



# Improving Inclusive Practices in Higher Education

## How EQAAs Can Help

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**Presented by**  
Jason Stafford,  
Jewel Elwin, UTT



## What's in our CANQATE paper \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ The UTT Student Disability Policy: *Its successes and challenges*
- ▶ Structured policy evaluation: *An important device in the QA toolkit*
- ▶ Considerations for effective policy implementation: *Ignore at your peril*
- ▶ The role of EQAA's in supporting inclusive education practices: *Going beyond compliance*



## What is inclusive education? \_\_\_\_\_

A welcoming environment where students irrespective of their ability, gender, age, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation, enjoy equitable access to educational resources and opportunities in the least restrictive manner



# UTT's Student Disability Policy

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Established in 2015 to comply with ACTT's recommendation



Intended to guide admissions, academic accommodations, and access to buildings and physical facilities



Not supported by related procedures or implementation unit



Limited planning and stakeholder engagement in initial development



## Structured policy evaluation ---



Evaluates the impact of the policy in terms of various targeted stakeholders



Has clear evaluation questions or criteria



Is data-driven comprising a mixed method approach



Utilises findings to inform improvement actions

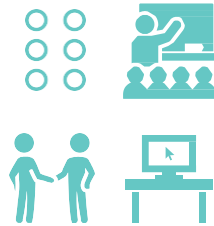


# Varied stakeholder perspectives

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## Disabled students

- ◆ Equitable admissions process
- ◆ Appropriate academic accommodations
- ◆ Safe and accessible physical facilities
- ◆ Environment free of stigma and discrimination



## Faculty and staff

- Teacher training in special needs education
- Adequate support staff and specialised equipment
- ◆ Professional development for administrators

# Varied stakeholder perspectives

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## Non-Disabled students

- Require sensitisation about disability issues
- Should become more comfortable with disabled students in class
- Require better understanding of academic accommodations



## Government, Donors & General Public

- Require a clear rationale for policy
- Want to ensure value for money
- Require compliance with the law
- Expect evidence of implementation and results



## Data collection and analysis ---

### UTT's Student Satisfaction Survey

1832 survey participants of which 23 were disabled students

Disabled students had slightly lower ratings on adequacy of library resources, perceived fairness of instructors, and overall UTT experience

There was also greater variability in the scores among disabled students compared to those within the non-disabled group





# Data collection and analysis ---

## Student Performance

Analysed the CGPA of 7432 students of which 80 were disabled

CGPA of disabled students lagged behind that of non-disabled students 2.44 to 2.61

There was also greater variability in the CGPA among disabled students compared to non-disabled students



## Data collection and analysis ---

### Student Enrolment

Examined new admissions data over a 7 year period before and after the policy was established

New admissions of disabled students increased 5-fold (7 to 42) from the year before the policy to current year



# Data collection and analysis

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## Faculty and Staff Interviews

Unstructured interviews with faculty and staff who either provide services to disabled students or have them as students

Feedback highlight the lack of coordination of disability services, and uncertainty about the university's obligations to disabled students

Insufficient staff training, professional development, and sensitisation

Four sign language interpreters advocate for and provide limited services to some disabled students



# Change justification matrix

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## Evaluation question

## Main findings

## Proposed improvement

Is there a clear vision for inclusion?	Ambiguity among faculty and staff	Articulate UTT's philosophy for inclusion
Does it align with the law?	No clear link to the law	Explain the legal context for the policy
Does it clearly define key terms?	Lack of understanding about various disability terms	Include a glossary of terms
Is there an implementation unit?	Lack of coordination of disability services. Inconsistency in the experience of different disabled students across the campuses	Establish an implementation unit. Develop supporting procedures and work instructions
Does it enable full access to UTT programmes?	Increased new admissions of disabled students five-fold since policy was established	Sustain sensitisation about the university's inclusive practices



# Change justification matrix

Evaluation question	Main findings	Proposed improvement
Does it support achievement of learning outcomes?	No guidelines on reasonable academic accommodations. Performance gap in disabled vs non-disabled students.	Provide supporting guidelines for reasonable academic accommodations. Deploy resources for assistive technology and support staff.
Does it equip faculty and staff with required skills and attitudes?	Limited professional development or training opportunities	Make provisions for training, professional development
Does it encourage disclosure of disabilities?	Non-visible disabilities are underreported	Provide protection from harassment and discrimination
Does it ensure that buildings and facilities are safe and accessible?	Some sites not fully retrofitted for the mobility-impaired	Address accessibility in long-term buildings masterplan



# Policy Implementation Considerations \_\_\_\_\_

The most challenging aspect of creating change and improvement in educational institutions is not the capacity to generate good ideas but their implementation.

## Leadership

- ◆ Create a shared vision for inclusion
- ◆ Be an advocate for the vulnerable
- ◆ Be guided by a personal inclusive philosophy, evidence and pragmatism
- ◆ Be a life-long learner and engage in reflective practice



# Policy Implementation Considerations \_\_\_\_\_

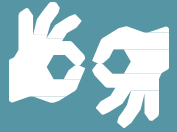
## Stakeholder involvement

- ◆ Secure buy-in of key stakeholders in the early stages of policy development
- ◆ Build coalitions of groups with shared interests (NGOs, foreign donors, ministries)



## Capacity building

- ◆ Develop a system of distributed leadership
- ◆ Facilitate appropriate training and professional development
- ◆ Develop professional learning networks



# Policy Implementation Considerations \_\_\_\_\_

## Funding and resources

- ◆ Many regional institutions are unable to afford resources for more inclusion
- ◆ Unfair to pass the full financial burden to disabled students
- ◆ Support from government, sponsors and development agencies is critical



## Evaluation and monitoring

- ◆ Regularly monitor and evaluate policy impact
- ◆ Establish indicators for the various areas covered in the policy
- ◆ Collect appropriate data to measure achievement
- ◆ Use findings to inform improvements





# The Role of EQAAs

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## Moving beyond compliance

National EQAAs in CARICOM have several functions as defined by their legislation but focused on regulatory aspects in their early years (registration, approval, etc.).

As the systems mature EQAAs must transition from primarily ensuring compliance to evaluating evidence for meaningful impact and change

EQAAs often require institutions to establish inclusive policies but must also build capacity to measure their efficacy



# The Role of EQAAs

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Inclusive education is quality education

The concept of quality education is inextricably linked with inclusive education

However defined, quality education has the dual role of social cohesion and prosperity in every society

These are best achieved when all citizens regardless of ability, gender, age, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation, are valued and given a meaningful opportunity to contribute

The background features a pattern of overlapping triangles in shades of teal, orange, and yellow. Four dark teal diamonds are placed at the corners, each containing a white icon: top-left shows a crossed-out eye, top-right shows an ear with sound waves, bottom-left shows a 2x3 grid of dots, and bottom-right shows the international symbol of access (a person in a wheelchair).

THANK YOU

Questions?

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