



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

**Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of  
Academic & Vocational Qualifications**

**Progress Report**

**INQAAHE External Review**

**September 2017**

## Introduction

Since the launch of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) and the introduction of the Four-stage Quality Assurance (QA) Process to underpin the integrity of the HKQF in 2008, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) has been continuously working in cooperation with its stakeholders to improve and refine its quality assurance approach. Not only is this improvement work based on stakeholder feedback and our own reflections on the quality of work, but it also makes reference to international good practices.

In early 2014 the Council considered it was time that we subjected ourselves to an external review to evaluate the effectiveness of HKCAAVQ's accreditation work in higher education against international standards. We expect that the exercise will enhance our international recognition and foster public understanding of the value of our work.

We chose the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education's (INQAAHE) *Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance* (GGP) as the relevant set of benchmarks. Following a critical self-review, we submitted a Self-review report which formed the basis for the review and assesses the extent to which we align with the GGP to a panel consisting of local and international experts in higher education and quality assurance (the Review Panel) in March 2015. In the Self-review report, we identified a number of recommendations for continuous improvement.

The Review Panel conducted a site visit at the HKCAAVQ office on 8-11 June 2015. An [External Review report](#) prepared by the Review Panel was provided to HKCAAVQ in July 2015. As presented in the External Review report, the Review Panel concluded that HKCAAVQ is substantially adhering to the GGP. The Review Panel made eight commendations and seven recommendations for HKCAAVQ's continuous improvement.

The External Review report was submitted to the INQAAHE Board, and the Board in October 2015 confirmed that HKCAAVQ comprehensively adheres to the GGP. HKCAAVQ's alignment with the GGP is valid for five years until 9 October 2020.

This progress report covers the following aspects:

- I. Progress on follow-up to External Review (*September 2015 - August 2017*) (pp.2-4)
- II. Progress on follow-up to HKCAAVQ's Self-review report (*September 2015 - August 2017*) (pp.5-8)

**I. Progress on follow-up to External Review (September 2015 - August 2017)**

Recommendation Made by the Review Panel	Status	Action(s) Taken by HKCAAVQ
<p>The Panel recommends that the Council of HKCAAVQ in the planned review of its schedule of delegations make explicit the powers which it reserves for itself as the governing body.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ has reviewed the Secretariat's delegation schedule. The revised schedule of delegations includes a preamble, which makes explicit the powers reserved for the Council.</p>
<p>The Panel recommends that HKCAAVQ vigorously pursue its exploration of alternative business models for the agency and continue to expand its revenue-based services such as consulting.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ continues to explore a range of alternative business models and business opportunities so as to extend fee-based activities and be responsive to any new market opportunities that may be available in the future. HKCAAVQ maintains a business model which seeks to identify and consider existing and new business opportunities.</p>
<p>The Panel recommends that HKCAAVQ maintain a strong focus on maintaining the quality and continuity of its Registrar and Assistant Registrar group to ensure continuing consistency of approach in the work of the agency.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>For continuity and consistency of approach in the work of HKCAAVQ, staff are given new roles such as deputy heads for a limited period of time, project managers to take up various development work, and team leaders to provide mentorship and coaching to colleagues. These new roles provide a training ground for staff to build up their capacity and experience for higher level responsibilities. In addition, in-house seminars on quality assurance are organised on a regular basis.</p> <p>With the funding granted under the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme, internal workshops were organised to enhance the competency of professional staff from 2015 to 2017.</p>

Recommendation Made by the Review Panel	Status	Action(s) Taken by HKCAAVQ
<p>The Panel recommends that HKCAAVQ establish mechanisms, such as an industry advisory committee, to augment current methods of ensuring operator input to the agency and facilitate two-way communication more generally.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ has set up two liaison panels, i.e. a Liaison Panel for Academic Accreditation (LPAA) and a Liaison Panel for Accreditation of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (LPAVPET). The purpose of the panels is to provide a platform for dialogue with senior executives of operators and the main stakeholders and to build ownership of quality of education and quality assurance. Information about the liaison panels is available on the HKCAAVQ website.</p>
<p>The Panel recommends that HKCAAVQ explore options which would allow more differentiation in how accreditation frameworks are applied to more mature operators with a solid track-record and also ways to lighten the documentation load for operators submitting multiple applications.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Based on the review of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process HKCAAVQ piloted facilitation approaches for accreditation between late 2013 and early 2015. With effect from July 2017, HKCAAVQ has introduced a differentiated approach for accreditation of operators based on their track record.</p> <p>HKCAAVQ has embarked on a review of the accreditation standards and criteria in 2016 and 2017 aiming to ensure that our accreditation criteria and standards are fit for purpose for our diverse range of operators.</p>
<p>The Panel recommends that HKCAAVQ establish protocols for release of revised or new documents to ensure that there is no ambiguity or confusion among stakeholders about the currency of requirements or documents.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ has strengthened the communication mechanism with stakeholders about timelines for the release of revised or new policy and process documents on the HKCAAVQ website. Details of the revision history such as Publication Date, Effective Date and Description of Changes are provided.</p>

Recommendation Made by the Review Panel	Status	Action(s) Taken by HKCAAVQ
<p>The Panel recommends that HKCAAVQ carefully monitor the growing interest among Hong Kong operators to provide programmes in Mainland China and anticipate both the role it might wish to play in ensuring the quality of what is provided offshore and any implications for the quality of provision in Hong Kong.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ does not have the authority to quality assure activities wholly offered outside of Hong Kong. According to section 4(2)(b) of Cap 1150, HKCAAVQ is required to seek permission from the Secretary for Education to perform functions outside of the territory. To meet the needs of Hong Kong operators wishing to offer programmes in mainland China, HKCAAVQ has developed an approach for non-QF accreditation of programmes operated in Mainland China.</p>

## II. Progress on follow-up to HKCAAVQ's Self-review Report (September 2015 - August 2017)

Recommendation Identified by HKCAAVQ	Status	Action(s) Taken by HKCAAVQ
<p>HKCAAVQ will continue to maintain transparency of its operations for enhanced public understanding of its work. As part of the refinements to the Four-stage QA Process, related guidelines, guidance notes and submission guides have been further revised. Consultation sessions were conducted in the first quarter of 2015 to gather feedback from stakeholders on these documents before they were published. Institutions will be further consulted on the publication of summary accreditation reports and on the possibility of publishing full accreditation reports and reports of other quality assurance activities.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ publishes summary reports of all kinds of accreditation exercises conducted under the Four-Stage Quality Assurance Process including non-local programmes.</p> <p>To further enhance the transparency, the two Liaison Panels (i.e. Liaison Panel for Academic Accreditation and Liaison Panel for Accreditation of Vocational and Professional Education and Training) were consulted in their meetings in August 2017 on the effectiveness of the publication of summary reports, and discussed approaches to publishing full accreditation reports.</p>
<p>To facilitate further exchange of information, HKCAAVQ will develop internet portals to provide a web interface for efficient communication and sharing of documents with institutions and Specialists. Good practices in quality assurance identified at QESS sponsored forums and workshops will be consolidated and incorporated into the internet portal called "knowledgebase", with a view to inspiring local institutions to enhance quality assurance capacity.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>HKCAAVQ's Quality Management System and an e-Portal have been in use since February 2015 and July 2016 respectively. Operators are now required to use the e-Portal to submit accreditation and assessment documents.</p> <p>The Quality Assurance Online Knowledgebase (QAOK) was launched in February 2017. As at September 2017, over 150 good practices including contributions from the Quality Assurance Council of UGC are contained in QAOK. A cumulative number of over 1,500 visits was recorded as at 31 July 2017. HKCAAVQ will continue to identify good practices from different sources and update the QAOK regularly.</p>

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<p>Educating the larger public on the nature and value of the work of HKCAAVQ as a QA agency remains a challenge. The Secretariat's <i>Communications Plan</i> is developed with this challenge in mind and will explore ways of more active engagement by various stakeholders in the long run.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Engagement Plan (previously the Communications Plan) is updated annually by the Secretariat's Engagement Unit with input from the relevant business units. The latest version includes a range of active engagement activities that are being pursued by the Secretariat. The HKCAAVQ website remains the main means of communication with stakeholders and a revised version will be available by early October 2017 aiming at more effectively meeting the needs of the users.</p>
<p>A QA body is expected to publish guidelines for institutions so that they are aware of the expectations and requirements to meet. As institutions mature the demand for flexibility in the application of the guidelines becomes stronger so that the needs of individual institutions can be met. One such example is a recent request for the extension of programme validity periods to align with the re-accreditation processes in order to save time and resources. HKCAAVQ considers such requests healthy but also challenging as they have to be resolved effectively taking into account the interests of all stakeholders concerned.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Since September 2015, seven new or updated policies have been put on the website to increase transparency, including the <i>Policy on Extension of Learning Programme Validity Period</i>, <i>Policy on Specialists Appointment and Management</i>, and <i>Policy and Guidelines on Observing Accreditation Site Visit</i>.</p> <p>Policy updates have since 2016 been included in the Newsletter. Such updates provide stakeholders with a quick reference to the most updated policies of HKCAAVQ. Since early 2017 emails have also been sent directly to operators to ensure they are informed about the latest policy updates.</p>
<p>Notwithstanding the above, it is necessary to continue to address the needs of operators given their varying sizes, maturity, and capabilities in conducting self-evaluation which impact on the quality of accreditation documents.</p> <p>In consultation with operators, it has also been</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The differentiated accreditation approach took effect in July 2017. Differentiation can include paper-based review, customised accreditation scope, and extended validity period.</p> <p>The Secretariat provides workshops to operators for enhancing the quality of their accreditation documents and their responses to the panel's initial comments as appropriate. Tailor-made</p>

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<p>decided that focus will be put on identifying means to ensure a higher degree of adequacy of the responses to initial comments in order to minimise the attention to evidence gathering during the site visit. This will enable Panels to have a more focused discussion with operators about the relevant areas of concern.</p>		<p>workshops can be organised to help operators reflect on issues arising from previous accreditation exercises and to enhance their understanding of the presentation of the accreditation documents.</p>
<p>HKCAAVQ sees the need for better linkage between academic accreditation and professional accreditation, while acknowledging that both HKCAAVQ and professional bodies do have their own set of accreditation parameters. During the past two years, HKCAAVQ has invited professional bodies and licensing authorities to share their experience in accreditation. These professional bodies include Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, Nursing Council of Hong Kong and Social Workers Registration Board. HKCAAVQ intends to further strengthen liaison with professional bodies, so that accreditation of programmes seeking recognition by both HKCAAVQ and professional bodies can be conducted more effectively. This process is expected to be complex and time consuming. Initially we will start to collaborate with professional bodies with whom accreditation most frequently intersects.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>We have noted that operators are increasingly feeling the burden of the need to undergo both HKCAAVQ accreditation and professional accreditation, in particular the added lead time arising from the need to seek professional accreditation only after having obtained HKCAAVQ accreditation.</p> <p>As such, since 2013, we have reached out to a number of professional bodies to share experience and discuss opportunities for cooperation. We are planning to take initiatives to formalise the relationship with targeted professional bodies.</p>
<p>As part of the succession planning, HKCAAVQ has been identifying new experts who have QA and/or accreditation experience and who have the requisite</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Since September 2015, the Secretariat has been stepping up effort to expand the pool of non-local Specialists by soliciting referrals from experienced panel members and overseas QA</p>



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calibre and leadership skills to be engaged as Panel Chairs in accreditation exercises. The existing pool of Specialists will be expanded by soliciting panel members' referral and inviting the case-specific invited panel members to serve as Specialists.		agencies.  With the use of the Quality Management System, the Secretariat is profiling the pool of Specialists regularly to ensure that the Specialists reflect the discipline areas in which operators seek accreditation.
Currently cases where the HKCAAVQ's determination deviates from the Panel's recommendation are not included in the regular reporting to QAC. To strengthen accountability, such cases and their justifications will be included in future reports to QAC. Furthermore, the process of notifying the Executive Director in the case of deviations will be formalised and will also include immediate notification of the Chair of QAC.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cases where the HKCAAVQ's determination deviates from the Panel's recommendation are included in the regular reporting to the Council.  The HKCAAVQ Secretariat's Delegation Schedule states that approval by the Executive Director and notification to Chair of Qualifications and Accreditation Committee are required in the event that the Panel's recommended outcome is not accepted in its entirety.
To follow up on the focus of re-accreditation, HKCAAVQ conducted a consultation session on the approach and tools for re-accreditation of NLPs in June 2014. When accreditation of NLPs was first introduced, the exercises were organised according to discipline. In future HKCAAVQ will explore opportunities for bundling re-accreditation exercises on the basis of granting bodies for operators with a good track record.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The percentage of combined exercises for non-local programmes (NLP) in 2015/16 is 64% and in 2016/17 is 50%. Based on the exercises planned for 2017/18, the percentage of combined exercises for NLP will be 66%. The introduction of the differentiated accreditation approach in July 2017 is also expected to further facilitate the bundling of the exercises.

HKCAAVQ  
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