

## **FAQs**

### **(A) Accreditation Process and Criteria**

- 1) Are there any stipulated minimum standards e.g. in terms of teaching premises and equipments for operators to meet in accreditation?

Ans: Accreditation is undertaken under the “fitness for purpose” principle. In other words, the operators and the learning programme(s) are accredited on the basis of their stated objectives to achieve the intended learning outcomes, taking into account different natures, sizes, operational complexity and scopes of expertise of the operators.

The minimum standards are the quality requirements stipulated in respective accreditation guidelines taking into account the prevailing education system and the learning outcomes requirements laid down in the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) as well as any other relevant policy intention / regulations / guidelines / common descriptors / specification of competency standards (SCS) promulgated by the Hong Kong SAR Government.

- 2) Are internal training courses (learning programmes) without external participants or soft skill training programmes eligible for QF recognition? How can the effectiveness of these programmes be reflected with reference to the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD)?

Ans: Yes, as long as they meet the claimed objectives and deliver the learning outcomes that are commensurate with respective levels of the [GLD](#) as well as meet the following general requirements for entry into the QR after having been quality assured by an appropriate authority:

- The learning programme should carry an award (i.e. a qualification) as a formal approval of the achievement of the learning programme.
- The learning programme should be accessible to learners of Hong Kong.
- The learning programme should include formal assessments to ascertain that learners have achieved the specified learning outcomes of the programme.
- The learning programme should correspond to an assigned QF level in accordance with the Generic Level Descriptors.

An appropriate authority refers to the self-accrediting operators specified in Schedule 2 of the AAVQO (Cap 592) concerning qualifications awarded by

them, or operators with Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status granted by the HKCAAVQ concerning qualifications covered by the PAA status or the HKCAAVQ for all other operators.

- 3) Is the lack of a fixed teaching venue a concern to panel members in considering an accreditation application?

Ans: Teaching venue as a physical resource to underpin the quality of a learning programme. It is one of the accreditation criteria that the panel will review. The onus of proof that the operator has adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of its learning programme(s) lies with the operator.

- 4) How will HKCAAVQ accredit different operators with various types of learning programmes?

Ans: Although there are different kinds of learning programmes operated by operators of different scales and types, they are all subject to the same minimum standards of accreditation. However, the type of evidence they present may be different.

Specific guidelines have been tailor-made for different types of operators. They are available on our website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/publication.asp>. Alternatively, operators may attend our workshops to gain a better understanding about the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process.

- 5) Is it necessary for the institution to be registered under the Education Ordinance (Cap 279) before it can apply for accreditation?

Ans: As provided for under the AAVQO (Cap 592), a person, school, institution, organisation or other body, the whole or part of the business of which includes the operation of any learning programme or any part of a learning programme, is considered as an operator and may apply for accreditation service under the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that underpins the QF. Registration under the Education Ordinance (Cap 279) is not a pre-requisite for

accreditation service, but the operators have to demonstrate that they have complied with all statutory requirements of the Government necessary for the conduct of learning programmes at their proposed QF level(s).

- 6) Are there any restrictions / requirements on the programme length and qualification title of quality assured learning programme?

Ans: Under the AAVQO (Cap 592), learning programmes are defined by a curriculum, which may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements, and includes, where the context permits, any proposed programme of such studies or training. There are no stipulated requirements concerning the programme length. As regards qualifications title, for programmes where policy guidelines have been promulgated by the Education Bureau (e.g. Associate Degree, Higher Diploma, SCS-based Programmes), compliance with the stipulated requirements for qualification title is a must. For other programmes where no specific requirements are stipulated by the Government, as a good practice, a qualification title should normally contain two components, reflecting both the subject matter of the learning outcomes and the content of the validated learning programme, as well as and the qualification level. Reference can be drawn from the EDB's [Qualifications Guidelines](#).

- 7) How long does it take to go through an accreditation exercise?

Ans: It depends on the QF level and the accreditation service required. An exact time schedule will be determined and agreed upon between the HKCAAVQ and the operator at the time of entering into the service agreement. Typically, Initial Evaluation will take 10-15 weeks and Programme Validation will take 14-17 weeks from the time of the operator's submission of the accreditation document.

- 8) What is the success rate of getting approval for accreditation of training courses?

Ans: Accreditation is an independent exercise. The key to successfully completing an accreditation exercise is to be well-prepared and to understand the guiding principles of accreditation. Attending our [workshops](#) will be the first step to get prepared, which help you understand more about the accreditation procedures and requirements.

9) How will the validity period of accreditation status be decided? How long will it be?

Ans: *Initial Evaluation* has a validity period of two years. Within the two-year period, operators must apply to have at least one learning programme at the approved QF Level validated under *Programme Validation*. If operators continue to have their programmes validated the Initial Evaluation status does not expire.

The validity period for validated programme will be decided taking into consideration factors such as the length of the learning programmes and the level of maturity of the operator to operate the learning programmes.

10) When will a re-validation be conducted?

Ans: Operators must have their learning programmes revalidated by the HKCAAVQ at least six months before the expiry date of the validity period or a date as agreed by the HKCAAVQ in advance. If revalidation is not completed by the expiry date, the validation status will automatically lapse and the registration of the related qualifications of the learning programmes in the QR will be indicated as expired.

11) In case of changes in the learning programme, must an operator re-apply for accreditation?

Ans: It is the responsibility of the operator to inform the HKCAAVQ of any substantial change(s) to the accreditation status, which might have an impact on its competency to continue to meet the criteria for accreditation, before the change is made. The operator should consult the HKCAAVQ on the need for seeking approval on substantial change as soon as feasible, and prior to making any change(s). Guidelines on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status are available on our website at

<http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/publication.asp>.

**(B) Determination of QF levels**

12) What are the seven levels in the HKQF?

Ans: The Qualifications Framework (QF) is a hierarchy of qualifications, comprising seven levels. Each of the seven levels is characterised by outcome-based Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Education Bureau. The GLD describe the common features of qualifications at the same level and the requirements of each level in four aspects - "Knowledge and Intellectual Skills", "Processes", "Application, Autonomy and Accountability" and "Communications, IT and Numeracy". More information about the GLD is at [http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF\\_GLD.asp](http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_GLD.asp).

13) Is there is a distinct boundary between Initial Evaluation status for QF Levels 1 to 3 and for QF Levels 4 to 7? Are operators with Initial Evaluation status at QF Levels 4-7 not eligible to proceed with validation of programmes intended to be at QF Levels 1 to 3?

Ans: Yes. Initial Evaluation (IE) is QF Level specific because the teaching skills and academic qualifications of staff, and the physical resources needed for successful delivery of learning programmes alter between levels. In general, there is a divide between IE status at QF Levels 1-3 and QF Levels 4-7 and accreditation status at lower levels cannot be extended upwards. Within the range of QF Levels 1-3 and 4-7, an operator may proceed with validation of learning programmes at the approved QF Level or below. For example, if an operator is granted an IE status to operate learning programmes at QF level 5, it can proceed with validation of learning programmes at QF Levels 5 and 4 but cannot extend downward to QF Levels 1 to 3.

14) What QF Level should be claimed in applying for an Initial Evaluation of an operator?

Ans: Initial Evaluation (IE) is undertaken at institutional level to assess whether an operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) at a particular QF

Level(s). The QF Level(s), if approved, indicates that the operator may proceed with validation of learning programmes at the approved QF Level(s) or below, within the cluster of QF Levels 1–3 or 4-7.

- 15) For learning programmes that fail to pass programme validation at the claimed QF Level, will the HKCAAVQ approve the grant of a Programme Validation (PV) status at an alternative / lower QF Level as appropriate?

Ans: Normally, for a learning programme that fails to pass programme validation, the accreditation outcome would be non-approval. However, if the operator has provided sufficient and adequate evidence to demonstrate to the HKCAAVQ that it is competent to deliver the learning programmes that meet the claimed objectives, the minimum quality standards and the QF standards at the determined QF Level, the HKCAAVQ may consider granting a conditional approval to the learning programme at the determined QF Level, subject to fulfilment of relevant condition(s) / requirement(s) by stipulated deadlines to bridge the identified gap.

**(C) Subject Specialists**

- 16) Will the subject specialists be paid and employed as panel members in accreditation?

Ans: Panel members provide service to the HKCAAVQ on a voluntary basis. They are paid an honorarium as a token of appreciation of their contribution to the HKCAAVQ.

**D) SCS-based programme**

- 17) Are there any fee schedules for SCS-based programmes?

Ans: Accreditation is conducted under the principle of “fitness for purpose”. SCS-based programmes are designed with reference to the published Specification of Competency Standards for specific industry in accordance with the Qualifications Guidelines (QG) promulgated by the Government. Hence, the declaration by the operator to accredit a learning programme as a SCS-based programme of relevant industry is in fact the “purpose” or

objective of the learning programme and this will be determined as part of the accreditation of learning programmes under the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. Therefore, under normal circumstances when SCS-based programme accreditation is conducted as part of the programme validation, the regular accreditation fee for Stage 2 Programme Validation will be levied and there would be no extra cost for assessing the programme against the QG.

- 18) Are the accreditation criteria stipulated in the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process guidelines in line with the Qualifications Guideline promulgated by the government?

Ans: All learning programmes are accredited under Stage 2 Programme Validation of the HKCAAVQ's Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. Reference will be made to the published Qualifications Guidelines for accreditation of SCS-based learning programmes.

**(D) Accreditation Fees**

- 19) Are there any accreditation discounts for operators seeking validation of a number of learning programmes at one go?

Ans: The HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit self-financed body. Accreditation fee is levied on a full cost recovery principle. The accreditation fee for Initial Evaluation will be charged per operator per applied QF level. The fee for Programme Validation varies according to QF level. The [fee schedule](#) for accreditation services laid down by the HKCAAVQ is approved by the Secretary for Education.

The Council may consider a fee discount for validation exercises undertaken concurrently at its discretion.

- 20) Is there a fee difference in respect of learning programmes of different durations or learning programmes with different class sizes?

Ans: The costs for accrediting programmes of different durations or of programmes with different class sizes are normally the same.

21) If a number of programmes of similar disciplines are put forth to the HKCAAVQ for validation at the same time, will there be any discount for accreditation fee?

Ans: If learning programmes of the same industries / disciplines are validated at the same time by the same panel, a discount calculated on a cost-recovery principle, may be offered. The authority to decide whether a discount can be offered rests entirely with the Council.

#### **E) Financial Subsidies**

22) Are there any financial subsidies to facilitate operators to participate in the QF?

Ans: The Education Bureau has introduced various funding schemes under the Qualifications Framework to support quality assurance of programmes offered by education and training providers and to encourage them to register the qualifications in the Qualifications Register (QR). Information is available at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/QFSS.asp>.

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