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

Guidance Notes on Initial Evaluation, Learning Programme Accreditation and Learning Programme Re-accreditation

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1. Introduction

1.1   These Guidance Notes contain the accreditation criteria and standards for Initial Evaluation (IE), Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA) of the Four-stage Quality Assurance (QA) Process. They give an overview of the timeframe and procedures of IE, LPA and re-LPA. These Guidance Notes also serve as reference for Accreditation Panels (Panel).

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Four-stage QA Process

1.2   Stage 1, Initial Evaluation (IE), is the means for HKCAAVQ to assess whether Operators have the capacity and capability to achieve their stated objectives, and to operate learning programmes that meet the stated Qualifications Framework (QF) standards.

1.3   Stage 2, Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA), is an accreditation exercise through which HKCAAVQ assesses whether the learning programmes meet the required standards to achieve the stated objectives, and deliver the intended learning outcomes that meet the QF standards. When a learning programme is successfully accredited, the qualification can be entered into the Qualifications Register (QR) for the approved validity period upon fulfilment of any conditions as determined by the QR Authority.

1.4   A combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 is the standard route for Operators without a prior IE status. To streamline procedures, both stages are conducted by the same Panel in a single exercise. Alternatively, Operators can choose to conduct Stage 1 and Stage 2 separately.

1.5   For Operators who have obtained an IE status separately, they must proceed to LPA before they can operate and enter the qualification of their learning programme into the QR.

1.6   Operators applying for IE must specify the QF level at which they intend to offer their learning programmes. An IE status at the approved level covers programmes at that level or lower. Operators are required to undertake another IE if their approved IE status does not cover the intended QF level of a programme submitted for LPA.

1.7   Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA) is the cyclical evaluation of an accredited learning programme to determine whether the learning programme continues to meet the stated objectives, and delivers the learning outcomes that meet the QF standards as determined at the previous LPA. Re-LPA focuses on changes, improvements and outcomes since the LPA or the last re-LPA. Operators are expected to demonstrate continuous improvement as a result of internal QA procedures over the validity period.

1.8   A Facilitation Phase (the "Preview Approach") has been incorporated into Stage 1 and Stage 2. The "Preview Approach" is designed to help Operators to familiarise themselves with the accreditation requirements. Please refer to the Annex for the details of the approach to the Facilitation Phase.

Differentiation Approach

1.9 In recognition of Operators' track records at both institutional and programme levels, accredited Operators with substantial track records of good performance applying for LPA / re-LPA may be eligible for differentiated accreditation approaches, such as (a) paper-based review accreditation, (b) customised accreditation or (c) variation in validity period or (d) some combination of the above. Upon analysis of data on their track records, Operators will be notified by HKCAAVQ if the differentiation approach is applicable in the accreditation exercise(s) concerned.

Self-evaluation and Accreditation Document

1.10 Operators applying for IE, LPA and/or re-LPA should submit an Accreditation Document based on their on-going internal review activities or a self-evaluation process that makes reference to the respective accreditation criteria and standards (see Section 2), and Submission Guides/Forms. The Submission Guides/Forms, which are available from HKCAAVQ website, indicate the possible sources of evidence to address the accreditation criteria. The self-evaluation process helps Operators assess their readiness for seeking accreditation and prepare their Accreditation Document.

1.11 It is important that Operators provide evidence to demonstrate they have met the respective accreditation criteria and standards. Sources of evidence should also cover measures adopted by Operators which assure the quality of the student/learner learning experience. The responsibility for providing appropriate evidence lies with the Operators. In preparing evidence, the emphasis should be put on its quality and relevance, not the amount. The sources of evidence listed in the Submission Guides/Forms are for reference, and are not meant to be exhaustive. As Operators are diverse in nature and operational mode, it is likely that evidence will differ.

Eligibility for Offering Degree Programmes

1.12 Degree-granting Operators seeking to offer degree programmes at QF levels not covered by their approved IE status are required to undertake another IE, apart from going through LPA for the higher degree programmes. Operators must demonstrate through their track record against the relevant accreditation criteria and standards that their capacity and capability in offering Bachelor's or Master's degree programmes before their application for accreditation of Master's (or Doctoral) degree programmes can be considered.

1.13 The *Submission Guide for Initial Evaluation at QF Levels 6 and 7 for Degree-granting Operators* indicates the possible sources of evidence to address the accreditation criteria and standards for IE at QF Levels 6 and 7.

Policies Promulgated by the Education Bureau (EDB)

1.14 Operators should make reference to the following policies when seeking accreditation:

QF Level	• The QF in Hong Kong is a 7-level hierarchy. The level of a programme/ qualification is determined in accordance with a set of Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) which specifies, in four domains, the outcome standards expected of the qualifications at each level. The four domains are: (a) Knowledge and Intellectual Skills; (b) Processes; (c) Application, Autonomy and Accountability; and (d) Communications, IT and Numeracy. (www.hkqf.gov.hk, click this *Web link* for further details)
QF Credit	• All programmes on the QR at QF Levels 1-4 are required to have QF credits by 1 January 2016. This includes all exit awards at Level 4 or below nested within degree programmes at Level 5. • The ratios of contact to self-study hours published in the *Operational Guidelines on Use of Credit* issued by EDB are only indicative. Operators are required to justify how the ratios they have adopted fit the needs of respective modules and programmes. (www.hkqf.gov.hk, click this *Web link* for further details)
Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)	• Operators should refer to the *Policy, Principles and Operational Guidelines for Credit Accumulation and Transfer under Qualifications Framework in Hong Kong* issued by EDB. • Arrangements for CAT form part of the admission policy of Operators and/or apply in regard to particular programmes. As part of the accreditation process, CAT arrangements are considered and noted in the accreditation report. (www.hkqf.gov.hk, click this *Web link* for further details)
Title of Programme/ Qualification	• Effective from 1 January 2016, all programmes at QF Levels 1 to 7 should adopt titles which conform to the requirement of Award Titles Scheme (ATS) before they can continue to be registered in QR. (www.hkqf.gov.hk, click this *Web link* for further details)
SCS-based / SGC-based Programme	• The structure and design of SCS-based/SGC-based programmes, that adopt the Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) formulated by various Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs or CITAC) or Specifications of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGCs) as the main basis for curriculum design, are governed by the principles stipulated under the Qualifications Guidelines (QG). (www.hkqf.gov.hk, click this *Web link* for further details)
Associate Degree/ Higher Diploma	• For programmes/ qualifications carrying the Associate Degree/ Higher Diploma titles, the *Revised Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes under the New Academic Structure* should be observed. (www.cspe.edu.hk, click this *Web link* for further details)

Graduate Profile	• Operators registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap 320) applying for LPA or re-LPA for a degree programme must submit a graduate profile. Other Operators are encouraged to provide the same information as a good practice. Please refer to the *Submission Guide for Learning Programme Accreditation/ Re-accreditation* for template for the graduate profile. (www.hkcaavq.edu.hk, click this *Web link for further details*)

Accreditation of Non-local Learning Programmes

1.15   Operators wishing to apply for accreditation of their non-local learning programmes should refer to the *Guidance Notes on Accreditation of Non-local Learning Programmes* available on HKCAAVQ's website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes.

2. Accreditation Criteria and Standards

2.1   To complete IE, LPA or re-LPA successfully, Operators have to demonstrate with supporting evidence that they meet the standards under the criteria specified below. The evidence should be presented in the Accreditation Document with supporting documentation, and through meetings and/or a site visit organised by HKCAAVQ with the Panel.

2.2   The Four-stage QA Process is student/learner-centred. Operators should demonstrate that they take into account the quality of students'/learners' learning experience in institution-wide and programme-specific activities.

2.3   The four criteria and standards for Initial Evaluation are specified below.

    (i)   Organisational Management

    Operators' management including structure and processes and quality assurance arrangements must be sufficient to manage their operations.

    (ii)   Financial and Physical Resources

    Operators must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their programmes.

    (iii)   Staffing and Staff Development

    Operators must have adequate teaching and support staff with the qualities, competence, qualifications and experience necessary for the effective delivery of their programmes.

    (iv)   Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)

    Operators must (i) develop learning programmes by addressing the needs of the community, employees and employers and aligning them with the GLD of QF; and (ii) monitor and review the performance of all their programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that the programmes remain current and valid and that the learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and student/learner assessments are effective.

2.4   The ten criteria and standards for LPA and re-LPA are specified below.

    (i)   Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes

    The learning outcomes should reflect the stated programme objectives, which are tested through assessment. The evidence from assessments must show that the QF level of the learning outcomes correspond to the GLD and other relevant documents.

(ii) Programme Content and Structure

The content and structure of the learning programmes must be up-to-date, and must be coherent, balanced and integrated to facilitate progression, to enable students/learners to achieve the stated learning outcomes and the required standards at the appropriate level in QF.

(iii) Admission Requirements and Student/Learner Selection

The minimum admission requirements for the programmes must be clearly outlined for students/learner and staff. These requirements and the student/learner selection processes must ensure that students/learners enrolling in the programmes have the knowledge and skills to be able to undertake the learning activities proposed in the programmes.

(iv) Teaching and Learning

The teaching and learning activities designed for the programmes must be effective in delivering the intended learning outcomes and programme content. A range of appropriate teaching methods must be employed to effectively engage students/learners in the learning process.

(v) Student/Learners Assessment

Assessments must support effective learning and enable students/learners to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and the required standards. The assessment methods and techniques used for the programmes must be valid, reliable, fair and sufficient to reflect the learning outcomes at the claimed QF levels.

(vi) Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes

Operators must have adequate teaching and support staff with the qualities, competence, qualifications and experience necessary for the effective programme management, planning, delivery and monitoring of their programmes. There must be adequate staff development scheme and activities to ensure that the teaching and support staff are kept updated for the quality delivery of the programmes.

(vii) Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes

Operators must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their programmes.

(viii) Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)

Operators must (i) develop learning programmes by addressing the needs of the

community, employees and employers and aligning them with the GLD of the QF; and (ii) monitor and review the performance of all their programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that the programmes remain current and valid and that the learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and student/learner assessments are effective.

(ix) **Workplace Attachment and Student/Learner Support Services**

Operators must provide students/learners with clear, accurate information and dependable access to workplace attachment and support services that give students/learners optimum opportunity for successful completion of the programme.

(x) **Student/Learners Records and Information Management**

Operators must have effective administration and management systems and procedures in place to ensure integrity, security, accuracy and currency of their record.

2.5 For a combined IE and LPA exercise (standard route), there are 11 accreditation criteria. Three common accreditation criteria, namely 'Staffing and Staff Development', 'Financial and Physical Resources' and 'Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)', are assessed at both institutional and programme levels.

3. Timeline and Process

3.1   It normally takes about 14 to 20 weeks to complete an IE and/or LPA or re-LPA after Operators have submitted their Accreditation Document. The time schedule will be specified in the Service Agreement signed by HKCAAVQ and the Operator.

3.2   The following table shows an indicative timeline of the main steps of an accreditation exercise.

Time		Main Steps
For QF Levels 1-3	**For QF Levels 4-7**	
Preparation Stage	Preparation Stage	**Attendance at Operators' Workshop** • New Operators are strongly encouraged to attend an Operators' Workshop. Operators who have attended workshops previously are encouraged to attend if they have not attended one recently or if there have been new developments. **Submission of Statement of Intent** • An Operator indicates its intention to seek accreditation by submitting a Statement of Intent and the required attachments via the e-Portal. **Facilitation Phase** • Please refer to the Annex for the details of the Preview Approach to the Facilitation Phase. **Differentiation Approach** • Accredited Operators will be notified by HKCAAVQ if the differentiation approach is applicable in the accreditation exercise(s) concerned. **Signing of Service Agreement** • HKCAAVQ will issue a Service Agreement setting out the purpose, the time schedule and the fee for the exercise. After signing the Service Agreement and making payment of the initial/full accreditation fee, the Operator is required to submit the Accreditation Document on or before the date specified in the Service Agreement. **Preparation of Accreditation Document** • To prepare the Accreditation Document, the Operator is advised to conduct a self-evaluation making reference to the respective accreditation criteria and

		standards, and the respective Submission Guides/Forms. **Formation of Panel** • The Panel Members are nominated by HKCAAVQ and the appointment is confirmed after checking for conflict of interest with the Operator in writing.
Weeks 1-3	Weeks 1-4	**Submission and Initial Review of Accreditation Document** • Operators are required to submit the accreditation documents via HKCAAVQ's e-Portal. • The Panel reviews the Accreditation Document.
Weeks 4-7	Weeks 5-8	**Panel's initial comments and Operator's responses** • The Panel provides initial comments on the Accreditation Document and requests additional information as needed. • The Operator provides response to the Panel's initial comments. • Further information/clarification from the Operator may be needed.
Weeks 8-9	Weeks 9-10	**Site visit or meeting** • There will be a site visit conducted by the Panel or a meeting held at HKCAAVQ office between the Operator and the Panel. • The Panel will typically meet management representatives, other key staff and students/learners; and inspect facilities and examine records and other supporting documents. • There will be an exit meeting session with representatives of the Operator at the end of the site visit or meeting. The exit meeting will provide a general overview of the Panel's key observations. • There may be post-visit or post-meeting follow-up, if applicable.
Weeks 10-14	Weeks 11-19	**Reporting** • HKCAAVQ may issue an interim report to inform the Operator of the Panel's recommended outcome of the exercise. • HKCAAVQ finalises the accreditation report with consideration of the Panel's recommendations. HKCAAVQ makes the final determination. • HKCAAVQ sends the accreditation report to the Operator to check for factual accuracy.

End of Week 14-16	End of Week 20	**Notification of Outcome** • HKCAAVQ issues the accreditation report.
Up to 3 months from the specified fulfilment dates	Up to 3 months from the specified fulfilment dates	**Follow-up Actions** • If conditions (i.e. pre-conditions and/or requirements) and/or restrictions are stipulated in the accreditation report, the Operator must provide evidence of having fulfilled them by the specified deadlines. After considering the evidence HKCAAVQ may request further information or seek clarifications, if necessary. • If the Operator cannot fufil / comply with the conditions and/or restrictions within the allowable time period, HKCAAVQ may deem that the Operator and/or programme is no longer competent to achieve its objectives and the accreditation report may be varied or withdrawn. • HKCAAVQ will normally issue a notification letter on the fulfilment of conditions within 3 months from the specified deadlines.

4. Possible Outcomes

4.1 In its capacity of the Accreditation Authority provided for under the AAVQO (Cap 592) and the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap 1150), HKCAAVQ makes an accreditation determination after considering the Panel's recommendation(s) (taking into account the Terms of Reference of the accreditation exercise as specified in the signed Service Agreement) and the available evidence. The possible determinations of an accreditation exercise are:

> Approval
> Approval with conditions (pre-conditions and/or requirements) and/or restrictions
> Non-approval

Where approval is granted, a validity period will also be specified in the accreditation report. An IE has a validity period of two years. The validity period for LPA and re-LPA is linked to programme quality and programme duration. Under normal circumstances, the validity period is N + 1 years, where N is the programme duration.

4.2 Any pre-condition(s) that forms part of the determination must be fulfilled prior to the commencement of the validity period imposed on an IE, LPA or re-LPA status. Requirement(s) must be fulfilled by the stipulated deadline(s) within the validity period.

4.3 A recommendation forms part of the accreditation determination. It has a continuous improvement purpose and is directly related to the accreditation criteria and standards. It is non-binding in nature but Operators should explain if/how recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation or Periodic Review. Advice is an opinion of the Panel for the improvement of Operators and/or learning programmes. It provides for the sharing of good practice in education and training among peers. It is non-binding and Operators are not required to report follow-up actions taken, if any, to HKCAAVQ.

4.4 Restrictions form part of the accreditation determination, to be fulfilled by Operators by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period of the approved accreditation status. Operators' ability to fulfil the Restriction is dependent on actions taken by Third Parties.

4.5 Fulfilment of the condition(s) and compliance with restriction(s) are **mandatory for obtaining and maintaining a valid accreditation status**.

4.6 Operators shall ensure that they obtain all approvals and registrations necessary in order for them to operate the learning programme(s) and shall maintain and comply with the terms of all such approvals and registrations for the duration of the validity period. If it is stated in the programme aims / objectives or intended learning outcomes that a programme would lead to professional recognition, HKCAAVQ may impose a pre-condition or restriction to specify that the programme has to secure professional recognition before being granted the accreditation status and commencing operation. It is advisable for operators to liaise with HKCAAVQ and relevant professional bodies well ahead of time when planning for HKCAAVQ and professional accreditation, so as to ensure alignment between the two processes to the extent possible and avoid unnecessary delays in the offering of programmes.

4.7   A Statement of Accreditation Approval confirming the granting of the IE or LPA or re-LPA status to Operators is issued together with accreditation report when no pre-conditions are stipulated, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all of the pre-condition(s). In the latter case, the validity period will only start after satisfactory fulfilment of the pre-condition(s).

5. Follow-up before expiry of IE and LPA

5.1   Within the two-year validity period for IE, Operators must have at least one programme successfully accredited. Operators who will not have a current accredited programme on the QR after the end of the two-year validity period of their IE will need to apply for an extension of their IE status at least three months before the validity period expires. In other words, the IE status of Operators will lapse when the validity period of the last accredited programme has expired. In such case, Operators may submit an application for extension of IE status, explaining the reason for seeking extension and plans to offer accredited programme within the extended validity period. An extension of up to 2 years may be granted. Only one extension of IE status will normally be allowed. If Operators continue to gain successful LPA, their IE status will remain valid.

5.2   Operators should submit the Statement of Intent (SoI) for re-LPA **at least** **ten months** before the expiry date of the validity period of their learning programmes.

5.3   Accredited programmes with no student/learner commences the study during the validity period are not eligible for re-LPA.

5.4   If re-LPA is not completed by the expiry date, the accreditation status will automatically lapse and the corresponding qualifications of the learning programmes on the QR will be indicated as expired.

5.5   An operator that wishes to seek an extension of validity period for a learning programme, other than by re-accreditation, may only do so on the basis of unforeseen circumstances not within the control of the operator itself. Details are available in the *Policy on Extension of Learning Programme Validity Period* on HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

6. Points to Note

6.1   These Guidance Notes are by no means exhaustive. They should be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines on the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the Qualifications Framework* available on HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

6.2   These Guidance Notes supersede any previous guidance notes, other guidelines or handbook that HKCAAVQ or the former Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) has published or issued previously regarding Initial Evaluation and Learning Programme Accreditation.

6.3   As the QF evolves, these Guidance Notes will be revised from time to time. Whilst HKCAAVQ endeavours to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information contained in these Guidance Notes, HKCAAVQ reserves the right to delete, suspend or edit any information at any time at its absolute discretion without prior notice. To obtain the most up-to-date information, users should refer to the electronic version of these Guidance Notes on HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

6.4   For enquiries, please contact HKCAAVQ at info@hkcaavq.edu.hk, or by phone at (852) 3658 0000.

7. Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation Authority (AA)	HKCAAVQ specified in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAV`QO) (Cap 592) to accredit Operators and learning programmes for the purpose of entering their qualifications into the Qualifications Register (QR), for recognition under the Qualifications Framework (QF).
Accreditation Document	Prepared by the Operator to substantiate its claim of meeting the required standards when undertaking any stage(s) of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. For Operators acquiring accreditation status at QF level 3 or below, the document is presented in the Application Form available at HKCAAVQ website.
Accreditation Panel	A panel consisting of specialists with expertise in the relevant discipline/industry/quality assurance issues. It is formed to assess the Operator/learning programmes in each stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the guiding principle of 'peer review', with a HKCAAVQ staff member serving as the Panel Secretary.
Accreditation Report	A report issued by HKCAAVQ pursuant to section 5 of the AAVQO on completion of any stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process after conducting the relevant accreditation tests.
Accreditation Standards	The standards specified for the respective accreditation criteria, listed in the relevant sets of guidance notes on individual stage(s) of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process.
Advice	Advice is an opinion of the Panel for the improvement of Operators and/or learning programmes. It provides for the sharing of good practice in education and training among peers. It is non-binding and Operators are not required to report follow-up actions taken, if any, to HKCAAVQ.
Condition	A condition forms part of the accreditation determination(s), to be fulfilled by the Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status (pre-condition), or by a specified deadline(s) during the validity period (requirement).
Criteria	The elements for consideration in an accreditation exercise, as specified in the relevant set of guidance notes on individual stages of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. Each stage in the process has a specific purpose and therefore requires relevant evidence corresponding to the respective accreditation criteria and standards.
Facilitation Phase	The quality assurance process in IE, LPA and re-LPA that helps Operators to familiarise themselves with the accreditation requirements.

Four-stage Quality Assurance Process (the Process)	The Process is a quality assurance mechanism with four stages, i.e. *Initial Evaluation* (IE), *Learning Programme Accreditation* (LPA), *Programme Area Accreditation* (PAA) and *Periodic Review* (PR). It forms the means through which HKCAAVQ evaluates Operators and their learning programmes under the QF.
Initial Evaluation (IE)	The first stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. It assesses the institutional competency of Operators to effectively manage and provide adequate resources for the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of their learning programmes and educational services in order to meet their claimed objectives and QF standards.
Learning Programme	A programme of study or training defined by a curriculum (which may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements) that includes, where the context permits, any proposed programme of such studies or training.
Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)	The second stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. It evaluates a learning programme to ensure that the standards of the stated programme objectives are met, and learning outcomes are delivered commensurate with the claimed QF level of competency, with reference to the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD).
Learning Programme Re-accreditation (Re-LPA)	The cyclical re-evaluation of an accredited learning programme. It ascertains whether the learning programme continues to meet the standards of the claimed objectives, and delivers the learning outcomes commensurate with the claimed QF level of competency as determined at the preceding LPA.
Learning Outcome	The knowledge, skills and application ability attained by a student/learner as a result of completing the learning programme.
Operator	A person, school, institution, or 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.
Pre-condition	A pre-condition forms part of the accreditation determination, to be fulfilled by the Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status.
Qualification	A formal award given in recognition of the skills, knowledge and experience acquired by an individual upon the satisfactory completion of a learning programme that meets specified QF standards. It is granted on the basis of formal assessment. The award title should follow the policy laid down by the EDB (www.hkqf.gov.hk), and should not include a Statement of Attendance.

Qualifications Framework (QF)	A hierarchy of recognised qualifications in academic, vocational and continuing education as well as qualifications attained by individuals through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme in Hong Kong. It is characterised by three key features: **level**, which reflects the depth and complexity of learning leading to the qualification; **award title**, which reflects the nature, area of study and hierarchy of the qualification; and **credit**, which indicates the volume or size of learning leading to the qualification. There are seven levels in the QF.
Qualifications Framework Level	Under QF, each qualification is assigned a level to indicate its position in the hierarchy relative to others. The level of a qualification is determined in accordance with a set of GLD which specifies the outcome standards expected of the qualification at each level.
Qualifications Framework Standards	The skills, knowledge or experience acquired upon the completion of the learning programme that are commensurate with the requirements under the specified level of the QF.
Qualifications Register (QR)	The public face of the QF containing all qualifications that have been quality assured under the QF. HKCAAVQ is specified in Cap 592 as the QR Authority.
Qualifications Register Authority	HKCAAVQ specified in Part 2 of Schedule 1 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap 592) is responsible for maintaining the Qualifications Register (QR).
Recommendation	A recommendation forms part of the accreditation determination. It has a continuous improvement purpose and is directly related to the accreditation criteria and standards. It is non-binding in nature but Operators should explain if/how recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation or Periodic Review.
Requirement	A requirement forms part of the accreditation determination, to be fulfilled by Operators by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period of the approved accreditation status.
Restriction	A restriction forms part of the accreditation determination, to be fulfilled by Operators by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period of the approved accreditation status. The Operators' ability to fulfil the restriction is dependent on actions taken by Third Parties.
Service Agreement	A contract between HKCAAVQ and an Operator to undertake an accreditation exercise.
Site Visit	A visit to the Operator's learning centre/campus used for the purpose of delivering the learning programme(s) under study. This is an integral part of an accreditation exercise, conducted primarily to collect evidence for evaluating whether the accreditation criteria and standards are met.

Statement of Accreditation Approval	An official document issued by HKCAAVQ confirming the granting of accreditation status to an Operator. It is issued together with the accreditation report for approved cases, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all pre-condition(s) in cases for which pre-condition(s) are set.
Terms of Reference	The Terms of Reference set out the services that will be provided to an Operator, the fee and the conditions under which the services will be provided.
Track record	A record of performance of an Operator against relevant accreditation criteria and standards.
Validity Period	The period of time in which an approved accreditation status is effective as stipulated in the accreditation report. The validity period for Stage 1 IE is standardised as two years subject to conditions; the validity period for Stage 2 LPA and re-LPA is linked to programme quality and duration; and the validity period for Stage 3 PAA and Stage 4 PR is five years.

The Preview Approach to the Facilitation Phase

The purpose of the Preview Approach is to enhance Operators' awareness of the accreditation requirements and facilitate their preparation for the accreditation exercise. Both new and accredited Operators can apply for the preview of the accreditation documents (for academic programmes) / Submission Form (for vocational programmes). Some examples are:

- Operators applying for combined IE and LPA for the first time;
- Operators with valid IE status but applying for IE at a QF level higher than the approved level; and
- Operators applying for Learning Programme Accreditation for new programmes, if requested by Operators/HKCAAVQ.

Initial observations on the completeness and relevance of the submitted draft documents will be provided to Operators. No judgement is made on whether the Operators can meet the accreditation criteria and standards. The initial observations are independent from any judgement made by the Panel.

The following flow chart shows the main steps of the Preview Approach:

Action by Operator	Action by HKCAAVQ

Submit SoI and required documents via e-Portal

- (*for vocational programmes*) Fill in and submit the draft Submission Form (*excluding Appendices*)
- (*for academic programmes*) Operator to request for a preview of draft Accreditation Document

(*for academic programmes*)
- Meeting between HKCAAVQ and Operator to explain the Objectives and Work Model of Preview Approach (optional)
- Submit draft Accreditation Document

- Review the draft Accreditation Document (i.e. Submission Form and appendices for vocational programmes). Provide observations and feedback on the state of readiness of Operator for accreditation; Meet the Operator to provide clarification, if needed.

Proceed to Service Agreement?

NO → Revise & resubmit

YES → Issue Service Agreement

Returned signed Service Agreement

Form Panel

- Refer to the initial observations provided to refine their Accreditation Document. The final version of the Accreditation Document (i.e. Submission Form and appendices for vocational programmes) should be submitted to HKCAAVQ by the due date stated in the service agreement.