

Part III: Regional Bodies

Chapter 12: Caribbean Examinations Council

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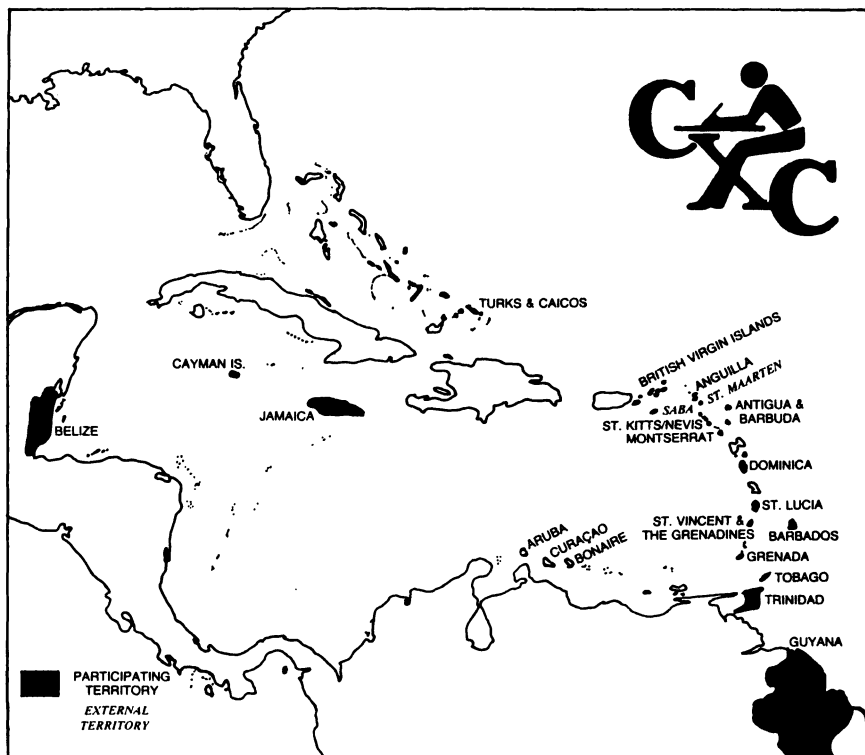
The idea of forming an organisation to take charge of examinations in the Caribbean dates back to 1946. A proposal initiated in that year was part of a move to promote collaboration throughout the English-speaking part of the region, which in 1958 culminated in a federation of all English-speaking territories except the Bahamas and British Guiana.

The federation collapsed in 1962 because of demands for stronger national autonomy, but the governments of the English-speaking territories retained a policy of cooperating in some sectors in order to provide services which were deemed desirable but which were thought at that time to be beyond the resources of any one territory. This was described as functional federation, but was not as simple and straightforward as it sounds. Governments or sectional interests in the territories were by no means unanimous about what services were desirable yet beyond the capacity of this or that government on its own.

Among the most notable examples of collaboration was the University of the West Indies (UWI), which had been established in 1948. Preservation of this regional institution was no doubt made easier by the establishment of campuses in Barbados and Trinidad in addition to the one in Jamaica. The Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM), the headquarters of which were in Guyana, was another form of cooperation. This chapter focuses on a third regional initiative which has stood the test of time: the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC).

Birth of the CXC

If the willingness to explore functional federation enabled the idea of a regional examination to be put on the agenda, the initiative of putting the proposal before governments came from Eric Williams, Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago. Williams was not the only one of his generation who had expressed opinions about the effects of overseas examinations on what was taught in Caribbean secondary schools. However, he had examined its



cultural consequences systematically while he had been a professor of history at Howard University in the USA, and had published a book on education which took account of the cultures of the peoples of the Caribbean (Williams 1950). At that time, the major secondary school examinations were set by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES).

As a Prime Minister and one of the leading advocates of functional federation, Williams was able and willing to promote the idea. The CARICOM Secretariat was his instrument, and the CARICOM Secretary-General was personally involved in the establishment of the CXC. The Secretariat organised the three meetings at which the terms of the agreement to establish the CXC were negotiated.

Functional federation was the context, but pedagogical considerations made the timing of the CXC's establishment opportune. All governments in the region had decided to increase the number of students in secondary schools. The governments were thus confronted with the consequences of extending the range of abilities in the schools while examining performance by tests which were effectively sieves for selecting who could go to university. The result was a long tail of failures, even though the word 'fail' was no longer used. The effect of what seemed a final judgement on the candidates' intelligence was felt by teachers to damage individuals and, by extension, whole societies.

By the time Caribbean teachers had become publicly critical of this aspect of the General Certificate of Education Ordinary (GCE 'O') level, the British had already sought to address the issue by providing an alternative examination, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). By the late 1960s this had been in existence long enough to be judged unsatisfactory as a solution to Caribbean problems. It provided a certificate that lacked prestige because it was considered second-class.

In addition, teachers had for some time been exchanging ideas about the UCLES syllabuses, especially in English, Geography, History and Mathematics. Some suggested changes, particularly in History, had been accepted by UCLES. In general, UCLES senior staff were receptive to proposals for modification to syllabuses by Caribbean teachers. So, even before the discussion among governments was initiated by Trinidad & Tobago and CARICOM, teachers and others were discussing what was taught in the classroom, as well as the results of the forms of testing used by the overseas boards.

Many people underestimated the reluctance of some senior officials and their political chiefs. Nevertheless, after a prolonged series of meetings the terms for establishing the Council were agreed. The headquarters were to

be in Barbados, and an administrative operational centre was to be established in Jamaica. Creation of the Jamaican office, later called the Western Zone Office, was part of the package to persuade Jamaica to join the organisation and to permit the headquarters to be in Barbados. The Western Zone Office greatly added to the costs, especially in the early years when it had relatively little to do. However, history has demonstrated the value of this part of the original structure.

The Agreement was to be acted on when all the parties had signed. By 1972, this had taken place; and in January 1973 the first Council meeting was held in Barbados. The Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Education met in Guyana in 1974 to consider the direction the Council should take. Agreement was eventually reached, but not without lengthy argument, strong language, and even the occasional loss of temper. The first Registrar was appointed in 1974; and the first subject panels were set up in 1975. The latter were to have syllabuses ready for schools to begin teaching in September 1977, so that the first examinations in English, Geography, History, Mathematics and Integrated Science could be offered in 1979.

Membership and Structure

The members of the CXC are officially known as Participating Territories. Fifteen such territories were members from the outset. The only territory to have been added to full membership is Anguilla, which joined in 1989. CXC examinations are also now offered in two External Territories, namely St. Maarten and Saba which are parts of the Netherlands Antilles. Arrangements were first made for St. Maarten in 1985, and for Saba in 1995.

However, CXC membership has not had an entirely steady pattern. In 1977, the government of Cayman Islands withdrew from CXC membership and instead affiliated with an examination board in Wales. This move was partly motivated by concern over Jamaica's dominance of CXC affairs, especially because at that time Jamaica was perceived to have many vigorous advocates of communism and black power. By the 1990s this concern had subsided, and following reapplication for membership Cayman Islands again joined the CXC in 1993.

Information on the populations and colonial histories of the Participating and External Territories is presented in Table 12.1. In population, they range from 2,415,000 in Jamaica to just 1,000 in Saba. The majority are independent sovereign states, but five are still UK dependencies and two, as already mentioned, are Netherlands dependencies.

The CXC has no quotas, either formal or informal, on the nationalities of its professional staff. Some consideration is given to geographical distribution during recruitment, but the principal consideration is always the

Table 12.1: Populations, Constitutional Statuses and Colonial Histories of CXC Participating and External Territories

| <i>Country/ Territory</i> | <i>Population mid-1990s</i> | <i>Present Constitu- tional Status</i> | <i>Outline Colonial History</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Anguilla | 7,000 | UK dependency | UK (1650-1967); independent as part of St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, but separated in 1980 and again became a UK dependency |
| Antigua & Barbuda | 67,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1632-1981) |
| Barbados | 260,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1627-1966) |
| Belize | 205,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1862-1981) |
| British Virgin Is. | 13,000 | UK dependency | UK (since 1666) |
| Cayman Islands | 25,000 | UK dependency | UK (since 1670) |
| Dominica | 72,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1763-1978) |
| Grenada | 91,000 | Independent sovereign state | France (1650-1763); UK (1763-1974) |
| Guyana | 812,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1814-1966) |
| Jamaica | 2,415,000 | Independent sovereign state | Spain (1509-1660); UK (1660-1962) |
| Montserrat | 12,000 | UK dependency | UK (since 1783) |
| Saba* | 1,000 | part of Netherlands Antilles | Netherlands (since 1816) |
| St. Kitts & Nevis | 41,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1783-1983) |
| St. Lucia | 158,000 | Independent sovereign state | France (1642-1814); UK (1814-1979) |
| St. Maarten* | 25,000 | part of Netherlands Antilles | Spain (1633-1648); Netherlands (since 1648) |
| St. Vincent & Grenadines | 110,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1763-1778); France (1778-1783); UK (1783-1979) |
| Trinidad & Tobago | 1,282,000 | Independent sovereign state | UK (1797-1962) |
| Turks & Caicos Is. | 10,000 | UK dependency | UK (since 1766) |

* External Territory

Note: The outline history excludes many details. For example, during the 18th and 19th centuries, claims over parts of Guyana changed many times according to the vicissitudes of European politics and varying dominance by the Dutch, French and British.

Sources: Commonwealth Secretariat (1995); Box & Cameron (1989).

professional expertise of applicants. At the same time, various economic factors shape the pools of applicants. Almost all the staff in the Western Zone Office are Jamaicans, in part because Jamaican salaries have been too low to attract significant numbers of applicants from other countries. The staff at headquarters in Barbados is more representative of the region, but Barbadian regulations have discouraged applications of non-Barbadians by imposing obstacles to local employment of spouses. Nevertheless, this has been expected to change following passage of legislation granting diplomatic immunities and privileges for CXC officers, and following lifting of restrictions on the movement of CARICOM nationals in the region.

Although no quotas exist for employment of professional staff, membership of the Council of the CXC and of various committees is carefully balanced to ensure representation by all Participating Territories. Some recognition is given to population size, though the principle of equal participation by the various units is stronger than the principle of proportional participation.

The Council of the CXC has power to coopt additional members but at a minimum must include:

- the Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies;
- the Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana;
- three representatives of the UWI appointed by the Vice Chancellor, regard being given to the geographic distribution of the campuses;
- one representative of the University of Guyana appointed by the Vice Chancellor;
- two representatives appointed by each of the Participating Governments of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago, and one representative appointed by each of the other Participating Governments; and
- one representative of the teaching profession appointed by each National Committee from among its members.

Policy is determined by the Council, which meets annually.

The work of the Council is conducted through the Administrative & Finance Committee (AFC) and the School Examinations Committee (SEC) and its Sub-Committee (SUBSEC). The AFC does not have a fixed membership, but had 12 members in 1996 and conducts the Council's business between meetings of the Council. The SEC has power to coopt additional members, but at a minimum consists of:

- the Chairman of the Council or his Deputy who shall be Chairman;

- four members representing universities (three from the UWI, one from the University of Guyana);
- one Technical Administrative Officer selected by each Participating Government from its Ministry or Department of Education; and
- one member of the teaching profession nominated by each National Committee.

The SUBSEC deals with technical and professional matters between the annual meetings of the SEC. It also has power to coopt members, but must include:

- the Chairman of the Council;
- the Past Chairman;
- one representative of SEC from each of the two universities;
- one representative of SEC appointed by each of the Participating Governments of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago; and
- four members from the remaining territories.

In addition, the CXC constitution provides for National Committees, established by each Participating Government in its territory and comprising representatives of the Ministry or Department of Education, the teaching profession, the universities in the area, and the general community. The Chairman of each National Committee is normally appointed by the Participating Government from among the members of that National Committee.

Subject panels are appointed by the SEC to advise it on all matters concerning the subjects under their control. The panels draw up syllabuses, recommend methods of testing, receive criticism, comments and suggestions, and consider examiners' reports. Each subject panel normally has six members of the education profession drawn from throughout the region, but the panels are permitted to coopt people for specific meetings. At least three members of each panel must be practising teachers of the subject at the level at which the syllabus is aimed.

The members of the Examining Committees, who are appointed by SUBSEC, set question papers, prepare marking schemes, and supervise the marking by examiners and assistant examiners. Their work is assisted by the Measurement & Evaluation Division of the Registry.

The Examinations

In the early history of the CXC, participants agreed that the Council should provide an examination to replace the GCE 'O' level. A proposal for an

examination at age 14+ held the floor for a time; but the decision to replace the fifth form examination was stimulated by the view of many participants that "we should get on with it", and commence what was long overdue as soon as possible. For a while, members considered whether the Council should begin by taking over the administration of the existing GCE 'O' level examination; but two impediments to this proposal were identified. Firstly it would make no sense to call the result of such an arrangement a Caribbean examination; and secondly, the matter would have to be negotiated with Cambridge, and there was no telling how long that would take.

The compelling argument to break loose from Cambridge was the desire for syllabuses with a Caribbean content where possible, and, where not (as in mathematics), for ways in which the tests might take account of cultural factors such as language. To achieve changes in teaching, syllabus content, and testing (which then seemed radical), the decision-makers were reconciled to a longer gestation period.

The teachers and educational administrators in the Caribbean were not isolated from the main items of discussion taking place in the UK and USA. Many had studied in the UK and USA (especially the University of London Institute of Education and Columbia Teachers College), and had visited the UCLES offices in Cambridge on short attachments. They were therefore familiar both with the English criticisms of the English system and with the solutions proposed, some of which UCLES was adopting for English schools. As such, the Caribbean benefitted from being part of the general discussion of problems in the UK and USA which seemed to follow from the decision in these countries to provide secondary education for a major part of the 11-16 age cohort.

One aspect concerned the long tail of failures and ways to deal with it. The "two examinations" solution that had been tried in the UK had clearly not worked, so this was evidently not a model to be followed. The consensus among Caribbean educators was that everyone could not somehow be assessed within the framework of a single paper. Yet the Council had been instructed by the policy makers to examine the whole range of abilities as far as possible, in ways that were appropriate and that were calculated not to damn candidates to the ranks of the unemployable. The challenge, therefore, was how to safeguard the general interests of the majority, yet ensure the ascent into the hallowed halls of University by an examination acceptable to Matriculation Boards not only of Caribbean Universities but also of those in Canada, the UK and the USA.

In the event, it was decided to have examinations at two levels, designated General Proficiency and Basic Proficiency. The General Proficiency syllabuses aimed to enable students to acquire concepts, principles, skills

and competencies required to obtain a sound foundation for further study of the particular subject area. The Basic Proficiency subjects were designed to provide skills and attitudes associated with secondary courses in specific subjects. The scheme was intended for students who wished to study subjects at secondary level but who did not intend to study the subjects at higher levels. The CXC designed common syllabuses for the two proficiencies, with one paper in common, and the other components catering to different levels of intellectual demand.

Attractive as the solution seemed when designed, and there remain persuasive and cogent arguments in its favour, the Basic Proficiency was never a complete success. Although the arrangement did achieve some of its aims, the major one was never realised because the school population has mainly by-passed the examination. By failing to provide an avenue to employment, which had less to do with the quality of the examination than with the prevailing economic conditions, the Basic Proficiency failed to meet the test of parity of esteem. From the pedagogical perspective, it has barely fulfilled the aim of moderating early specialisation. This was to be accomplished by introducing General Proficiency candidates to subjects at a lower level of demand and, in so doing, encouraging them to seek a more rounded education.

One directive to the Council that was very much ahead of its time was to integrate technical and vocational subjects with academic ones. This led to the adoption of the Technical Proficiency category of examinations, which was and is the basis for further academic study as well as a route to providing competency in particular skill areas. The Technical Proficiency syllabuses enable students to acquire skills that serve as a foundation for further study and training, for example in the business sector. The qualifications obtained are pre-technician and have the same status as the General Proficiency qualifications. The Technical Proficiency scheme reflects the importance attached by policy makers, employers and the public for young people to acquire the foundation of a wide range of skills needed for a changing labour market. Here again, however, the success has only been partial because the examination is not the only determinant of this. In the final analysis, the matter has to be resolved by the attitude of the society in which the schools and the Council exist, and an inherent conservatism in Caribbean Society has made the CXC's innovations difficult to implement.

At the outset, the CXC made the decision to use criterion-referencing rather than norm-referencing, and to make school-based assessment an integral part of the testing policy. Criterion-referencing was in practice not easy to achieve. Not only do old habits die hard, but the desire of parents and children to have a certificate which had international currency from the

beginning led to an indirect but clear indication from one of the major supporting governments that the General Proficiency should be seen as equivalent to the GCE 'O' level examination, which was itself at that time norm-referenced.

To achieve its goals, the Council contracted UK Chief Examiners, mainly from Cambridge, during the formative years to participate in the paper setting, moderating, marking and grading. In this respect, as with other aspects of administration, undoubtedly the Council was right to seek help overseas, as it also did with the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, USA. The need for help was never questioned. What the Council did not want was an institutional relationship with Cambridge of the type which the West African Examinations Council had negotiated.

Other help from Cambridge came in the form of training of markers, which started before 1979 and took the form of the marking in Barbados of some 'O' level scripts by Caribbean teachers under the supervision of Cambridge examiners. The goal of inducing confidence in sceptical persons, or at least politicians subject to lobbying by such persons, required the overseas chief examiners to certify in writing that the boundaries for Grades I and II were drawn where they would have been drawn by them had they been grading for their overseas boards. The move to a criterion-referenced system was thus the subject of constant debate in the early years, and although this is now less intense, especially because criterion referencing has been increasingly adopted by overseas boards, the fact that CXC's examinations are criterion-referenced has to be constantly brought to the attention of paper setters and graders.

School-based assessment was one of the banners of innovation under which the Council marched in its formative years. It was a frequent boast and pardonable exaggeration that in implementing the idea, the CXC was ahead of the English boards. However, the innovation required Council staff to engage in demanding forms of moderation, and teachers have grown increasingly restless as the number of subjects demanding school-based assessment has grown. The teachers claim to be burdened beyond tolerable limits by the number of assignments they have to mark and record. However, the Council remains fully committed to school-based assessment, and efforts are constantly made to assist schools and teachers with its implementation.

The decision to use a criterion-referenced system influenced the decision on the grading system. The Council agreed to report results on a five-point overall grade, on the grounds that the smaller the number of grades employed, the less complex would be the task of carrying forward criteria and grade boundaries from one year to the next. For purposes of equating

with the overseas ABC grades, the CXC Grade I was assigned equivalency with A and Grade II with B and C combined. The equating exercise had the unfortunate effect of placing a question mark on CXC's Grade III, which from the outset had been defined within the CXC criterion-referenced framework as being an acceptable grade for some forms of further study and for employment. However, in promoting the worth of a Grade III, CXC has succeeded to a greater extent than in the other innovations. This is because the governments of Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago have accepted the grade as meeting their requirements for employment in the civil service. The private sector in the meantime remains ambivalent, and its recruiting officers seem generally to pay little attention to the nuances of certificates.

In addition to the five-point overall grade, the Council decided to provide information on candidates' strengths and weaknesses through the use of profiles. Grades I-V were thus accompanied by profiles A, B, C and D representing respectively above average, average, below average, and not assessed. Grades V and D were both recorded as N/A, meaning that the candidate has not provided the examiners with enough evidence to permit an assessment. Because of difficulties in harmonising five overall grades and four profile grades, especially in relation to harmonization at Grades I to III and A, B and C, the Council decided from 1998 to report on a six-point scale for both grades and profiles.

A major development launched in the mid-1990s after extensive consultations in the 1980s, is the establishment of a Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) which has been designed to replace the Advanced ('A') level examinations set by the Cambridge and London examinations boards. The architects created a unified system of certification of both examined and accredited courses designed to encompass current arrangements in the 'A' level classes, and to serve equivalent stages of programmes in community colleges and other tertiary institutions across the region. The development of this examination was facilitated by a grant of US\$3 million from the European Union. The project funded by this grant was launched in 1996 in order to allow the new examination to be offered from 1998.

Also worth mentioning is that the CXC gives some assistance to governments in the construction of national examinations. Two examples are the Common Entrance Examinations set in Trinidad & Tobago (see Chapter 11) and in St. Lucia. These activities to some extent resemble the support given to national bodies by the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. Two countries in region — Jamaica and St. Kitts & Nevis — operate national secondary school leaving examinations which parallel the CXC

ones. CXC has given occasional professional advice to the Jamaican Ministry of Education on its examinations. Both Jamaica and St. Kitts & Nevis have benefitted from the many workshops organised by CXC to provide training in question-setting and marking.

Growth and Regional Distribution of Examination Entries

The CXC started with five subjects in 1979, but by 1997 was providing examinations in 20 subjects at General Proficiency, 18 at Basic Proficiency and three at Technical Proficiency. Technical and vocational subjects accounted for 11 of the total in the General Proficiency examination, 11 in the Basic Proficiency, and all of the Technical Proficiency subjects. Candidate entry for the main sitting in May/June reached nearly 98,000 in 1996. Overall subject entries exceeded 354,000.

CXC additionally offers examinations in January in a limited number of subjects. In 1997 they were English, Mathematics, Principles of Business, and Principles of Accounts. In 1996, candidate entry in the January examinations was 10,586.

Table 12.2 shows the regional distribution of candidate entries. By far the largest numbers were from Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago, each of which provided over a third. At the other end of the scale, in the June examination six of the 16 Participating Territories, and also the two External Territories, each provided less than 1 per cent. The figures were not completely proportionate to population sizes in the countries concerned. For example, Jamaica had nearly twice the population of Trinidad & Tobago, but had similar numbers of candidate entries. Likewise, Barbados and Belize had similar population sizes but sharply differing proportions of candidates. The differences partly reflected variations in secondary school enrolment rates, but also variations within the countries in access to the examinations of other boards. For example, large numbers of candidates in Jamaica continued to take examinations set by UK and other examining boards rather than by the CXC.

Recognition, Security and Integrity of the Examinations

When the CXC was established, one of the principal concerns of parents, teachers and students, and hence of the participating governments, was whether the Council's certificates would be recognised by overseas universities, and in particular those in Canada, the UK and the USA which have been destinations for further education by many Caribbean students. The acceptance of the certificate by the University of the West Indies and the University of Guyana was assured by involving their staff in syllabus development from the beginning.

Table 12.2: Candidate Entries by Territory in CXC Examinations, January and June 1996

| | January Examination | | June Examination | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | Number | % | Number | % |
| <i>Participating Territories</i> | | | | |
| Anguilla | 63 | 0.6 | 162 | 0.2 |
| Antigua & Barbuda | 121 | 1.1 | 993 | 1.0 |
| Barbados | 897 | 8.5 | 6,296 | 6.4 |
| Belize | 20 | 0.2 | 1,821 | 1.9 |
| British Virgin Islands | 11 | 0.1 | 260 | 0.3 |
| Cayman Islands | 0 | 0.0 | 313 | 0.3 |
| Dominica | 204 | 1.9 | 1,440 | 1.5 |
| Grenada | 260 | 2.5 | 2,248 | 2.3 |
| Guyana | 389 | 3.7 | 7,562 | 7.7 |
| Jamaica | 3,762 | 35.5 | 37,284 | 38.2 |
| Montserrat | 9 | 0.1 | 123 | 0.1 |
| St. Kitts & Nevis | 131 | 1.2 | 812 | 0.8 |
| St. Lucia | 794 | 7.5 | 2,730 | 2.8 |
| St. Vincent & Grenadines | 206 | 1.9 | 2,098 | 2.2 |
| Trinidad & Tobago | 3,633 | 34.2 | 33,199 | 34.0 |
| Turks & Caicos Islands | 85 | 0.8 | 289 | 0.3 |
| <i>External Territories</i> | | | | |
| St. Maarten & Saba | 1 | 0.0 | 81 | 0.1 |
| TOTAL | 10,586 | 100.0 | 97,711 | 100.0 |

Source: Caribbean Examinations Council (1996), pp.8, 9.

Parents and students with their eyes focused overseas were placated (or at least not provoked into public statement of anxiety) by the employment of chief examiners from the UK. However, more had to be done. In 1978, as soon as it appeared that there was adequate documentation to support requests for recognition, letters were written to the boards in the UK and to universities in Canada. The responses were gratifying, though not uniform. The majority accepted General Proficiency Grades I and II for entry to courses. The University of London began by accepting only Grade I, though added Grade II some time later. The University of Cambridge said that it would be guided by the practice of other UK boards. The Canadian universities one by one accepted both CXC grades for matriculation purposes. In the USA, recognition of grades was effectively achieved

through CXC's membership of the American Association of College Registrars & Admission Officers (AACRAO). The Association is a clearing house for information about the worth of unfamiliar qualifications. By explaining what the CXC was doing and gaining the confidence of the AACRAO, the Council's certificate surmounted the barriers created by the differences between the US system of secondary education and that of the English-speaking Caribbean. By the 1990s, recognition of CXC qualifications had ceased to be problematic. Holders of CXC certificates have become the living proof of the quality of CXC grades.

If recognition of certification was perhaps the foremost concern when the CXC was founded, the security and integrity of examinations were not far behind. In these small societies, it is difficult for anything to remain a secret for long, and there was an understandable fear that the CXC's papers would suffer from leakage. In the event, the number of security breaches has been small, though in the absence of comparable data from other examining boards the media and the public have tended to exaggerate their occurrence.

The measures taken to ensure the security and integrity of the Council's examinations include requirement that:

- at the time of service, chief examiners must not be classroom teachers;
- examination papers are printed by security printers overseas;
- papers are marked at centres, to which markers are brought; and
- the examinations are administered in each territory through a local Registrar who, except in Jamaica, is a civil servant in the Ministry or Department of Education. In Jamaica, the examinations are administered by an overseas examination office, which carries out a similar function for the London and Cambridge examining boards.

The Council began with one centre, and now has four. The intention is to involve in a secure manner as many teachers as possible from the different territories. This is seen as a way to promote in the classrooms first-hand experience of the examination process, and also a way to give teachers an opportunity to exchange information and understanding.

The Council organises periodic meetings with Registrars to keep abreast of the problems of administering the examinations in the different territories. Each local Registrar is responsible for registration of candidates, distribution of question papers, employment of invigilators and supervisors, the movement of school-based assessment records and assignments, the movement of scripts to marking centres, and the distribution of certificates.

Finance

The Council gains its annual revenue from two main sources: examination fees and government subventions. In 1996, income from examination fees, in Barbados dollars, was BDS\$11,609,680 (US\$5,804,840) while income from subventions was BDS\$4,987,000. Earnings from consultancies and related services were small, but were projected to become more significant in the future. In addition, the Council receives periodic support from external aid agencies, including the Caribbean Development Bank and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

The fees of all candidates in some Participating Territories are paid by their governments. However, other candidates must pay their own fees. The latter group includes Jamaica, which, as noted above, has the largest number of candidates. For political reasons, for an extended part of the 1990s the Council had to freeze fees even though an increase could have been justified on economic grounds. The level of government subventions had been held constant for an even longer period, i.e. since 1981. Against this background, the fact that the CXC is a vibrant organisation with major achievements to its credit is all the more remarkable.

A further complexity has arisen from the fact that some currencies in the region, particularly those of Jamaica and Guyana, have not been freely convertible for much of the CXC's history. However, the governments of both countries have been very cooperative, and have made their payments in Barbados dollars when required. On the occasions of large devaluations, the Council worked out a payment schedule which permitted the relevant governments to meet their obligations over time. The Jamaican government was unable to make a similar arrangement with the Cambridge and London examining boards, which assisted the Jamaican authorities to see the value of the Caribbean partnership. Moreover, the CXC keeps its fees permanently below those of UCLES, which helps retain demand for CXC examinations.

Table 12.3 presents a breakdown of expenditure in 1996. As might be expected, salaries of permanent staff were the largest item, though they only comprised 30.1 per cent. The other large items were the marking exercise, fees to examiners, and printing of examination papers. The fact that meetings consumed only 4.5 per cent deserves emphasis. To keep costs down, the full Council meets only once a year. The Administration & Finance Committee and the Sub-Committee of the School Examinations Committee each meet about three times a year; and subject panels meet according to fixed schedules either to review syllabuses when needed, or for special purposes relating to the examinations. The figure for meetings in the CXC budget does not include the extra costs that governments may incur

when hosting meetings, but it includes all other expenses for meetings.

Table 12.3: Operational Expenditures, Caribbean Examinations Council, 1996 (Barbados Dollars)

| | BD\$'000 | % |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Fees to Examiners | 1,332 | 9.0 |
| Examination papers and printing | 1,210 | 8.2 |
| Marking exercise | 3,073 | 20.7 |
| Salaries of permanent staff | 4,466 | 30.1 |
| Salaries of seasonal staff | 672 | 4.5 |
| Stationery, telephones, advertising | 376 | 2.5 |
| Office accommodation | 390 | 2.6 |
| Postage and local travel | 335 | 2.3 |
| Meetings | 661 | 4.5 |
| Computer services | 408 | 2.8 |
| Research and development services | 184 | 1.2 |
| Consolidations and new development | 1,022 | 6.9 |
| Non-recurrent | 200 | 1.3 |
| Miscellaneous | 494 | 3.3 |
| TOTAL | 14,823 | 100.0 |

Source: Caribbean Examinations Council (1996), p.27.

Conclusions

Since its establishment in 1972, the CXC has been a major embodiment of regional cooperation. The geographic, political, social, nationalistic and individualistic problems which seem to bedevil attempts at cooperative enterprises everywhere have not been absent from the CXC. However, the CXC has now established itself as a major institution within the domain of education in the region. CXC's success, and its many achievements to date, are a tribute to the belief in the organisation, and a commitment to it, shown by the extended CXC family, embracing policy-makers, staff, examiners, markers, principals, teachers and countless volunteers providing services of one kind or another.

Among the significant developments in the first 25 years of the Council's history have been development of the General, Technical and Basic Proficiency examinations and, more recently, the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination. Early concerns about standards and external

recognition of qualifications were dealt with effectively during the 1970s and 1980s. Politically, the CXC has expanded its influence by welcoming Anguilla as a full Participating Territory and St. Maarten and Saba as External Territories.

At the same time, the CXC has sought, and largely found, an appropriate niche in the balance between national and metropolitan examinations. Some countries of the region have decided to operate their own national examinations at various levels, and in some case have been assisted in this task by the CXC; and in some countries metropolitan examining boards, including those of the Universities of London and of Cambridge, have continued to operate alongside the CXC. As the context and the needs continue to evolve, the CXC will also continue to evolve. Meanwhile, as a body which is now over a quarter of a century old, the CXC has both developed a maturity and earned respect as a way through which small states can collectively meet needs which the majority would be unable to achieve on their own.