learners from some training programmes is likely to be high.

8.6 Post-enrolment disinterest

8.6.1 Analysis

Another issue that needs attention is the development of post-enrolment disinterest due to the protracted courses and the academic and economic pressures associated with the preparation of courses' mandated portfolios. The evidence from this review indicates that some learners are turned off by the long duration of courses and the academic requirements imposed upon them by the paper-based portfolios. This affects dropout rates in some territories. For example, this issue alone accounted for a dropout rate of over 20% in one TVET institution.

8.6.2 Recommendations

Where course duration and academic pressures contribute to attrition the following is recommended:

1. Pre- course delivery and assessment planning should design course introductory strategies to “grab” the attention and interest of learners and in turn, generate higher levels of motivation throughout the course. This may include a presentation of the product that encompasses the summative course competencies which they will work towards. Another approach could be using the pre-testing activities and competencies embedded in a number of unit competencies. Learners are then required to demonstrate current skill levels against those that are aspirational. This pre-test information can be used to progressively build the skills needed for course competency. This in effect will provide the learners with a road map for their journey through the course.
2. The NTA and training providers should work collaboratively to identify the profile and needs of learners. This information should assist in the design of short courses characterised by unit clusters for specific job certification. For example, some learners who may register for a Cosmetology qualification may be only interested in unit clusters related to nails, to seek employment primarily as a nail technician.
3. The NTA should review the utility and applicability of the course portfolio to determine where exactly it fits into and contributes to the veracity of learners’ competence, as prescribed in the occupational standards. Having determined its utility, NTAs should provide the guidance needed to create a portfolio document that:
 - supports judgment of performance competence;
 - is not an academic burden to learners but a representation of the systematic and progressive training journey of the learner;
 - transition to e-portfolio and use it as a tool for teaching IT and multi-media skill. Such format is likely to generate more interest in its development and presentation;
 - redefine the content of the portfolio so that it transitions from a document characterised in large parts by a compilation of internet-based information and written tests. Portfolios should reflect the generic goal of the occupational standards and not just general information on course work. The focus should be on the learners' ability to reflect on his or her performance. The interaction and mental processing and application of the underpinning knowledge that undergirds the creation of products, projects and services should be clearly evident in the portfolio. This will strengthen its value and purpose relative to the formative assessment evidence it aims to convey.

8.7 The impact of training projects on the quality of training and assessment

8.7.1 Analysis

In a mixed financing approach to TVET, it seems inevitable that NTAs will need to prepare for customised training programmes that are sponsored by outside agencies, including employers, philanthropic foundations as well as development partners. Such programmes demand synergistic relationships between all critical stakeholders. This professional inter-organizational relationship provides the understanding and

appreciation of the respective functions, responsibilities and roles that each entity contributes to the overall success of these programmes. This requires collective planning, identification of realistic performance targets and indicators, quality assurance standards and practices, training and assessment logistics and other critical issues and requirements which underlie all successful training endeavours. These must be catered for pre-delivery, thru-delivery and post-delivery. If these issues are not worked through before the delivery of the training interventions, then significant challenges will surface especially when it comes to the assessment and verification of these programmes leading to certification.

The evidence provided in the review with regards to sponsored training programmes, indicated that in one case only, a training provider compromised the standards, guidelines and policies of the NTAs in order to meet the scheduling pressures of the programme.

Evidently, there were challenges with the availability of external assessors and internal verifiers. In some instances, this capacity challenge contributed to high attrition of learners.

There was misunderstanding between the NTAs, Country Coordinators, QA personnel and training providers about the implementation of assessment procedures and practices. Some Training Providers (in St Lucia and Grenada) were not aware of the procedure for the payment of assessors. These and other issues contributed to the delays in assessment and verification activities and in turn, affected the output of the programme in noticeable ways.

8.7.2 Recommendations

1. Significant pre-planning and preparation be done that involves all the components and offices in vocational qualification leadership, management, supervision, monitoring and guidance.
2. Programmes must understand the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) philosophy, principles and practices, which undergird TVET and an appreciation of the procedures of the NTAs. The situation in Dominica would be the case that underpins this recommendation to SKYE.
3. Programmes need a full appreciation of real-world consequences of scarcity of human resources which some NTAs face. These risks were identified in the programme design phase, and steps to mitigate these risks have been taken. Even so, programmes must:
 - a. Ensure that the programme is well informed of the protocols, guidelines, standards and the systems associated with National TVET training, assessment, validation and certification. Specifically, specific training centres need to be approved by the NTA to award specific CVQs *before* being contracted to deliver said CVQs by a programme.
 - b. Consider possible flexible contingencies for assessment outputs and targets. This is to mitigate the realities and reservations embedded in any CBET TVET system. Further, this is needed to minimise the possible employ of interventions that are likely to negatively impact the quality of the assessment and validation outputs of such programmes.
4. The terms of any agreement must be based on the principle of collaboration between the programme sponsor, the National TVET system and the training providers. Specifically, whether the programme can engage Training Providers without express agreement by the NTA.

5. Such agreement must consider the realities of how vocational qualifications are adequately targeted, planned, financed, managed, implemented, monitored, assessed, validated and certified.

8.8 Certification of learners who missed the assessment and verification process

8.8.1 Analysis

Accounts provided to the review team suggest that across the four countries there has been a significant number of learners who have exited SkYE-funded TVET programmes without going through the formal assessment and validation processes. These learners could be attracted back into specially designed programmes where certification for unit competence is awarded without extensive retraining. It is believed that once the competence can be measured, judged and validated then such competencies necessitated endorsement, which is the business of the NTAs. It is critical that this be done since the greatest promoters of TVET are the learners, whose needs have been met by the TVET system. This boosts the credibility and builds the integrity and trustworthiness of the national TVET system.

8.8.2 Recommendation

Implementation of the proposed fast-track assessment activities, involving the use of the instructors to conduct "one-off" assessment activities with past and present trainees and the validation of the assessment by a select team of Master Assessors and Verifiers to recognize trainees' competencies by the awarding of NVOs.

8.9 Updating of NTAs/CANTA policies and procedures

8.9.1 Analysis

It is incumbent that all NTAs are positioned to respond to any identifiable or perceived gaps that remain unaddressed within the system it is mandated to lead and manage. Changes and adaptation in the policies and guidelines for assessment and validation necessitates regular review and revision so that they are brought in line to respond effectively to the learners' needs. Outdated and rigid policies and guidelines provide chances for certain groups of learners to fall into policy chinks, and hence suffer from lack of equitable access to training and assessment intervention. Without developmental support structures that are backed by a good policy and guideline environment, the needs of learners will remain peripheral to the work of the NTA bodies. Failure to revise the policies and procedures of the NTAs regarding assessment activities and processes, demonstrate inflexibility, unresponsiveness, the lack of innovative practices, and reluctance to utilize online assessment tools.

The evidence shows that the policies and guidelines on which the assessment and validation system of the four NTAs rests, are based on the 2015 CANTA guidelines. While territories have over the past two years made minor adjustment to operational procedures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no available evidence which suggests that NTAs have attempted adjustment to the CANTA 2015 policies, so that they could be more effective and efficient in responding to the challenges associated with assessment and validation in their respective territories.

Nowhere in the CANTA guidelines does it recommend or stipulate that its policies and guidelines are not adjustable. In fact, the spirit of the CANTA guidelines anticipate adjustments to deal with country specific issues and challenges, without significantly compromising the standards and quality that undergird the regional TVET system. Despite this, some territories have adopted carte blanche, CANTA's guidelines, logo included, as the standard operating procedures and guidelines for their own national TVET system.

8.9.2 Recommendations

The policies and procedures of NTAs regarding assessment activities and processes should be revised to demonstrate flexible, responsive and innovative practices, inclusive of the use of online assessment tools.

CANTA's Criteria and Guidelines for the CVQ should be updated to reflect flexible, innovative and responsive procedures, inclusive of online training and assessment of TVET learners.

9 Conclusion

SkYE's Review of the assessment, verification and validation of TVET in the four targeted Eastern Caribbean countries was informative. The data gathered through interviews with stakeholders and the observation of both training and assessment activities in TVET captured some innovative and best practices, which can be shared across the four Eastern Caribbean countries.

The principal gap identified, revolved around the responsiveness of the NTAs to resolving delays in assessment and consequently certification activities. As highlighted in this report, the NTAs will have to enhance their capabilities to be flexible and agile so as to effectively and efficiently address the needs of its two primary stakeholders, training providers and learners.

Given the identified gaps and recommendations, NTAs with the exception of Dominica, have the requisite resources, knowledge and in most cases, the established practices, to respond with alacrity to enhance the quality of their assessment services and to adequately meet the needs of its stakeholders.

TVET sponsored projects such as SkYE can assist significantly with the implementation of the proposed assessment and verification strategies in Dominica to assist the TVET Council to commence, as soon as possible, the process of awarding vocational qualifications to competent individuals.

The consultants are confident that the findings in this report will contribute to the implementation of the recommended corrective actions to facilitate the continuous improvement and enhancement of the assessment, verification and validation procedures of the NTAs and attendant training providers. This will enable them to better respond to the needs of the labour-market with qualified and competent individuals.

Appendices

Appendix 1 : REFERENCES

CANTA - Quality Assurance Criteria and Guidelines for the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (November 2015)

CARICOM-CANTA - Regional TVET Strategy for Workforce Development and Economic Competitiveness: Skills and Credentials - The New Global Currency (2015)

Grenada National Training Authority: TVET Policy Review (2020)

Grenada National Training Authority -Annual Report -(2019)

(UNESCO) Guidelines for the Quality Assurance of TVET Qualifications in the Asia-Pacific Region (2017)

Appendix 2: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS Interviewed-SVG

NAME	TITLE	LOCATION
Endall Johnson	Director	SSDA/NQD
Nicola Sparkes-Brown	Senior Education Officer- Programmes and Training	SSDA/NQD
Eslyn Thomas	Senior Education Officer-Quality Assurance	SSDA/NQD
Richard Hanson	Team Leader	SKYE
Dwight Lewis	Quality Assurance and Capacity Building	SKYE
Bertillon Hamilton	Principal	Kingstown
Ms. Judith Wallace	CVQ Coordinator	Kingstown
Iran Rouse	Administrative Head	Campden Park
Theron Providence	Instructor-Assessor -Wleding	Campden Park
Keijon Robertson	Instructor-Welding	Campden Park
Tyrone Providence	CVQ Coordinator	Campden Park
Sandrine Murray	Learner-Welding	Campden Park
Shoaib Charles	Learner-Welding	Campden Park
Kenal Sam	Principal & Internal Verifier-Electrical Installation	George Town
Lemuel Simmons	Instructor Furniture Making & Internal Verifier-Welding	Georgetown
Heather Huggins	Instructor Food Preparation & Cookery	Georgetown
Cuffy Manson	Electrical Installation-Instructor -Assessor	Georgetown
Pearlette Hanaway	Principal	Barrouaille
Roslyn Hazelwood	Front Office Instructor-Assessor - CVQ Coordinator	Barrouaille

Appendix 3: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS Interviewed -GRENADA

NAME	TITLE	LOCATION
Frances Ruffin	Quality Assurance Coordinator	GNTA
Nadine Lett	Quality Assurance Assistant	GNTA
Ann Peters	Directors	Laboucan
Uriel Peters		
Joan Gilbert	Manager	CDACT
Johnny Calliste	Manager	CEEP
Cynthia Mcdonald	Training Coordinator	Faith Org for People Development
Lorna Douglas	Internal Verfier -Marketing Manager & Board Member-GNTA	NEWLO
Versulla Lorainey	Fashion Design Instructor	NEWLO
David Duncan	ICT Instructor and GNTA Registered Independent Assessor	NEWLO
Sister Margaret Yamoah	Executive Director	NEWLO
Yolande Newton	Country Coordinator	SkYE

Appendix 4: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS Interviewed -ST. LUCIA

NAME	TITLE	LOCATION
Estellita Rene	Acting Executive Director	SLCTVET
Millina Cox	Quality Assurance Officer	SLCTVET
Dr. Clifford	Educator-Curriculum Specialist	SLCTVET
Anthia Joshua	Assessor	
Euthalia Fulgence	Assessor	
Rita Dyer	Assessor	
Signa Francis	Owner- Managing Director	School of Art & Design
Selma St. Prix	General Manager	NSDC
Keturah Donai	Head of Accounts	NSDC
Barry Williams	Training Manager-Internal Verifier	NSDC
Anse La Raye & Ms Mitille		CARE
Dr. Mason	Managing Director	CARE
Miguel and Lyndale James	Managing Directors	Oaktreez
Dr. Sonia Alexander		Munroe College
Travis Hall	Assessor	
Shervon Stanislaus	Assessor	
Dr. Prescott	Director	NELU
Lyndel Archibald	Coutry Coordinator	SKYE

Appendix 5: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS Interviewed - DOMINICA

NAME	TITLE	LOCATION
Paula Seraphine	Executive Director	Dominica TVET Council
Annette Giraudel	Administrative Assistant	Dominica TVET Council
Lucia Stedman	Manager	Business Training Centre
Eamond Gibbons	Administrator	Dominica Youth Business Trust
Melinda Francis	Instructor	Dominica Youth Business Trust
Roy Mitchell	Managing Director	CALLS
Cynthia Prince	Instructor-IV	CALLS
Nella Jno Baptiste	Instructor	CALLS
Giselle Gabriel	Plumbing Instructor	AED
Abigail Lucky	Coordinator	AED
Julio Ferreira	Stone-Wall Construction Instructor	YDD
Merril Matthews	Master Assessor	Dominica State College
Jules Pascal	Country Coordinator	SKYE