



Submission Guide for Accreditation of Online Learning Programmes

.....

Notes to Operators

1. This Guide is designed to assist Operators to prepare Accreditation Documents for Initial Evaluation (IE) and/or Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) for provision of online learning programmes.
2. While the same set of accreditation criteria for IE and LPA under the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process are used to accredit online learning programmes, Operators are required to provide additional evidence applicable to the context of online learning delivery to demonstrate that requirements specific to the offering of programmes in an online delivery mode are met. If an Operator / a learning programme fails to provide relevant evidence to demonstrate that the online delivery mode can meet the accreditation criteria, the accreditation outcome will be non-approval.

Definition of online learning programmes

3. Online delivery is defined as delivery that is enhanced by the use of technology and is delivered through a digital learning platform to provide structured teaching, learning and assessment. Learning programmes with more than 50% of instruction delivered online will be accredited with reference to the additional evidence requirements.

Eligibility requirements

4. For a local institution/organisation that wish to apply for HKCAAVQ's accreditation service for its local online learning programme and qualifications, the institution/organisation must have been accredited by HKCAAVQ and have a valid Initial Evaluation status or a valid Institutional Review status and have a track record of at least one accredited programme.
5. A non-local online learning programme that leads to an award of a non-local qualification must be registered or exempted under Cap. 493 (Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance).
6. In the scenario that the non-local operator does not work with a local operator, sources of evidence specific to a partnership (e.g. contractual documents concerning the collaboration between the local and non-local Operators) do not apply.

7. To prepare the Accreditation Document, Operators are expected to conduct a self-evaluation making reference to the relevant accreditation criteria and standards, and the types of possible sources of evidence listed in this document.
8. This Guide only contains specific evidence required for accreditation of online learning programmes and should be read in conjunction with the relevant Submission Guides/Forms for local and non-local programmes for a complete understanding of evidence to be provided.

Part I General Information

Section 1 Overview of the Operator

Information specific to Operators offering programmes involving online delivery:

- Location(s) of the registered server(s) hosting the online learning platform
- Reasons for choosing online delivery for the programme(s) and the relevant experience in online education of the Operator

Note: For learning programmes with no face-to-face component, address of teaching venue(s) may not be applicable

Part II Accreditation Criteria for Initial Evaluation

Accreditation Criteria	Evidence Specific to Operators Offering Programmes Involving Online Delivery
1. Organisational Management	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>Operators’ management including structure and processes and quality assurance arrangements must be sufficient to manage their operations.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>(a) Institutional Strategy and Authority to Establish the Collaboration Each partner to the collaboration must make collaborative provision a matter of institutional policy, and must have taken the decision to contract through a properly authorised body within the governance and management structure of the institution, with the authority to commit the necessary resources.</p> <p>(b) Accreditation Status of the Non-local Operator The non-local Operator should be fully authorised to operate in the country in which it is based, and the terms of its accreditation should permit (or not prohibit) its participation in collaborative provision with a partner outside its own country as well as to award qualifications.</p> <p>(c) Contractual Considerations There should be a written and legally binding agreement setting out the rights and obligations of the non-local Operator and the local Operator. The agreement must cover those matters that are the responsibilities of each Operator and the specific matters relating to the delivery of each learning programme offered through the collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Documents showing the Operator has complied with the statutory requirements, if any for online learning provision in its country of origin ❑ Strategic plans which include a vision for providing quality online education ❑ Documents showing the commitment of the institution(s) in developing and maintaining an online learning platform that supports effective online delivery, which include measures to ensure accessibility, reliability and security of the online platform as well as the necessary measures for verifying students’ identity and tracking the progress of their learning ❑ Institutional policies for the award of QF/academic credit for online learning modules ❑ Documents setting out the role, responsibilities and processes for managing the operation of the I.T. infrastructure necessary for online delivery ❑ Code of practice/guidelines in managing the risks specific to online programmes ❑ A contingency plan for delivery in the event of the failure of the main delivery system ❑ (for NLP Operators only) Authorisation granted to the non-local Operator to award qualifications in and outside the home country and to operate online programmes in and outside the home country, if different from the above

<p>(d) Policy and Operational Framework There should be a clear, written statement of responsibility for taking policy and operational decisions concerning the learning programmes covered by the collaboration. Being the awarding authority of the non-local qualification, the non-local Operator should assume overall responsibility of the academic standards and quality control of the non-local learning programme. The policy and operational framework specific to the partnership should be integrated and effective to ensure the delivery of high quality educational services to students.</p> <p>(e) Assessment and Management of Risk There should be a full assessment of risks to the learning programmes offered through the collaboration, with appropriate and realistic plans to manage risk, and contingency arrangements to protect student interests in the event of the termination of the collaboration.</p>	
<p>2. Financial and Physical Resources</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>Operators must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their programmes.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The collaboration should have an adequate financial and physical resource base to support its learning programme(s) at an acceptable level of quality on a continuing basis including provision of classrooms, laboratory, library, IT and other teaching and learning facilities.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Institutional budgets reflecting investment in online infrastructure and/or systems in the next three years</p>

3. Staffing and Staff Development	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>Operators must have adequate teaching and support staff with the qualities, competence, qualifications and experience necessary for the effective delivery of their programmes.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>(a) Staffing The partnership has policies which are effective in ensuring the availability of an adequate number of staff with the appropriate expertise, experience and competency to teach the learning programmes covered by the collaboration.</p> <p>(b) Staff Development There should be effective policies to provide appropriate and sufficient opportunities for teaching staff to enhance their pedagogical skills and subject knowledge and be familiar with the academic ethos of the non-local learning partner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Roles and responsibilities of management, academic and support staff in online learning provision <input type="checkbox"/> Competences required for key staff members involved in the design and development of the online components of the programmes <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional policies and plan for formal staff training and professional development for online delivery of learning programme(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development budgets related to online education provision <input type="checkbox"/> Policies which recognise excellence in teaching and learning in online settings
4. Quality Assurance	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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 assessments are effective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Documents showing how data/information collected from learning analytics tools are utilised to monitor and review students' achievement as well as identify measures to enhance the effectiveness of the online delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional policies to safeguard the quality of online learning environment, e.g. security policy, student privacy and copyright or IP of online learning materials

For Non-local Operators:

There must be an appropriate and effective quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality of the collaboration. There must be effective integration of the quality mechanisms of the partners, with a clear delineation of the responsibilities of each, particularly with respect to programme development and management, and the authority to contextualise and make changes to learning programmes. The partnership must demonstrate competency to operate the non-local learning programme under collaboration meeting the HKQF standards and that required of by the Hong Kong education system. It must be committed to the provision of accurate, current and complete information to the public and students at policy level.

Part III Accreditation Criteria for Learning Programme Accreditation

Accreditation Criteria	Evidence Specific to Programmes Involving Online Delivery
1. Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The learning outcomes must reflect the stated programme objectives and the objectives should be fit for purpose in the local context. The HKQF level of the learning outcomes must correspond to the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Hong Kong SAR Government for the purpose of the HKQF.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Benchmarking with similar internal and/or external programmes (campus-based) to ensure comparability of programme learning outcomes*</p> <p>*<u>Note:</u> If the online learning programme has an equivalent campus-based programme leading to the same award, the programme objectives and learning outcomes and constituent modules should be identical. Any divergence must be explained.</p>
2. Programme Content and Structure	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>The content and structure of the learning programmes must be up-to-date, and must be coherent, balanced and integrated to facilitate progression and enable students/learners to achieve the stated learning outcomes and the required standards at the appropriate level in QF.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The content and structure of the learning programmes must be coherent, integrated and effective in enabling students to achieve the stated</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Policies for the award of QF/academic credit for online learning modules</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individualised (self-paced) online contents to allow students to progress at their own pace</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum design and individualised contents demonstrating flexibility of allowing students to progress at their own pace</p>

<p>learning outcomes and the required standards. The learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessments must be coherent, balanced, enable progression and be pitched at the appropriate HKQF level.</p>	
<p>3. Admission Requirements and Student Selection</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The minimum admission requirements for the learning programmes must be clearly outlined for students and staff. These requirements and the student selection processes must ensure that students enrolling in the learning programmes have the knowledge and skills to be able to undertake the learning activities proposed in the learning programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Justifications for different admission requirements and student selection process, if different from the face-to-face delivery mode <input type="checkbox"/> IT skills required for undertaking the online learning activities
<p>4. Teaching and Learning</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Learning management system used for online teaching and learning activities <input type="checkbox"/> Learning management system in place to support students' self-pace learning experience <input type="checkbox"/> Policies on online teaching and learning for interaction between teachers and students or among students in the online environment <input type="checkbox"/> Methods adopted to facilitate interaction on the online platform and motivate learners' participation

<p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The teaching and learning activities designed for the learning programmes must be effective in delivering the intended learning outcomes and programme content.</p>	<p>Policies on online learning participation</p>
<p>5. Student Assessment</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>Assessments must support effective learning and enable students to demonstrate attainment of the learning outcomes at the required standards. The assessment methods and techniques used for the learning programmes must be valid, reliable, fair, sufficient to reflect the learning outcomes at the claimed HKQF levels, and secure against cheating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and procedures governing online assessments including academic integrity, moderation and progression <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and procedures governing student authentication including submission of assessment work <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate online assessment data for continuous improvement purposes <input type="checkbox"/> Training for teaching staff in using data from online assessments and other data sources to modify content and to guide student learning <input type="checkbox"/> Samples of formative and summative online assessments
<p>6. Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Profiles of staff (teaching and IT technical support) with relevant qualifications and experience in an online teaching and learning environment

<p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The partnership must have adequate teaching and support staff with the qualities, competency, qualifications and experience necessary for effective programme management, planning, delivery and monitoring of their learning programmes. There must be adequate staff development schemes and activities to ensure that the teaching and support staff are kept updated for the quality delivery of the learning programmes.</p>	
<p>7. Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>Operators must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their programmes.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The partnership must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their learning programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are fit-for-purpose for online programmes <input type="checkbox"/> Information about the availability and life expectancy of the technology <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated cost related to the maintenance and sustainability of its online programme offerings with respect to facilities and equipment for the next five years
<p>8. Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Documents showing how data/information collected from learning analytics tools are utilised to monitor and review students' progress as well as identify remedial measures to support students' learning <input type="checkbox"/> Formal channels for teachers and students to give feedback on their online learning experience including performance of teaching staff/tutors if applicable.

<p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The partnership must (i) develop learning programmes that address the needs of the community, employees and employers delivering learning outcomes that align with the intended HKQF level; (ii) monitor and review the performance of all their learning programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that the learning programmes remain current and valid and that the learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and student assessments are effective; and (iii) ensure that there is a clear delineation of responsibilities for all aspects of quality assurance between the partners in the collaboration, and effective integration of the exercise of those responsibilities.</p>	
<p>9. Student Support Services</p>	
<p><u>For Local Operators:</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>For Non-local Operators:</u></p> <p>The partnership must provide students with clear, accurate information and dependable access to support services that give students optimal opportunity for successful completion of the learning programme. Where the non-local Operator is responsible for providing a service, or determining an appeal, complaint or other application, there must be clear information available to students as to how they may access the non-local Operator; and provision for any appeal or complaint to be heard in Hong Kong or by video-conference link to the non-local Operator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and procedures reflecting the needs for support services related to online learning programmes <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and guidelines for online support services, including technological support <input type="checkbox"/> Policies determining when educational interventions are needed to support online students at risk of failure or discontinuation of studies

10. Student Records and Information Management

For Local Operators:

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

For Non-local Operators:

The partnership must have effective administration and management systems and procedures in place to ensure integrity, security, accuracy and currency of their records, and effective arrangements for information to be shared between the local and the non-local Operators.

- Measures in place for protecting the security and integrity of teaching, learning and assessment data of the online programmes
- Roles and duties of the responsible unit(s) administering student information, teaching, learning and assessment for online learning programmes
- Data on student engagement, performance, retention in online learning

Glossary

Accreditation Document

Prepared by the partnership to substantiate its claim of meeting the required standards when undertaking any stage(s) of the accreditation.

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.

Initial Evaluation (IE)

It is an upfront quality test to determine whether the collaborative provision between a local Operator and a non-local Operator (the partnership) is able to achieve its objectives as claimed and to operate the learning programmes (under the collaborative partnership) that meet the claimed QF standards. It is separate from, and additional to, any Initial Evaluation / Institutional Review which the local Operator may have undergone in respect of its local learning programmes or in connection with another non-local partner in another partnership.

Learning Programme

A programme of studies or training defined by a curriculum (which may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements) and includes, where the context permits, any proposed programme of such studies or training.

Local Operator

An Operator whose base of operation is in Hong Kong (including the local office of a non-local educational institution).

Non-local Operator

A local Operator's partner whose base of operation is outside Hong Kong.

Online Delivery

Online delivery is defined as delivery of learning programmes that is enhanced by the use of technology and is delivered through a digital learning platform to provide structured teaching, learning and assessments.

Online Learning Programme

In cases where an online delivery is used and integrated into the majority of the structured teaching and learning activities of a learning programme, such a programme is deemed as an online learning programme for accreditation purposes.

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 programmes or any part of a learning programme.

Partnership

It refers to the collaborating Operators (local and non-local) responsible for the collaborative provision of a non-local learning programme of the non-local Operator.

QF Level

The level of the learning programme pitched against the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Government at

https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content_13/HKQF_GLD_e.pdf.

QF Standards

In respect of a learning programme, the skills, knowledge or experience acquired on the completion of the learning programme that are commensurate with the requirements under the specified level of the QF.