



香港學術及職業資歷評審局  
Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of  
Academic & Vocational Qualifications

# Institutional Review Manual for Private University Title

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# Introduction

1. An institution that requests the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to conduct an Institutional Review for the purpose of making an application for university title (IR) for consideration by the Chief Executive (CE) in Council should use this Manual. The *Institutional Review Manual for Private University Title* (the *IR Manual*) serves as the guiding document for the participating institutions, the IR panel engaged by HKCAAVQ, and HKCAAVQ. Apart from the *IR Manual*, the IR panel members will be provided with information about practical arrangements for the IR, such as the logistics in relation to meetings and the site visit, from HKCAAVQ.
2. The *IR Manual* serves various purposes: (i) to outline the purposes, guiding principles and terms of reference for IR; (ii) to introduce the IR standards and criteria; (iii) to guide the participating institutions in planning and preparing for the IR; and (iv) to explain the IR process and procedures to ensure a common understanding of roles and responsibilities.
3. In carrying out the IR, HKCAAVQ conducts an accreditation test as provided for under section 4(1)(a)(i) of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 1150). Empowered by section 22(2)(d) of Cap 1150, HKCAAVQ sets out the process and standards for the IR, in line with the requirements that institutions have to meet before applying for university title as set out in the *Roadmap for Becoming a Private University* (the *Roadmap*) promulgated by the Education Bureau (EDB) by way of a Legislative Council Brief in July 2015. In the process of developing the *IR Manual*, HKCAAVQ consulted the relevant stakeholders, including the EDB and self-financing post-secondary education institutions registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap 320).

## Roadmap to and Requirements for Private University<sup>1</sup> Title

4. In Hong Kong, the decision to award private university title for a self-financing post-secondary education institution rests with the CE in Council. To provide guidance for higher education institutions seeking to become private universities, EDB promulgated the *Roadmap* for institutions to follow in acquiring private university title. The *Roadmap* sets out the steps that an institution has to go through and the requirements that an institution should meet before applying for university title.
5. Prior to applying for university title, a self-financing post-secondary education institution should have gone through a number of accreditation tests conducted by HKCAAVQ. It should firstly undergo an Institutional Review for the purpose of seeking registration under Cap 320 and then be approved by the Permanent Secretary for Education for registration under Cap 320. With Cap 320 registration, an institution is eligible to offer degree programmes. Each degree programme to be offered by the institution has to undergo Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and then seek approval from the CE in Council. Accredited programmes are subject to periodic Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA).
6. When an institution has demonstrated a sound track record in assuring the quality of its accredited learning programmes, it may be eligible to undergo another Institutional Review together with Discipline

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<sup>1</sup> In the Manual, university refers to a private university in Hong Kong established pursuant to the *Roadmap* promulgated by EDB in July 2015.

Review to gain Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status. PAA status allows the institution to develop and operate a learning programme within the approved scope of programme area without going through LPA or re-LPA. The PAA status of the institution is subject to Periodic Review (PR). A private university must also continue to comply with the requirements under Cap 320.

7. To fulfill the requirements for seeking private university title, the institution should acquire PAA status for degree programmes at undergraduate level (i.e. QF Level 5) in programme areas in at least three different Areas of Study and Training under the new classification system of 14 Areas of Study and Training, against which qualifications and the respective learning programmes in the Qualifications Register are grouped. The *New Classification of Areas of Study and Training in the Qualifications Register (QR), List of Sub-areas and Illustrative Scope Statements (Version 1.0, October 2015)* is available on HKCAAVQ website at [http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/file/news/972/New\\_Classification\\_System\\_Eng\\_20151023.pdf](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/file/news/972/New_Classification_System_Eng_20151023.pdf). A programme area can be a whole Area of Study and Training, a Sub-area in full or a Sub-area in part.
8. Having obtained PAA status in at least three different Areas of Study and Training, the institution may commission HKCAAVQ to carry out another Institutional Review – the Institutional Review for Private University Title – to assess its fundamental ability to meet the standards expected of a private university before the institution can make an application for university title to the CE in Council via EDB.
9. In addition to undergoing an IR before making an application for university title, an institution should meet the following requirements: (a) have a minimum student enrolment of 1,500 (full-time equivalent) at degree level for the past two consecutive academic years immediately preceding an application for university title<sup>2</sup>, and (b) have demonstrated a certain level of research capability by having successful applications under publicly-funded research-related schemes.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the *Roadmap* promulgated by EDB in July 2015, the minimum student enrolment number required will be confirmed by EDB before the IR commences (Footnote 3 of Annex B).

# 1. Purposes of an IR

- 1.1 This IR for Private University Title is a holistic assessment of overall institutional effectiveness, with particular emphasis on:
- (a) whether an institution has effectively managed its performance in order to achieve its mission and objectives and has assured the quality of its educational provision over an extended period of time<sup>3</sup>, with regard to the roles of the institution in the Hong Kong education sector; and
  - (b) whether the institution has put in place a well-managed academic environment, embracing all members of staff, guided by carefully formulated academic development, staffing and resource plans implemented with systematic and transparent processes and successful outcomes.
- 1.2 The assessment of institutions to achieve these purposes will be based on five standards which are presented in Section 4 of this Manual.

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<sup>3</sup> An extended period of time typically covers a period of four to five years.

## 2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The scope of an IR is defined by the terms of reference as agreed between an institution and HKCAAVQ, stipulated in the service agreement to be signed by both parties. The terms of reference are:

- (a) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 1150) for the institution to assess (i) the institutional effectiveness in achieving its missions and objectives and assuring the quality of its educational provision; and (ii) whether the institution has put in place a well-managed academic environment with implemented systematic and transparent processes and successful outcomes, so as to meet the IR standards underpinned by the requirements as laid down in the *Roadmap for Becoming a Private University*; and
- (b) To issue to the institution an Accreditation Report in the form of an Institutional Review Report in regard to (a) above.

## 3. Guiding Principles

3.1 HKCAAVQ applies the following guiding principles in conducting the IR.

- Peer review
- Evidence based
- Fitness of purpose
- Fitness for purpose
- Threshold standard
- Transparency
- Avoidance of conflict of interest situations
- Confidentiality of information
- Respecting academic autonomy

3.2 Peer review

The principle of ‘peer review’ is implemented through the engagement of a panel of academic / professional experts who have expertise and/or experience in institutional governance / management and/or quality assurance of institutions. The role of the IR panel is to review and evaluate evidence to assess the capability and capacity of the institution, and form a judgment in respect of the standards set out in the *IR Manual*. Details of the roles and responsibilities of panel members in an IR are listed in **Appendix 1**.

3.3 Evidence based

The IR process is ‘evidence based’. This means that the IR panel conducts the review and forms a judgment with reference to evidence provided by institutions to support their claims that they meet the standards required of a university.

3.4 Fitness of purpose

‘Fitness of purpose’ means that the IR panel will consider the role of an institution in the higher education sector in Hong Kong in terms of its mission / objective and philosophy and how the institution addresses the needs of the community.

3.5 Fitness for purpose

‘Fitness for purpose’ means that institutions are reviewed against the IR standards based on their institutional aims and objectives. As institutions are different in size and complexity of their operations, the IR process will take these differences into account.

3.6 Threshold standard

The IR is conducted based on ‘threshold standard’, which means that an institution must demonstrate that it has effectively managed its performance to achieve its mission and objectives and has assured

the quality of its educational provision, and has put in place a well-managed academic environment with implemented systematic and transparent processes and successful outcomes, so as to meet the IR standards underpinned by the requirements as laid down in the *Roadmap*.

### 3.7 Transparency

The IR is conducted through a 'transparent' approach. An institution should provide full disclosure of information so that both the panel and the institution will have a common understanding of the relevant issues in the review. Throughout the IR process, the institution will have opportunities to respond to the panel's questions / concerns.

### 3.8 Avoidance of conflict of interest situations

Panel members are required to abide by the *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels* to avoid conflict of interest situations. The implementation of the *Code* is supported by a dual procedure for checking of potential conflict of interests. Prior to the confirmation of panel membership, both the potential panel members and the institution are asked to declare if potential panel members have any potential conflict of interests in regard to their participation in a particular IR exercise. An institution may raise objections to the participation of potential panel members based on potential conflicts of interest supported by reasons. HKCAAVQ will carefully consider the rationale for the objection, although the final decision on panel membership rests with HKCAAVQ. The *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels* is in **Appendix 2**.

The *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels* lists some examples of potential conflict of interests, including (i) the panel member was / is serving, with or without pay, as an adviser, examiner, or consultant to the institution; (ii) the panel member has other close association / partnership with the institution. Under the guiding principle of 'peer review', the involvement of panel members from local institutions that offer similar programmes is not a conflict of interests.

### 3.9 Confidentiality of information

All parties involved in the IR shall treat as proprietary and confidential any information or material made available to them either through HKCAAVQ or the institution if the information is not in the public domain. Such a duty of confidentiality is specified in the *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels* which the panel members agree to abide by. Apart from panel members, participants in the site visit such as representatives of the institution and observers must not disclose the facts gathered and views discussed with the panel during the site visit.

### 3.10 Respecting academic autonomy

The IR is conducted with due respect to the academic autonomy, identity and integrity of institutions. Institutions have the autonomy to set their own direction, identify goals, and develop objectives of the institutions as well as their educational provision and research activities, as long as they are commensurate with the standards expected of a university.

## 4. Standards for Institutional Review

4.1 This IR for Private University Title is a holistic assessment of overall institutional effectiveness. Effective institutional management requires rigorous development and monitoring of institutional plans, policies and processes, and as a result of reviews of the outcomes achieved, identification and implementation of necessary improvements. The assessment is based on five standards:

1. Governance and management
2. Academic environment
3. Financial sustainability
4. Research and scholarship
5. Quality assurance

The development of these standards was largely guided by the *Roadmap*. A context statement is included for each standard to illustrate how a standard contributes to the overall assessment of an institution's ability to manage its own performance and effectiveness in doing so.

4.2 To demonstrate how a particular standard is and will continue to be met, an institution is required to provide evidence that it regularly and systematically analyses its outcomes, including learning outcomes, takes appropriate improvement actions, and allocates sufficient resources to ensure effective management of its operations and enhancement of quality. The lists of possible evidence provided under the standards are examples only of how the effectiveness of institutional operations and the outcomes achieved can be demonstrated. In recognition of the diversity of institutions which are eligible to undertake an IR, there is no prescribed method of operation and hence it is likely that evidence provided by institutions will differ.

4.3 Each of the standards is supported by a set of criteria which sets out important expectations in relation to the corresponding standard. The criteria serve as guidance for institutions to consider whether the evidence provided is sufficient to demonstrate how a standard is met. No determination will be made against individual criterion. However, an institution must satisfy the eligibility requirements for private university title stipulated in the *Roadmap*.

4.4 The following lists the standards, the corresponding context statement, criteria, and some possible evidence to demonstrate how the standards are being met. Information about how to prepare the Institutional Submission and what to include in the Submission as a minimum is included in section 5.5.

## Standard 1: Governance and Management

The institution has demonstrated that its governance and management are effective in ensuring that the institution is operating sustainably towards accomplishing its mission, and accountable for the quality of its educational provision.

### Context

Governance of a university is typically divided between corporate governance and academic governance, together they provide the leadership for a university to achieve its mission, by setting directions, allocating resources, defining targets and reviewing performance. Following the directions set by the governing bodies, the management of a university applies the allocated resources to deliver the planned outcomes, and makes informed operational and strategic decisions.

### Possible evidence to demonstrate meeting the standard

- Evidence that a continuous, systematic and evidence-based approach has been adopted for institutional planning, development and performance management
- Evidence of using appropriate measures and data to determine whether institutional objectives have been achieved
- Evidence that relevant staff members understand their roles in the institutional planning process
- Evidence of obtaining external input in the planning and review process
- Evidence of active decision making at governing and management levels
- Evidence of assessment of risks and implementing corresponding risk control measures

### Criteria

- 1.1 The institution is expected to have a formally constituted governing body with independent external members. The governing body is unambiguously and collectively accountable for institutional activities, and makes final decisions on all matters within its remit.
- 1.2 All members of the governing body are expected to be fit and proper persons<sup>4</sup>. Collectively, they are expected to possess the necessary qualifications and experience for the governing body to discharge its functions. The institution is expected to have stipulated the selection criteria for appointment and maximum term of office. The institution is expected to have checks-and-balances in place between corporate and academic governance that provide clear separation of powers and membership. Induction should be provided to members of the governing body to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities, and are able to discharge their duties.
- 1.3 The governing body of the institution is expected to be an active policy-making group which is ultimately responsible for ensuring sufficient resources are available for viable and sustainable development of the institution, in accordance with its vision and mission.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Appendix 3 for *Fit and Proper Person Declaration*.

- 1.4 The institutional philosophy and mission are expected to be relevant in the context of Hong Kong. The governing body is expected to have approved a plan which sets out the institutional strategies, performance measures, and review mechanisms (as well as identification and management of risks), aligned with the stated objectives. The institutional plan is expected to be reviewed at least every five years.
- 1.5 The institution is expected to have operational plan(s) derived from the institutional plan. The institution should regularly review the operational plan(s) for effective implementation.
- 1.6 The institution is expected to have an academic board which is responsible for all academic activities of the institution, including the development and maintenance of outcome standards of its learning programmes and qualifications, research and scholarly activities, as well as setting standards for admission.
- 1.7 The institution is expected to have a management structure with appropriately delegated authorities and reporting mechanisms for effective implementation of the institutional plan.
- 1.8 The institution is expected to have a clear separation between the governance roles and the responsibilities of management.

## Standard 2: Academic Environment

The institution has established an effective academic environment with sustainable academic leadership capable of translating institutional objectives into institutional and programme outcomes. The institution develops a physical and teaching/learning environment supported by research and scholarship to promote or support a learning experience which fosters and improves learning and student success.

### Context

Academic environment refers to the physical infrastructures, the contexts, and cultures in which students learn. Creating a positive academic environment is one of the key roles of academic leaders ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to teaching and learning, delivery mode, scholarship, industry collaboration and community interaction. A good academic environment encourages interactions between students and staff, intellectual inquiry, generation of ideas, and pursuit of academic excellence.

### Possible evidence to demonstrate meeting the standard

- Evidence of a long-term staffing plan which is effective in supporting institutional mission and objectives (qualifications of academic staff and their assigned duties, and planned / actual student-staff ratio should be used as part of the supporting evidence)
- Evidence of evaluation of effectiveness of staff appointment, promotion and development plans
- Evidence of advancement of discipline-specific or pedagogical knowledge or skills for academic staff
- Evidence of periodic review of student admission standards informed by outcome data such as progression rate, attrition rate and graduation rate
- Evidence of analysis that improvement actions taken in teaching, programme design, and student support in response to student performance in assessment have been effective
- Evidence of regular review of information provided to current / prospective students
- Evidence of periodic review of attainment of student learning outcomes and taking corresponding actions as a result
- Evidence of collaboration with industry or employers

### Criteria

- 2.1 It is expected that the institution has an adequate breadth of programmes currently in operation, covering programme areas in at least three different Areas of Study and Training at undergraduate level (i.e. QF Level 5), and with a minimum total student enrolment of 1,500 (full-time equivalent) at degree level for the past two consecutive years<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.2 It is expected that there is an academic plan, guided by the institutional philosophy or mission which can effectively drive future development of the learning programmes, and is informed by

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<sup>5</sup> Eligibility requirements stipulated in the *Roadmap*. The minimum student enrolment number required will be confirmed by EDB before the IR commences.

actual outcomes.

- 2.3 The institution is expected to have an adequate division of labour between academic board and programme leaders who are responsible for programme design, delivery, and review.
- 2.4 It is expected that there is a long-term staffing plan and structure which can ensure that there are sufficient appropriately qualified academic leaders to lead and support the design, delivery and review of the learning programmes.
- 2.5 It is expected that the admission criteria set by the institution are effective in selecting students whose abilities and goals are fit to achieve the learning outcomes of the programmes they are admitted to.
- 2.6 It is expected that the institution systematically monitors student progress, identifies students at risk and provides appropriate support.
- 2.7 It is expected that assessments set by the institution are effective for ensuring that graduates are suitably equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience, consistent with the objectives of its programmes in terms of learning outcomes.
- 2.8 It is expected the institution provides accurate and adequate information for prospective and enrolled students on all matters relating to their studies, particularly relating to credit, progression and assessment in learning programmes.
- 2.9 It is expected that the institution has policies and procedures in place and uses these for programme design, review and improvement, which are effective to ensure attainment of learning outcomes.
- 2.10 The institution is expected to have formed working relationships with relevant industry and employers in order to identify industry and employer requirements of graduates, and to provide opportunities for academic staff and students to engage with industry and employers.

### Standard 3: Financial Sustainability

The institution has demonstrated that the financial planning and management is effective and that financial resources are sufficient to sustain the quality of its current and planned educational provisions and to support continuous institutional development in accordance with institutional academic planning.

#### Context

Financial resources are essential for the delivery of quality learning programmes and continuous development of a university. Financial sustainability is an important consideration for financial planning, which is essential for ensuring that the necessary resources are / will be available to support long-term academic development and excellence.

#### Possible evidence to demonstrate meeting the standard

- Evidence of analysis of financial situation and forecasts supported by audited financial statements (three years), as well as internal and external audit reports
- Evidence of assessment of financial risks and implementing corresponding risk control measures
- Evidence of proper control of financial resources and their allocation
- Evidence of assessment of effectiveness of resource acquisition, planning and budgeting, to support institutional development

#### Criteria

- 3.1 The institution is expected to have a rolling five-year financial plan which is congruent with the academic plan, based on projections using realistic and evidence-based assumptions, with thorough consideration of relevant financial risks.
- 3.2 The financial model of the institution is expected to incorporate the notion of value for money with a view to obtaining maximum benefit from resources employed to deliver institutional outcomes, with sustainable academic excellence as the highest priority.
- 3.3 The institution is expected to have a financial management framework stipulating the policies and procedures for monitoring financial health using adequate measures to inform financial decisions.
- 3.4 The institution is expected to proactively review its utilisation of resources, including physical resources, and to demonstrate efficient allocation of sufficient financial resources to achieve its plans.
- 3.5 The institution is expected to have an appropriate level of liquidity and/or guarantee to cover the financial risks associated with the activities of the institution.

## Standard 4: Research and Scholarship

The institution has demonstrated that it systematically develops and supports its academic staff in pursuing research and/or scholarly activities to ensure they are up-to-date with the theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy of their disciplines or professions.

### Context

Conducting research and/or participation in scholarly activities are essential functions of a university. These are necessary for the discovery of discipline or pedagogical knowledge, or for addressing contemporary issues, with a view to informing the teaching and learning activities within the university. Research and scholarship play a vital role in staff and programme development contributing to both professional growth and teaching / learning quality.

### Possible evidence to demonstrate meeting the standard

- Evidence of measuring academic staff productivity in the scholarship of teaching and in discipline-specific research and scholarship
- Evidence of successful applications for funding from sources such as Research Endowment Fund and Innovation and Technology Fund
- Evidence of maintaining accurate and up-to-date records of research and scholarship activities contributing to the measures of research and scholarship productivity
- Evidence that the policies and procedure are effective in encouraging development of research and scholarship
- Evidence of industry collaboration or engagement

### Criteria

- 4.1 The institution is expected to have a research and scholarship plan which shows how these activities are aligned with the institution's vision and mission, supported by the necessary resources and strategies to achieve the planned outcomes at institutional level.
- 4.2 The institution is expected to have policies and procedures in place to encourage and support development of research and scholarship, which are communicated clearly to staff and/or students. This includes e.g. formal recognition in terms of promotion criteria, workload allocation and financial support.
- 4.3 The institution is expected to have a system designed to monitor the undertaking of research and scholarship activities, stipulating a high degree of integrity, accountability and responsibility. This policy is expected to be clearly communicated to anyone involved in research and scholarship activities.
- 4.4 The institution is expected to have policies related to ethical considerations in research.
- 4.5 It is expected that staff conducting or overseeing research have the necessary qualifications, research experience and skills.
- 4.6 The institution is expected to keep an accurate record of the research and scholarship activities conducted, or being conducted, which contribute to its management and monitoring of research and scholarship productivity.

## Standard 5: Quality Assurance

The institution has demonstrated that its quality assurance mechanisms are robust and effective in reviewing its performance and in driving continuous improvement to meet institutional objectives.

### Context

Quality assurance encompasses all evidence-based activities that are aimed at reviewing the effectiveness of the operation of a university. These are conducted regularly and as needed at institutional and programme levels, in order to ensure that the university is progressing towards its stated objectives, and to identify areas of improvement. Quality assurance needs to be regularly reviewed to assess its effectiveness.

### Possible evidence to demonstrate meeting the standard

- Evidence of effective implementation of the policies for maintaining quality of its activities and programmes at the outcome standards befitting the qualifications
- Evidence of institutional performance improvement driven by quality assurance, for achieving institutional objectives
- Evidence of developing a culture for assessing institutional effectiveness
- Evidence of collecting internal and external feedback for enhancement of quality of educational provisions
- Evidence of providing development opportunities to relevant staff members to learn about management of quality

### Criteria

- 5.1 The institution is expected to have a quality assurance framework which sets out clear policies and procedures to review and monitor the quality of its activities and standards of its learning programmes, including any collaboration with other parties. In particular, it is expected to include learning programme approval, monitoring and review.
- 5.2 The reviews at institutional and programme levels are expected to be conducted regularly or as needed to include views from stakeholders such as staff, students and employers. The reviews should also take into consideration other information such as external benchmarks.
- 5.3 The institution is expected to have developed appropriate measures, such as performance indicators, to evaluate effective implementation of its institutional plan and attainment of institutional and student outcomes.
- 5.4 Quality assurance decisions are expected to be informed by data including but not limited to student profile, attrition rate, graduation rate, as well as student / graduate and employer surveys. Where appropriate, trend analysis is expected to be performed to assist in highlighting areas of improvement.

## 5. The Review Process

- 5.1 There are three main stages of an IR exercise, namely Preparation, Site Visit and the Reporting. An indicative timeline is at **Appendix 4**.

### Preparation

#### Conducting Self-review

- 5.2 An institution is strongly recommended to complete a critical and comprehensive self-evaluation in preparation of the IR. The self-evaluation may either be a stand-alone evaluation or be based on the institution's on-going internal review activities. The self-evaluation should incorporate relevant information including qualitative data, quantitative data on student outcomes and stakeholders' feedback collected over an extended period of time. Its purpose is for the institution to assess the effectiveness of its operation in relation to the IR standards and criteria, and to identify strengths and areas of improvement / enhancement. The self-evaluation process is intended to help an institution assess its readiness for an IR and to prepare the Institutional Submission.

#### Initiating the Process

- 5.3 An institution that intends to undergo an IR process can indicate its intention through a written request to or through a meeting with HKCAAVQ. HKCAAVQ will liaise with the institution in determining the time schedule for the exercise, including the dates for submitting the Institutional Submission, the site visit and the completion of the IR Report to ensure to the degree possible that the time schedule will fit with the institution's own plans. The time schedule will take into account the need for the institution to conduct a self-review before the IR exercise. Early planning conducted by an institution helps ensure that the IR exercise can be conducted to support the institution's plans. Upon agreeing on the time schedule for the exercise, HKCAAVQ will issue a Service Agreement setting out the terms of reference, time schedule and fee for the exercise.

#### Briefing to Individual Institution

- 5.4 Prior to the preparation of the Institutional Submission and after submitting the signed Service Agreement to HKCAAVQ, representatives of each institution, normally senior management of the institution and their nominated staff such as the Faculty Deans, Head of Quality Assurance and other senior staff with planning and quality assurance responsibilities, are required to attend a briefing conducted by HKCAAVQ that covers, inter alia, the standards and criteria, the IR process, and addresses questions an institution may have about the IR. The purpose of the briefing is to ensure that the institution has a thorough understanding of the standards and criteria so that it can assess its own readiness to undertake the IR and prepare the Institutional Submission. It is anticipated that after attending the briefing, the institution will be able to prepare a quality Institutional Submission which is comprehensive, evaluative and self-contained with claims substantiated so as to minimise the need for the panel to raise questions for clarification or request for further information. HKCAAVQ will approach the institution to confirm the date of the briefing.

## Preparation for Institutional Submission

- 5.5 The outcome of the self-review is the Institutional Submission which provides the primary information required for the panel in the IR process. The institution is advised to follow the broad guidelines below to structure the Institutional Submission.

### **Part A: Main Submission**

The number of words should be limited to 10,000 words. The suggested structure of the Main Submission is:

**Introduction** – a brief introduction to the institution, such as its origin and milestones of its development, vision and mission statements, staff and student population and breadth of programmes.

Each chapter should include an evaluation of how the standard is met and will continue to be met, the main strengths and areas for improvement and how these will be addressed. This analysis should be supported by relevant evidence. Reference to the criteria which are provided for guidance can be made, but this is not a requirement as long as adequate evidence is provided that each standard is met.

**Chapter 1:** Governance and Management

**Chapter 2:** Academic Environment

**Chapter 3:** Financial Sustainability

**Chapter 4:** Research and Scholarship

**Chapter 5:** Quality Assurance

**Conclusion** – a summary of strengths and areas for improvement of the institution and the institution's readiness for IR.

### **Part B: Supplementary Materials**

- Supporting materials to substantiate the evaluation and outcomes presented in the Main Submission.
- Case studies – Case studies are a form of evidence. They are a narrative presentation of how plans, policies and processes have been implemented, outcomes reviewed and improvements made. The case studies are a means of presenting how effective institutional management is performed across the institution or in a particular part of it and they can refer to multiple standards. Each case study should be presented with a brief description explaining, as appropriate, the topic, the relevant plan, policy or process it refers to, methods of implementation, how it was reviewed, the outcomes achieved and improvements made, if any. It can be supported by a document trail, such as relevant meeting minutes, reports and plans.

## Forming the Panel

- 5.6 One of the guiding principles in the IR process is 'peer review'. HKCAAVQ engages academic / professional experts who have the expertise and/or experience in institutional governance / management and/or quality assurance of academic institutions to be members of the panel. The panel comprises a Panel Chair, Panel Members and the Panel Secretary. The major roles of Panel Chair are to lead the panel in the IR exercise, to chair the panel meetings, and to lead panel deliberation on the review findings for recommendation to HKCAAVQ. The Panel Secretary, who is a staff of HKCAAVQ acting as HKCAAVQ Case Officer, is also a Panel Member. The number of members of the panel (including the Panel Chair and Panel Secretary) is typically around eight. One of the panel members is a financial expert who has a particular responsibility to provide advice on the financial viability and sustainability of the institution under review.
- 5.7 HKCAAVQ identifies potential panel members from its Specialists Register. To ensure panel members have no conflict of interests in participating in the IR exercise, the institution is required to submit to HKCAAVQ the list of external advisors it has engaged so that these advisors will not be invited to serve on the panel. To encompass both international and local perspectives, the composition of the panel requires local specialists as well as specialists outside Hong Kong. For the purpose of soliciting a balanced input from local and international specialists, the panel is composed of an adequate number of local specialists and specialists outside Hong Kong. The composition of the panel seeks to ensure that panel members, both individually and as a group, have the right profile for the IR exercise in question. As explained in Section 3 of the *IR Manual*, specialists have to declare that there is no potential conflict of interests and confirm that they have read and agree to abide by the *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels* before the panel membership is confirmed.
- 5.8 HKCAAVQ then sends the list of potential panel members to the institution for checking of potential conflict of interest. Further details are provided in Section 3.8 of the *IR Manual*. After the institution has checked the conflict of interest of the potential panel members, HKCAAVQ confirms with the potential panel members their appointments to the exercise, and sends the confirmed panel membership list to the institution.

## Review of Institutional Submission by Panel

- 5.9 When the Institutional Submission is ready HKCAAVQ will send the Institutional Submission to the panel for review together with a list of documents including the *IR Manual*, terms of reference for the IR, and a briefing document to the panel. The panel will review the Institutional Submission, and then provide initial comments on the Institutional Submission. The initial comments consist of requests for clarification of particular parts of the Submission and/or requests for additional information or supporting documents. These comments are intended to help the institution understand the areas of concern of the panel and to prompt reflection and further thought before the site visit. Each panel member will send their initial comments to HKCAAVQ. The HKCAAVQ Case Officer will prepare a draft consolidated version of the initial comments for the panel's consideration at its initial meeting.

## Panel's Initial Meeting

- 5.10 About two to three months before the site visit, the panel will meet in a private session (initial meeting) in Hong Kong. The purposes of the initial meeting are to discuss the Institutional Submission, prepare

the initial comments to be sent to the institution, identify any further information to be provided by the institution, and formulate the tentative programme for the site visit (such as whom to interview and the sequence of meeting sessions) and other logistical matters. The initial meeting also provides an opportunity for the panel members to meet and to be further briefed about the review process and for international panel members to be briefed about the context for self-financed institutions in Hong Kong. After the initial meeting, the HKCAAVQ Case Officer will finalise the initial comments and send them to the institution.

### Preparation for Site Visit

- 5.11 The institution will be given approximately three weeks to prepare and submit a written response to the initial comments, including any additional information requested by the panel. Upon receipt of the written response, the HKCAAVQ Case Officer will send the response to the panel for their review before the site visit.
- 5.12 In consultation with the Panel Chair, the HKCAAVQ Case Officer will draft a visit programme that reflects the organisational structure and staffing of the institution. The visit programme is designed to enable the panel to pursue any relevant issues according to the standards and criteria comprising normally the following activities:
- Meetings with the board of governors, college council, committees and senior management of the institution, teaching and other relevant staff, students, graduates and external stakeholders;
  - Review of documentary evidence;
  - Tour of facilities;
  - Panel's private meetings, during which representatives of the institution are required to withdraw from the panel's meeting room;
  - Any other session(s) to be requested onsite at the discretion of the panel as and when deemed necessary; and
  - Exit meeting with the senior management of the institution to convey the broad observations made by the panel.

A specimen visit programme is at **Appendix 5**.

- 5.13 The institution will be asked to identify the participants in various sessions of the site visit. HKCAAVQ will determine the criteria for the selection of people to be interviewed, and the size of the interview groups to ensure an efficient and effective interaction with the panel. The institution is expected to cooperate with HKCAAVQ in the prescribed arrangements to ensure a smooth conduct of the site visit. As a general rule representatives of an institution are requested not to attend more than one session as specified by HKCAAVQ in the visit programme. It is possible that parallel sessions, i.e. meeting representatives of an institution at different venues concurrently, are arranged during the site visit. Optional sessions (call-back sessions) may be arranged if the panel considers it necessary to meet with selected personnel of the institution to further clarify areas of concern. At the end of the site visit, the panel will conduct an exit meeting with the senior management of the institution. The purpose of the exit meeting is to provide a general overview of the panel's preliminary observations to the institution.

## Panel's Pre-visit Meetings

- 5.14 Two pre-visit meetings will be held normally the day before the site visit: (i) a meeting between the HKCAAVQ Case Officer and the Panel Chair, and (ii) a meeting of the entire panel. The purposes of these meetings are to consider if the concerns of the panel are addressed in the response to the initial comments, identify the major issues for discussion at the site visit and decide on the division of labour among panel members. During the meetings, the HKCAAVQ Case Officer will also reiterate the importance of adhering to the guiding principles and procedure of an IR exercise.

## **Site Visit**

- 5.15 The site visit is a key part of the review process as it allows for interaction between the panel and relevant personnel from the institution, and other stakeholders such as students, graduates, employers, and external advisors of the institution and discussion about key aspects of the institution with respect to the requirements to be met by a private university. Typical issues to explore during the site visit would be those raised in the panel's initial comments and other issues relating to the evidence provided by the institution in meeting the standards of the IR.
- 5.16 During the site visit, panel members will work as a group to review any tabled documents, and consider and agree on discussion items. Being secretary and member, the HKCAAVQ Case Officer assists the panel to understand relevant policies, local educational system and development, and any special features of the IR.
- 5.17 Where issues of serious concern which may have a bearing on the outcome of the IR exercise are identified, the panel will ensure that these concerns have been raised with the appropriate personnel of the institution and they have been given an opportunity to respond to these issues during the site visit. This approach seeks to ensure that the outcome of the exercise comes as no surprise to the institution at the end of the site visit. The panel may ask for additional evidence in the course of the site visit to clarify or support particular statements made in the submission document or in the discussions at the site visit. The end of the site visit marks the start of the reporting phase and means that the evidence collection has come to an end. The panel makes its judgment based on the evidence provided by an institution.
- 5.18 Other than panel members, observers may be invited to attend the site visit subject to no objection raised by the institution. HKCAAVQ staff, HKCAAVQ Council members, representatives of EDB, and staff members of sister quality assurance agencies under Memorandum of Understanding arrangements may attend site visits for the purposes of staff development, quality assurance and understanding the prevailing review process. Observers other than HKCAAVQ staff sign a formal declaration of any conflict of interests with institutions and they are subject to the *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels*. As observers are not panel members, they will not take part in the panel's deliberation process and will not participate in discussions during meeting sessions with representatives of the institution. The *Guidelines on Observers of Accreditation Exercises* are in **Appendix 6**. As mentioned in the above *Guidelines*, there should be no more than one external observer per on-site accreditation visit unless specifically approved by HKCAAVQ.

- 5.19 The day following the end of the site visit, an optional meeting of the panel may be organised if the panel considers that further discussion of the outcome of the IR or a preliminary discussion on the IR Report is needed.

## Reporting

- 5.20 The outcome of the IR will be presented in an IR Report issued by HKCAAVQ. The rationale for the panel's recommendation together with the supporting evidence obtained by the panel throughout the IR process will have to be documented in the IR Report. The IR Report also includes HKCAAVQ's determination as to whether the institution meets the IR standards after consideration of the panel's recommendation.
- 5.21 The HKCAAVQ Case Officer is responsible for drafting the IR Report taking into account, inter alia, the Institutional Submission, supplementary materials examined before and during the site visit, and information collected during the meetings at the site visit. The panel's comments on the draft IR Report will be sought to ensure their findings are accurately articulated in the IR Report, after which HKCAAVQ will decide whether it accepts the panel's recommendation.
- 5.22 The draft IR Report will be forwarded to the institution for comment on factual accuracy. The institution may propose amendments to the draft IR Report if the factual contents of the draft IR Report are inaccurate. The HKCAAVQ Case Officer will make necessary amendments in consultation with the panel. Upon confirmation on the factual accuracy, approval of the IR Report by Executive Director of HKCAAVQ will be sought before it is issued to the institution.
- 5.23 After the IR exercise is completed, the institution can follow the relevant procedure prescribed by EDB to make an application for university title to the CE in Council via EDB. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the institution to provide further information or clarification as requested by EDB in support of the application for university title.
- 5.24 In cases where the outcome of the IR is non-approval, an institution may submit another IR application to HKCAAVQ one year after the issuance of the IR Report.

## 6. Annual Reporting

### Purpose

- 6.1 A private university is required to submit an annual progress report together with an audited financial report to EDB. These annual reports are intended to provide an assessment of institutional outcomes, based as a minimum on an analysis of the baseline information described below. Annual reporting is a means for a private university to demonstrate its effectiveness in managing its performance through regular analysis of outcomes achieved, potential risks, and allocation of appropriate resources to drive continuous improvement.

### Process

- 6.2 HKCAAVQ has been commissioned by EDB to review the annual reports of private universities, and provide independent expert advice to EDB. The annual reporting period follows the financial year in Hong Kong, i.e. April to March. A private university is required to submit its annual progress report and audited financial report to EDB by 30 November each year, i.e. 8 months after the completion of the financial reporting period.
- 6.3 Upon receipt of the annual reports from EDB, HKCAAVQ may engage specialists in the assessment of annual reports submitted by a university. As a minimum a Finance and Corporate Governance Expert will be involved in reviewing the financial information submitted by the university. Other specialist(s) may be engaged by HKCAAVQ in the assessment of annual reports where appropriate. HKCAAVQ may seek clarification and/or request further information from the university in the assessment process. Based on the information obtained, HKCAAVQ will submit to EDB the observations and findings. EDB will make decisions about any follow-up actions based on the review of annual reports.

### Preparation for annual reports

- 6.4 Private universities may have different objectives and their ability to achieve these objectives can be measured differently. Therefore, HKCAAVQ does not prescribe a common set of performance indicators for all institutions to report on. Instead, HKCAAVQ considers it important for a private university to include an analysis of its performance against measures developed for its own context, supported by baseline information described below, as well as any other relevant information, in the annual reports. Therefore private universities are encouraged to use their existing materials that reflect their regular quality assurance process and operation.

### Annual reporting requirements

- 6.5 The annual reports should as a minimum provide the following baseline information with analysis described below:

#### **(I) Baseline information requirements**

##### **A. Student data**

- Student load (FTE) and headcount per programme
- Number of students admitted at each level per programme

- Number of non-standard entries at each level per programme
- Number of applications and planned places per programme

**B. Staff data**

- Staff teaching load (FTE) and headcount of academic staff
- Profile of academic and programme leaders
- Update of research and scholarship activities per staff member

**C. Financial data**

- Audited financial report
- Management account

**D. Outcome data**

- Results of graduate destination survey (or similar instrument)
- Results of student survey (or similar instrument)
- Completion rate per programme
- Attrition rate at each level per programme

Templates for submission of annual reports and the relevant data will be available from HKCAAVQ for reference. However institutions are free to use the format the institution uses for internal purposes.

**(II) Analysis of data and follow-up plan**

A university should provide an analysis of the data required in (I) above, together with any planned or proposed follow-up actions arising from the analysis. Such analysis should be supported by evidence of a robust decision making process such as internal reports and meeting minutes (or their extracts) of major boards and committees showing deliberations on the above.

A university may also submit other data and information to support its analysis of institutional effectiveness, and demonstration of achievements in accordance with its strategic plan. A university should also provide revisions to major plans, such as strategic and academic plans, since the IR exercise / last annual reporting, if any.

**Timeline**

6.6 The following table outlines the major steps and estimated time for annual reporting:

Submission of annual reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A private university submits annual reports to EDB.</li> <li>• The date of submission is 30 November and the annual reports should cover the reporting period from April to March.</li> </ul>
Assessment of annual reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upon receipt of annual reports from EDB, HKCAAVQ may seek clarification and/or request further information from a private university.</li> <li>• HKCAAVQ may engage specialists in assessment of annual reports.</li> <li>• HKCAAVQ submits to EDB the observations and findings no later than 3 months after the receipt of annual reports from EDB.</li> </ul>

## Enquiries

- 6.7 For enquires about the annual reports, please contact Principal Assistant Secretary (Further Education), Further Education Division, Education Bureau or email to [pasfe@edb.gov.hk](mailto:pasfe@edb.gov.hk).

## 7. Approach to Quality Assurance after Acquiring Private University Title

- 7.1 Subsequent to acquiring private university title, a self-financing post-secondary education institution shall continue to be registered under Cap 320 and be subject to the requirements under Cap. 320 as well as relevant accreditation requirements. A private university is required to continue meeting the IR standards after acquiring private university title.
- 7.2 Approved programme areas of the institution are subject to Periodic Review by HKCAAVQ. New programme areas are subject to programme area accreditation. Learning programmes which do not fall within an approved scope of a programme area at the specified QF level(s) or below are subject to LPA or re-LPA by HKCAAVQ in order for the qualifications of these learning programmes to be entered into the QR. Institutions seeking to offer degree programmes at QF levels not covered by their approved Initial Evaluation (IE) status are required to undertake the relevant IE, apart from going through LPA for the higher degree programmes. For details, please refer to the *Guidance Notes: Submission Guide for Initial Evaluation at QF Levels 6 and 7 for Degree-granting Operators* available on HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk>.

### Substantial Changes to Private University Status

- 7.3 Apart from being subject to these accreditation requirements, a private university is also responsible for informing EDB of any substantial change(s) to its private university status that might impact its competency to continue meeting the relevant IR standards before any change is implemented. EDB may seek HKCAAVQ's advice in assessing the substantial changes submitted. In case of doubt, the institution should consult EDB on the need for approval of a substantial change(s) as soon as is feasible, and prior to implementing any change(s). The assessment of substantial changes to private university status will be subject to a fee.
- 7.4 If HKCAAVQ identifies any issues that may have an impact on the IR status through its other quality assurance activities, HKCAAVQ may initiate a substantial change assessment. Should a situation occur where a private university is no longer competent to meet the IR standards, HKCAAVQ will review the IR status upon the request by EDB. Should it be necessary to vary or revoke the IR status, it may affect the private university status.

## 8. Feedback Collection from Stakeholders

- 8.1 HKCAAVQ strives to make continuous enhancement to its services. To this end, HKCAAVQ collects feedback from different stakeholders which use its accreditation services in an accreditation / review exercise, including the internal and external stakeholders of the institution, and the panel. Feedback is typically collected through the following means:
- Panel's opinion survey at the end of an accreditation / review exercise.
  - Annual survey of operators / institutions using the accreditation / review services.
  - Meetings with operators / institutions on various occasions, e.g. focused groups meetings and operators' / institutions' consultations, operators' / institutions' briefings, or meetings to clarify points made in the Accreditation / IR Report.
  - Online collection of public comments and suggestions through the HKCAAVQ website: <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/contact-us/comments-and-suggestions>.
- 8.2 Upon obtaining the feedback collected from stakeholders, HKCAAVQ will share the outcome of stakeholder surveys on its website.

## 9. Fee for Institutional Review

- 9.1 HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit self-financed body. HKCAAVQ's fee schedule is published on the HKCAAVQ website at [http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/files/services/accreditation/policies/Accreditation\\_Fees\\_e\\_20160314.pdf](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/files/services/accreditation/policies/Accreditation_Fees_e_20160314.pdf). The fee for an IR is per institution and will be set out in the Service Agreement to be signed between the institution and HKCAAVQ. Institutions will be able to seek funding support from EDB if they have successfully completed the IR exercise. With effect from 1 January 2016, the Accreditation Grant Scheme under the QF Fund provides grant to institutions that have successfully gone through the IR. The level of subsidy is 100% for non-profit-making providers and 50% for other providers. More information is available at <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/support/dss/index.html>.

## 10. Review of HKCAAVQ Determination

- 10.1 As provided in section 17A of Cap 1150, an institution which is aggrieved by a determination of HKCAAVQ as stated in an IR Report may apply to HKCAAVQ for a review of the relevant determination. All applications for review must be made on the designated Application Form and within 30 days of receipt of the IR Report. The review fee is one-third of the original fee for IR. Original payment evidence of the review fee must be submitted together with the completed Application Form, otherwise the review mechanism will not be initiated. The *Application Form for Review of Accreditation Determination and/or Decisions under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap 1150)* is available on HKCAAVQ website at [http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/files/services/accreditation/Application\\_Form\\_for\\_Review\\_under\\_Cap\\_1150\\_20160407.pdf](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/files/services/accreditation/Application_Form_for_Review_under_Cap_1150_20160407.pdf).
- 10.2 The processing of an application for a review is governed by sections 17B to 17D of Cap 1150. On receipt of an application for a review and the fees, HKCAAVQ shall establish a committee to conduct the review and make general recommendations to HKCAAVQ on any matters arising from the review. The members of a review committee shall consist of a chairman and not less than two and not more than six other persons appointed by HKCAAVQ. The members of a review committee shall be appointed from among persons who are suitable by reason of their expertise or experience in quality assurance or good standing in the field of education or training or in any industry. The review committee shall submit a report to HKCAAVQ which contains recommendations in respect of the relevant case and reasons for the recommendations. After receiving the report from the review committee, HKCAAVQ shall make a final decision to confirm, vary or reverse the determination under review or substitute any other determination for the determination under review. HKCAAVQ shall notify the institution in writing of the final decision and the reasons for the final decision.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Panel Members

1. Under the 'peer review' principle, decisions on review findings are made by HKCAAVQ after consideration of recommendations made by peers involved in the exercise as members of a panel.
2. The role of the panel is to review and evaluate evidence and form a judgment in respect of the standards of the IR. The panel works according to the principles set out within the relevant sections of HKCAAVQ *IR Manual for Private University Title* for the fulfillment of the Terms of Reference for the review exercise.
3. In order to perform their duties effectively and efficiently, panel members attend training and / or briefing session(s) and two panel meetings (i.e. initial meeting and pre-visit meeting), make themselves familiar with HKCAAVQ review requirements and processes, read thoroughly the Institutional Submission and materials supplied by the institutions, make initial comments on the Institutional Submission and other materials, participate in the site visit, share views and put forward recommendations to HKCAAVQ as a panel. Panel members are also expected to share their views on the draft IR Report.
4. The respective roles of the Panel Chair, the Panel Members and the Panel Secretary are outlined below:

#### Panel Chairperson

- To lead the panel in the review exercise.
- To advise on the site visit programme and adjust the programme as necessary.
- To chair the initial meeting of the panel, pre-visit meeting and any meetings of the panel.
- To provide overall guidance in order to satisfactorily complete the exercise.
- To lead panel deliberations of the review findings for recommendation to HKCAAVQ. When unavoidable, to put the matter to the vote; in the case of equality of votes, the Chairperson shall have a second vote.
- To assume overall authority over the accuracy and appropriateness of the IR Report, representing the view of the panel, before submitting it to HKCAAVQ for making decisions on review findings.
- To perform all other roles as panel member.

#### Panel Members

- To make preparation for the review exercise in good time.
- To follow the process set out in the HKCAAVQ *IR Manual for Private University Title* and *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels*.
- To provide observations and findings throughout the review exercise including but not limited to initial comments, participation in the full programme of the site visit, sharing of views during the panel meetings, and provide comments on the IR Report.
- To deliberate on the review outcome and make recommendation to HKCAAVQ.

## Panel Secretary (HKCAAVQ Case Officer)

- To be a member of the panel.
- To perform the following roles:
  - (i) To assist the panel to understand HKCAAVQ's review policies, standards, criteria and practices, local educational system and development, special features of the review exercise at hand, and any precedents that may be relevant to the exercise.
  - (ii) To provide professional support in the conduct of the review exercise, and preparation of IR Reports.

## Code of Conduct

5. The panel is subject to the code of conduct and compliance with confidentiality applicable to all HKCAAVQ Panel Members. Before finalisation of the panel, there is a checking of conflict of interest with the institution as declared in writing by potential panel members. For details, please refer to the *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels* in **Appendix 2**.

### HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels

#### Preamble

1. This document sets out general guiding principles for the Panel Chairs and members of HKCAAVQ panels conducting accreditation, audit, review or other assessment activities (hereafter referred to generally as accreditation activity) regarding possible conflict of interests, the duty of confidentiality and prevention of bribery.

#### Conflict of Interests

##### General Principles

2. HKCAAVQ Panel Chairs and members (hereafter referred to generally as panel members) may experience conflict of interests between their role(s) with HKCAAVQ and their other professional activities.
3. Panel members should advise HKCAAVQ of any possible conflict of interests which may arise either before, during or following the accreditation activity, and make full disclosure of their interests to HKCAAVQ at the earliest available opportunity.
4. If the conflict of interests issue is only identified in the course of their engagement in the accreditation activity, the panel member should immediately place such matter before the respective panel and seek instructions. Depending on the circumstance, he / she might be required by the panel to withdraw from the exercise or be excused from the discussion or decision-making of a particular subject matter. In some cases, where the conflict is slight or only perceivedly possible, the panel member may be allowed to continue in the panel's work but both the declaration and the reason for the special treatment must be on record.
5. It is however not intended that a panel member should make a declaration of interest simply because he or she has particular knowledge or experience on a subject matter.

##### Potential Conflict of Interest Situations

6. For illustration, the following are examples of potential conflict of interests:
  - (a) The panel member was / is serving, with or without pay, as an adviser, examiner, consultant to the client organisation concerned; or if he / she has recently been an applicant for a position (irrespective of whether the outcome is known to the applicant), or is a current applicant or intending applicant for a position in the client organisation.
  - (b) The panel member has any other close association / partnership with the client organisation concerned. Examples of such could include any joint commercial or professional activity carried out by the panel member in a personal capacity in conjunction with staff member(s) in the client

organisation concerned and who are closely associated with the accreditation activity in question, or any potential involvement of a similar nature.

- (c) The panel member who, as a barrister, solicitor, accountant or other professional adviser, has personally or otherwise advised or represented or had frequent dealings with the client organization concerned, or any person or body closely connected with the client organisation.
  - (d) Pecuniary interests in a matter under consideration by HKCAAVQ, held either by the panel member or by any close relative of his / hers.
  - (e) Kinship or some friendship which might be so close as to warrant declaration in order to avoid situation where an objective observer might believe that an advice from the panel member could have been influenced by the closeness of the association.
  - (f) Personal conflicts could also include animosity or any interest likely to lead an objective observer to believe that the panel member's advice might have been motivated by personal interest rather than a duty to give impartial advice.
7. Where the panel member is working in a client organisation that is in competition with one which is subject to the accreditation activity by HKCAAVQ, such situation will normally not be considered as to constitute a potential for conflict of interest, as long as the connection is known to HKCAAVQ, the panel and the client organisation concerned.
8. In order to avoid a conflict-of-interests situation arising, panel members are advised to abstain from accepting or negotiating consultancies or performing other services for the client organisation which is subject to the accreditation activity by HKCAAVQ, and to abstain from accepting hospitality from the organisation concerned, before, during and immediately after the accreditation activity until the relevant report has been issued.

## **Confidentiality of Documents**

### General Principles

- 9. All documents generated through the HKCAAVQ accreditation activities are confidential information and should be used solely for the purpose of the exercise concerned.
- 10. Panel Chairs or members shall treat as proprietary and confidential any information or material made available to them either through HKCAAVQ or the client organisation in question for the purpose of conducting the exercise concerned.
- 11. Panel members have a right to ask for (and receive) through HKCAAVQ any information and explanation they need in order to discharge their roles in the context of the accreditation activity. However, these privileges and rights must not be abused and must be exercised with care and integrity so that requests for personal or commercial information of a sensitive nature would be kept to the essential minimum.

12. The materials collected from the client organisation subject to the accreditation activity or the report produced by HKCAAVQ for the purpose of the exercise, and the copyright therein shall be and shall remain the exclusive property of HKCAAVQ or the client organisation concerned, as the case may be.
13. Panel members may make notes during the course of exercise in order to help them understand the issues being discussed and to facilitate the performance of their roles in the exercise as required by HKCAAVQ. These notes should not be divulged to any other party unrelated to the accreditation activity.
14. Panel members shall not communicate, or make known, any information or documents collected in the exercise or views expressed by another member or any person met in the course of the accreditation activity at any time without prior approval by HKCAAVQ.
15. Upon the completion of the exercise with the issuance of the HKCAAVQ accreditation report, panel members are expected to destroy all information gathered for the exercise, except for any information which is in the public domain.

### **Prevention of Bribery**

16. All HKCAAVQ Specialists / Accreditation Panel Members are invited to take note of the provisions of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap 201), which is applicable to HKCAAVQ. You are kindly reminded not to offer any advantage to HKCAAVQ staff in connection with your appointment as a specialist / panel member and serving as a panel member. You must not solicit or accept any advantage and/or entertainment from an operator in relation to an accreditation exercise that you are engaged in. Panel members should not participate in entertainment (e.g. lunch and dinner) offered by the operator during the course of the accreditation exercise or before the issuance of the relevant accreditation report.

### Fit and Proper Person Declaration

All members of the governing body of a private university are expected to be fit and proper persons in order to ensure the public of the suitability of the governing board members in exercising appropriate controls over the performance and operations of the university. Therefore, each member of the governing body must complete and sign a declaration.

The completed declarations should be submitted together with the Institutional Submission.

Name:			
Position / Title:			
Employing organisation: (if any)			
1. Have you ever been found by a court, statutory or regulatory body in Hong Kong or elsewhere to have acted fraudulently or dishonestly, or in violation of professional conduct?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
2. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence that involves fraud or dishonesty by any court in Hong Kong or elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
3. Are you prohibited by law or have you ever been disqualified from being a director of a body corporate in Hong Kong or elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
4. Have you ever been a director of a body corporate that has been wound up?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
5. Have you ever been bankrupt or are an undischarged bankrupt or are currently subject to bankruptcy proceedings in Hong Kong or elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	

If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions 1–5 above, please create a separate table for each question and provide further details below.

Question:	
Details:	

I declare that all the above information is, to the best of my knowledge, true and accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

### Indicative Timeline of IR Process

Indicative Timeframe (before / after site visit)	Action
9 to 12 months before	Institution conducts a self-review
8 months before	HKCAAVQ and Institution meet to determine the time schedule of the IR exercise
	Institution returns the signed service agreement to HKCAAVQ
7 months before	Institution attends a briefing conducted by HKCAAVQ
4 months before	Institution checks conflict of interest of potential panel members
	Institution submits Institutional Submission to HKCAAVQ
3 months before	Initial meeting of panel
	HKCAAVQ and Institution confirm visit programme and logistic arrangements
	Panel evaluates Institutional Submission and formulates initial comments
2 months before	HKCAAVQ Case Officer sends initial comments to Institution
1 month before	Institution responds to panel's initial comments on the Institutional Submission
<b>Site visit – Institution meets the Panel</b>	
1 day after	Meeting of panel on discussion of draft IR Report (optional)
8 weeks after	Internal clearance of HKCAAVQ on draft IR Report
	Panel comments on draft IR Report
10 weeks after	Institution checks factual accuracy of draft IR Report
12 weeks after	Internal clearance of HKCAAVQ on IR Report
14 weeks after	Institution receives IR Report from HKCAAVQ

**Note:** The IR conducted by HKCAAVQ is only one step in the application process. Subsequent to the issue of a successful IR Report the institution needs to prepare an application and submit it together with the IR Report to EDB. EDB will then submit the application of the institution, together with the IR Report, to the CE in Council, after which the CE in Council will consider the application of the institution for university title.

## Specimen Visit Programme

### Hong Kong ABC Institute Institutional Review for Private University Title

#### Visit Programme (Date)

Day One :  
Venue : To be provided by the Institute

Session	Time	Programme	Participants
1.	9:00 am	<i>Panel Private Meeting and review of tabled documents</i>	
2.	12:00 pm	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of the Board of Governors and College Council	
3.	12:45 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
4.	1:00 pm	<i>Panel Lunch</i>	
5.	2:30 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
6.	2:45 pm	Tour of facilities	
7.	3:30 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
8.	3:45 pm	Meeting with senior management including the President, Provost, Vice Presidents, and Associate Vice Presidents	
9.	4:30 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
10.	4:45 pm	Meeting with external Members of Academic Advisory Boards and External Programme Advisors and/or Assessors	
11.	5:30 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
12.	6:15 pm	End of Day One Programme	

End of Day One

## Specimen Visit Programme

### Hong Kong ABC Institute Institutional Review for Private University Title

#### Visit Programme (Date)

Day Two :  
Venue : To be provided by the Institute

Session	Time	Programme	Participants
13.	9:00 am	<i>Panel Private Meeting and review of tabled documents</i>	
14.	9:45 am	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of Academic Board and Chairman of its major committees (except committees on quality assurance and research)	
15.	10:30 am	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
16.	10:45 am	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of committees on quality assurance and research	
17.	11:30 am	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
18.	11:45 am	Meeting with heads of academic units of selected programmes / disciplines (i.e. Deans of Faculties or Heads of respective departments)	
19.	12:30 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
20.	12:45 pm	<i>Panel Lunch</i>	
21.	2:15 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
22.	2:30 pm	Meeting with representatives of teaching staff	
23.	3:15 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
24.	3:30 pm	Meeting with employers of graduates (may be arranged as parallel sessions)	
25.	4:15 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
26.	4:30 pm	Meeting with selected personnel (optional)	
27.	5:00 pm	<i>Panel Private meeting</i>	
28.	5:45 pm	End of Day Two Programme	

End of Day Two

## Specimen Visit Programme

### Hong Kong ABC Institute Institutional Review for Private University Title

#### Visit Programme (Date)

Day Three :  
Venue : To be provided by the Institute

Session	Time	Programme	Participants
29.	9:00 am	<i>Panel Private Meeting and review of tabled documents</i>	
30.	9:30 am	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of committees on finance, human resources and physical resources	
31.	10:15 am	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
32.	10:30 am	Meeting with the Registrar, Librarian and representatives from IT and units providing student support services	
33.	11:15 am	<i>Panel Private meeting</i>	
34.	11:30 am	Meeting with students and graduates (may be arranged as parallel sessions)	
35.	12:15 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
36.	12:30 pm	<i>Panel Lunch</i>	
37.	2:00 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
38.	2:15 pm	Meeting with selected personnel (optional)	
39.	2:45 pm	<i>Panel Private Meeting</i>	
40.	5:45 pm	Exit Meeting with Senior Management* <i>(*Only broad observations will be given.)</i>	
41.	6:00 pm	End of Visit – Depart from the Institute	

**End of Site Visit**

## Guidelines on Observers of Accreditation Exercises

### 1. Status of observers

- 1.1 HKCAAVQ welcomes interest in observing accreditation process and recognises its value in promoting transparency and increasing understanding of the work of HKCAAVQ.
- 1.2 Requests to observe accreditation visits may come from a variety of people, including staff of overseas agencies, overseas academics, prospective specialists, and Members of the HKCAAVQ Council. HKCAAVQ will attempt to meet these requests.
- 1.3 Observers may also be invited by HKCAAVQ to sit in accreditation visits for (a) staff development purposes for new HKCAAVQ staff members; (b) new Council Members to have experience of the prevailing accreditation process; (c) research studies in pilot exercises; and/or (d) staff members of sister QA agencies under MOU arrangement.
- 1.4 HKCAAVQ Council Members and staff members playing the role of observers are considered internal observers. Observers outside HKCAAVQ are considered external observers for the purpose of these Guidelines.
- 1.5 Heads / Acting Heads of Accreditation Units or Directorate Members will attend all or part of an on-site accreditation visit for quality assurance purposes. They are not considered as 'observers' and are not bound by this set of Guidelines.

### 2. Policy

- 2.1 The key principles which guide HKCAAVQ in agreeing to engage observers are:
  - (a) whether the engagement meets one or more of the stipulated purposes;
  - (b) the integrity of the accreditation process;
  - (c) minimal inconvenience to the panel and operator; and
  - (d) no more than one external observer per on-site accreditation visit unless specifically approved by HKCAAVQ.
- 2.2 Observers who are HKCAAVQ staff members will be assigned by relevant Heads of the Accreditation Units. All other observers will normally be approved by the HKCAAVQ Directorate in consultation with the relevant Heads of the Accreditation Units.
- 2.3 Observers will be subject to the same *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels*, including the requirement for confidentiality. Observers other than HKCAAVQ staff and Council members are required to formally declare that they have no conflict of interest with the operator and, furthermore, would not be able to act as an observer if the operator raised a valid evidence-based objection to their

presence.

- 2.4 External observers from outside Hong Kong will be responsible for the cost of their accommodation and travel, but HKCAAVQ will normally meet the cost of meals and refreshments during the site visit.

### 3. Rules governing Observers

- 3.1 The following rules apply to observers for the observation of an accreditation visit:

- (a) In accordance with the *HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels*, the observers, other than staff or Council members of HKCAAVQ, will be requested to declare conflict of interest. External observers will also provide HKCAAVQ with a photograph and short biographical statement of themselves for the information of panel members and for checking of conflict of interest with the operator concerned.
- (b) Observers will receive relevant accreditation documents from the HKCAAVQ Secretariat.
- (c) HKCAAVQ reserves the right to withhold other documents at its discretion on valid grounds.
- (d) Observers are not to participate in the discussion either at the panel private meetings or private meetings with representatives from the operator. Observers may, at the invitation of the Panel Chair and/or Panel Secretary, offer comments during private meetings of the panel.
- (e) Observers may not use any video, camera or voice recorder at any time during the site visit without prior approval from the Panel Secretary.
- (f) Observers, particular external observers, may be invited to give their views on the process of accreditation or other aspects of accreditation exercise to the Panel Secretary after the site visit.
- (g) External observers are required to sign a declaration confirming their understanding and acceptance of these procedures.