



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

# Guidance Notes on Non-Qualifications Framework (Non-QF) Accreditation for Accredited Hong Kong Operators Offering Learning Programme in Mainland China

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# 1. Preamble

- 1.1 The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) is established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap 1150) as a statutory body responsible for conducting accreditation activities generally or as authorised under any other local enactment. Under Section 4(2)(a) of Cap 1150, HKCAAVQ may, subject to the prior approval of the Secretary for Education, conduct accreditation tests outside Hong Kong.

Non-Qualifications Framework accreditation (non-QF) is offered as a general accreditation service under Cap 1150 for local accredited operators wanting accreditation as proof of quality of a learning programme offered outside Hong Kong, primarily in Mainland China.

The accreditation certifies the quality of the programme and does not infer any recognition of the qualification(s) issued by the operator under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework or in Mainland China.

- 1.2 These Guidance Notes are for accredited Hong Kong Operators planning to apply for non-QF accreditation of a learning programme operating in Mainland China. These Guidance Notes also serve as reference for Accreditation Panels (the Panel) to be formed by HKCAAVQ pursuant to the principle of 'peer review' to undertake non-QF accreditation exercises. Under this principle, the Panel will evaluate the quality of the learning programme operating in Mainland China and exercise its professional judgement according to the principles laid down in these Guidance Notes.
- 1.3 Whilst HKCAAVQ endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in these Guidelines, HKCAAVQ reserves the right to delete, suspend or edit all information at any time in its absolute discretion without giving any prior notice.
- 1.4 For the information of post-secondary colleges considering non-QF accreditation, the provisions under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap 320) are intended to have application in Hong Kong only. The actions of a Cap 320 institution outside Hong Kong will be governed by the applicable laws of the relevant jurisdiction but not Cap 320. There is thus no restriction stipulated on Cap 320 institutions that prevents them from making non-QF accreditation applications for offering programmes outside Hong Kong.
- 1.5 It is the operators' responsibility to comply with all the relevant and applicable laws and regulations of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Mainland China and to have obtained the necessary approvals for offering the learning programme(s) in Mainland China. Before entering into a service agreement with HKCAAVQ, the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or partner(s) in Mainland China are required to declare with supporting evidence that they have fulfilled all legal requirements for offering learning programmes in Mainland China. HKCAAVQ reserves the

right to withdraw the accreditation report in cases where the declaration has relied on false or misleading information. Should HKCAAVQ have any doubts about the validity of the declaration at the time of signing of the service agreement that may warrant seeking legal advice, the operator will be required to provide such advice and cover the costs of providing it.

- 1.6 The accreditation criteria for learning programmes operated in Mainland China, as well as criteria for the institutional context in which the programmes operate are listed as follows:

**Table 1: Accreditation Criteria for Learning Programmes Operated in Mainland China**

<b>(A) Institutional Level</b>
Criterion 1: Organisational Management
Criterion 2: Assessment and Management of Risk
Criterion 3: Financial and Physical Resources
Criterion 4: Staffing and Staff Development
Criterion 5: Quality Assurance
Criterion 6: Learner Support Services
Criterion 7: Learner Records and Information Management
<b>(B) Programme Level</b>
Criterion 1: Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
Criterion 2: Programme Content and Structure
Criterion 3: Admission Requirements and Learner Selection
Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning
Criterion 5: Learner Assessment
Criterion 6: Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes
Criterion 7: Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes
Criterion 8: Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)

- 1.7 Provision of a learning programme typically involves an accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China, acting in partnership.
- 1.8 There should be a written and legally binding agreement setting out the rights and obligations of the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China. The agreement must cover those matters that are the responsibilities of each partner, and the specific matters relating to each learning programme offered through the collaboration.
- 1.9 After considering the nature of the partnership and the accreditation status of the learning programme(s), an appropriate accreditation approach based on the criteria listed in Table 1 will be applied.

- 1.10 The validity period for a non-QF accreditation will be linked to programme quality and programme duration. Under normal circumstances, the validity period is  $N + 1$  year, where  $N$  is the programme duration.

## 2. Guiding Principles

2.1 The guiding principles for non-QF accreditation are as follows:

- Peer review
- Fitness for purpose
- Evidence-based
- Threshold standards
- Transparency in the process

### Peer Review

2.2 Under the principle of 'peer review', the Panel Members are academic and professional experts with relevant expertise and experience in areas such as institutional management, programme delivery and management in relevant programme area/discipline, collaborative provision of learning programmes and quality assurance. The role of the Panel is to assess the quality of the learning programme(s), evaluate evidence and form a judgement as to whether the learning programme(s) meet the required accreditation standards.

### Fitness for Purpose

2.3 Under the principle of 'fitness for purpose', the learning programme(s) are evaluated on the basis of their stated objectives, and taking into consideration differences in nature, size, operational complexity and scope of expertise in respective partnerships as prescribed in the partnership agreement and reflected in actual implementation.

### Evidence-based

2.4 Determinations are to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the partnership to support its claim that it meets the criteria and standards stipulated in these Guidance Notes. Judgement will be made independently of any other previous decision(s) made on the same Hong Kong Operator or its partner(s) and/or the learning programme(s).

### Threshold Standards

2.5 Decisions are made against threshold standards. The benchmark is the minimum requirements of the criteria and standards stipulated in these Guidance Notes.

2.6 In addition to verifying that the learning programme(s) meet the minimum standards required in these Guidance Notes, the accreditation process should

also be helpful in assisting partnerships to develop internal mechanisms aimed at further enhancing the programme quality.

### Transparency

- 2.7 A transparent approach is adopted throughout the process so that all parties involved (i.e. the partnership and the Panel) have a common understanding of these Guidance Notes. The Panel has the duty to raise its main concerns with the partnership in the process and give the partnership an opportunity to respond to the Panel's questions/concerns and to justify its claims in the accreditation process.

## 3. Accreditation Criteria and Standards

- 3.1 To complete a non-QF accreditation successfully, the partnership has to demonstrate with supporting evidence that it meets the standards and criteria at both institutional and programme levels as 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.
- 3.2 The partnership should demonstrate that it takes into account the quality of learners' learning experience in institution-wide and programme-specific activities.
- 3.3 The criteria and standards for non-QF accreditation are specified below:

<b>(A) Institutional Level</b>
<b>Criterion 1: Organisational Management</b>
Standard: Each partner has clear institutional strategy, authority to establish the collaboration, policy and management to deliver the programmes in Mainland China to ensure that the necessary oversight is sustained.
<i>Possible Sources of Evidence:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic plan, institutional policy, governance and management structure to govern and monitor the delivery of the programmes in Mainland China</li><li>• Approval documents by the relevant quality assurance committees/boards showing its commitment to operating learning programmes in Mainland China</li><li>• Written statement of responsibilities for taking policy and operational decisions concerning the learning programmes at the institutional level and covered by the collaboration</li></ul>
<b>Criterion 2: Assessment and Management of Risk</b>
Standard: There should be a full assessment of risks to the learning programmes offered through the partnership, with appropriate and realistic plans to manage risk, and contingency arrangements to protect learner interests in the event of the termination of the collaboration.
<i>Possible Sources of Evidence:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key considerations of the partnership in assessing the risks associated with the collaboration, e.g. risk register or similar document</li><li>• Evidence of contingency arrangements</li></ul>
<b>Criterion 3: Financial and Physical Resources</b>
Standard: The partnership should have an adequate financial and physical

resource base to support the learning programmes at an acceptable level of quality on a continuing basis including provision of classroom, laboratory, library, IT and other teaching and learning facilities.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Duration and terms of leases of accommodation not owned by the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China
- Evidence of approval for the setting up of the office/campus by the appropriate authority
- Financial statements covering the collaboration in the past three years (e.g. audited financial statements)
- Budgets and estimates for the collaboration in the next three to five years
- Availability of start-up funds for new start-ups
- Resources deployment agreement and plans for the collaboration
- Details of facilities available to the learning programmes offered through the collaboration

**Criterion 4: Staffing and Staff Development**

Standard: Each partner has clear 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 in Mainland China. There should be effective policies to provide appropriate and sufficient opportunities for its teaching staff to enhance their pedagogical skills and subject knowledge and be familiar with the academic ethos of the partners involved.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Human resources policy or human resources management plan
- Appointment criteria for the management staff
- Roles, responsibilities and profiles of management staff
- Staff handbook or staff manual
- Recruitment policies and practices
- Methods used to appraise staff performance and sample of staff performance appraisal report and follow-up action
- Sample of staff grievances, if any, and follow-up action
- Staff development policy and record of related activities

**Criterion 5: Quality Assurance**

Standard: There must be effective integration of the quality mechanisms of the partners involved, with a clear delineation of the responsibilities of each, particularly with respect to programme development and management, and the authority to make changes to learning programmes. The partnership must demonstrate competency to operate the learning programmes. It must be committed to the provision of accurate, current and complete information to the public and learners at policy level.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Personnel/Committees involved in quality assurance, including terms of reference, composition, membership of relevant committees or advisory bodies involved in the development and review of the learning programmes
- The processes/measures for ensuring the quality of the learning programmes at various stages:
  - programme development
  - programme management
  - programme review
  - programme modification
- Written agreement on the allocation of responsibilities for quality assurance
- Quality assurance manuals applicable to the collaborative programme(s)
- Minutes of joint meetings dealing with quality issues
- Written confirmation of any authority and process to make changes to the learning programme
- Written confirmation (e.g. minutes of a meeting authorised to approve a change) that any change made is properly authorised
- Audit/accreditation report (internal/external) by the partner(s) and/or external quality assurance bodies
- Record of monitoring visit by the accredited Hong Kong Operator to its partner(s)
- External examiner's report, employers' report, etc.
- Statistics and summary report on feedback collected from stakeholders regarding the partnership
- Records of/reports on follow-up action taken and evidence to trail effective decision making and implementation of decisions
- Publicity materials and other public information about the collaboration and relevant learning programmes published by the partnership. Records of approval of the release of such information by the appropriate authorities

**Criterion 6: Learner Support Services**

Standard: The partnership must provide learners with clear, accurate information and dependable access to support services that give all learners the opportunity for successful completion of the learning programme. Where the accredited Hong Kong Operator is responsible for providing a service, or determining an appeal, complaint or other application, there must be clear information available to learners as to how they may access the accredited Hong Kong Operator; and provision for any appeal or complaint to be heard in Mainland China or by video-conference link to the accredited Hong Kong Operator.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Support services provided to learners

- Learner handbook, brochure or website information outlining programme information, support services and relevant learner policies
- Procedure for monitoring learner under-achievement and evidence of appropriate counselling
- Copy of relevant academic, disciplinary and complaints policies and procedures, as provided to learners
- Communication channels provided to learners

#### **Criterion 7: Learner Records and Information Management**

Standard: 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 accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Documented administration and record-keeping procedures
- Agreement between the accredited Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China on the sharing of information and the maintenance of records beyond termination of the collaboration, if not covered in other formal agreement between the two parties
- Publicity materials and other public information about the collaboration and relevant learning programmes published by the partnership. Records of approval of the release of such information by the appropriate authorities
- Sample forms such as enrolment forms, class results forms or certificates

### **(B) Programme Level**

#### **Criterion 1: Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

Standard: The learning outcomes must reflect the stated programme objectives, which are tested through assessment.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Definitive programme document with programme design chart illustrating how intended learning outcomes contribute to the fulfilment of the programme objectives
- Professional recognition and/or external benchmark
- Employment opportunities
- Pathways for further study

#### **Criterion 2: Programme Content and Structure**

Standard: The content and structure of the learning programmes must be coherent, integrated and effective in enabling learners to achieve the stated learning outcomes and the required standards. The learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessments must be coherent, balanced and enable progression.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Mapping of modules against programme intended learning outcomes
- Programme structure [an overview of all the key parameters of each module and how the modules are combined in each semester/year and stream (if applicable)]
- Definitive programme documents and syllabus
- Recommended reading lists

**Criterion 3: Admission Requirements and Learner Selection**

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

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Minimum entrance requirements for all entry routes
- Admission policy (including special admission, exemption and advanced standing)
- Learner selection and enrolment procedures, including any procedures for the recognition of prior learning (if applicable)
- Planned yearly learner intake of each stage and stream, if any, of the learning programme
- Brochures or website information showing admission requirements and procedures

**Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning**

Standard: The teaching and learning activities designed for the learning programmes must be effective in delivering the intended learning outcomes and programme content.

*Possible Sources of Evidence:*

- Teaching staff to learner ratio for various types of delivery modes
- A description of the teaching and learning methods (e.g. lectures, tutorials, laboratories, practical demonstration, work placement, etc.)
- Medium of instruction policy
- Samples of teaching and learning materials
- Details of workplace attachment/internship (if applicable) including:
  - Intended learning outcomes
  - Structure
  - Work placement agreement
  - Monitoring mechanism
  - Assessment methods and criteria
  - List of (potential) placement employers
  - Guidelines to learners, supervisors and placement employers (e.g.

<p>handbooks and/or manuals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidance materials for employers or other parties involved in learner learning</li><li>• Learner and supervisor manual for workplace attachment</li></ul>
<p><b>Criterion 5: Learner Assessment</b></p> <p>Standard: Assessments must support effective learning and enable learners 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, and secure against plagiarism and cheating.</p> <p><i>Possible Sources of Evidence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment policy of the Programme</li><li>• An outline of assessment methods and weightings for each subject/module</li><li>• System of assessment verification or moderation and external examination, as appropriate, including the responsibility for appointing external examiners, and the procedures for the partners in the collaboration to consider jointly the reports of external examiners</li><li>• Graduation requirements for the intermediate exit awards (if any) and the terminal exit award</li><li>• Grade descriptors for the intermediate exit awards (if any) and the terminal exit award</li><li>• Samples of formative and summative assessments for two capstone modules</li><li>• Assessment criteria for each of the above sample assessments</li><li>• Measures to ensure examination security</li></ul>
<p><b>Criterion 6: Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes</b></p> <p>Standard: The partnership must have adequate teaching and supporting staff with the qualities, competency, qualifications and experience necessary for the 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 supporting staff are kept updated for the quality delivery of the learning programmes.</p> <p><i>Possible Sources of Evidence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appointment criteria for the teaching staff</li><li>• Profiles of teaching staff which include academic and/or professional qualifications, and work experience; including, where appropriate, profiles of staff of the accredited Operator who will teach in Mainland China, or to whom learners will have remote electronic access</li><li>• Teaching staff's duty assignment, including teaching load and other relevant administrative and management load, e.g. teaching staff timetables, project supervisorship, etc.</li><li>• Anticipated staff-to- learner ratios for each learning programme</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data on implemented staff development activities</li></ul>
<b>Criterion 7: Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes</b>
<p>Standard: The partnership must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their learning programmes.</p> <p><i>Possible Sources of Evidence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initial and annual income and expenditure for the learning programme(s)</li><li>• Mechanism to deal with over/under enrolment</li><li>• Description of the premises and teaching facilities for the learning programmes</li><li>• A detailed list of the specialist facilities and equipment required to deliver the learning programmes</li><li>• Library collection is sufficient in size and relevant to the learning programmes</li></ul>
<b>Criterion 8: Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)</b>
<p>Standard: The partnership must (i) develop learning programmes that address the needs of the community, employees and employers; (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 learner 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><i>Possible Sources of Evidence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback mechanism to stakeholders</li><li>• Profiles of external advisors and external examiners</li><li>• Consultation reports from external examiners, external advisors and employers</li><li>• A copy of the formal agreement between the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s)</li><li>• A copy of the most recently available independent review of the learning programme as received by the accredited Operator (this may be a report from HKCAAVQ)</li><li>• Notes of liaison meeting with staff responsible for teaching and managing the learning programme(s)</li></ul>

## 4. Accreditation Process

### Initiating the Process

- 4.1 The interested partnership should send a request letter to HKCAAVQ indicating that it is ready to undergo the non-QF accreditation of their collaborative learning programme(s) operating in Mainland China. In the request letter, a person/representative should be nominated jointly by the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China as the authorised liaison point with HKCAAVQ on all matters related to the accreditation exercise.
- 4.2 On the basis of the request letter, HKCAAVQ will enter into a Service Agreement with the partnership, setting out the schedule, the Terms of Reference, the accreditation fee and payment terms. Both the request letter and the Service Agreement must be signed by the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China. HKCAAVQ will only enter into a Service Agreement with the partnership whose learning programme(s) is/are permitted to operate legally in Mainland China. Each partner should be fully authorised to operate in Mainland China, and the terms should permit (or not prohibit) its establishment of a cross border entity or participation in collaborative provision with an external partner in Mainland China as well as to award qualifications. Evidence showing the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary are authorised to operate in Mainland China must be provided to HKCAAVQ.
- 4.3 Upon signing the Service Agreement, the partnership should proceed to prepare a self-contained Accreditation Document for submission to HKCAAVQ by the stipulated deadline. It normally takes about 20 weeks to complete an accreditation after receiving the Accreditation Document by HKCAAVQ.

### The Panel

- 4.4 The Panel consisting of members with the requisite profiles and expertise will be formed to conduct the accreditation by assessing the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China at the institutional and programme levels.
- 4.5 HKCAAVQ has full authority in the selection of members of the Panel for a particular exercise, after seeking views from the partnership on any conflict of interest of the potential Panel Members. The Panel will include a HKCAAVQ

professional staff as the Panel Secretary. The Panel Secretary has a full voting right.

### Preparing for Accreditation

4.6 A thorough understanding of what is required for the partnership in the accreditation process is the first step to successful accreditation. The partnership is expected to undertake the following responsibilities in the exercise:

- To submit an Accreditation Document of a self-evaluative nature;
- To provide with the Accreditation Document any supporting documents and additional documents at the Panel's request before and during the site visit;
- To prepare the site visit;
- To participate in the meeting sessions and engage in the discussions with the Panel during the site visit;
- To provide the basic protocol and logistical support; and
- To provide feedback on factual accuracy of the draft accreditation report.

4.7 Accreditation is conducted by HKCAAVQ on the expectation that the partnership is involved in a continuous process of self-evaluation. Before seeking the accreditation service, a partnership should undertake an internal self-evaluation for the purpose of assessing its own readiness to meet the intended purpose of the exercise and making any necessary reforms and changes to any aspects of structure and processes of the collaborative partnership, quality assurance or resource planning.

### Preparing the Accreditation Document

4.8 To prepare an Accreditation Document that addresses the relevant accreditation criteria, the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China are advised to make reference to these Guidance Notes. The partnership is required to present evidence to support its claim. As partnerships are diverse in collaborative mode and operational arrangements, the possible sources of evidence listed in these Guidance Notes are indicative rather than exhaustive. The onus of providing sufficient and appropriate evidence that demonstrates that an accreditation criterion has been met for accreditation determination lies with the partnership. HKCAAVQ understands that some of the information requested may be sensitive and confidential. All Panel Members sign a confidentiality statement and any confidential documents will be treated as such by the Panel.

4.9 Prior to submission of the Accreditation Document, HKCAAVQ requires an electronic version of the Document for distribution to the Panel under secure

arrangements. In terms of presentation of the main submission, hyperlinks to the supporting evidence should be included in the format of an e-portfolio to enhance readability. The Accreditation Document should also be a searchable file. Where appropriate, the Document should include a glossary and a list of abbreviations. The main submission is preferably limited to 60 A-4 size pages.

#### Initial Examination of the Accreditation Document

- 4.10 HKCAAVQ may conclude after an initial examination of the Accreditation Document that the information provided is inadequate and/or the state of readiness of the partnership is such that it is unlikely for HKCAAVQ to be able to conduct a meaningful accreditation process according to the scope of the Terms of Reference of the exercise specified in the Service Agreement. In this event, HKCAAVQ may terminate the accreditation exercise and any unused accreditation fee will be refunded to the partnership.
- 4.11 If the Panel concludes that there is adequate evidence contained in the Accreditation Document for it to reach a conclusion and make recommendations to HKCAAVQ without conducting a meeting or site visit, HKCAAVQ may make the accreditation decisions without a meeting or site visit.

#### Initial Comments and Partnership's Responses

- 4.12 After reviewing the Accreditation Document, the Panel may seek further clarification and/or ask for additional supporting documents as evidence during the stage of Initial Comments. The supporting documents can be requested to be made available to the Panel either prior to the site visit or on site.
- 4.13 The accreditation site visit will be planned by HKCAAVQ in consultation with the Panel Chair. The visit provides an occasion for interaction between the Panel and relevant personnel from the partnership, and other stakeholders such as learners and employers.
- 4.14 Personnel from the partnership attending the visit should include representatives of the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China. Such representatives should be persons with decision-making authority and be familiar with the learning programme(s), in relation to the partnership.
- 4.15 The timeframe for the site visit will be agreed with the partnership and included in the Service Agreement.

- 4.16 It is the responsibility of the partnership to ensure that there are suitable facilities available for the site visit, including the availability of a private meeting room with sufficient space for the Panel and the interviewees, access to documents, and the provision of reasonable refreshments (at the cost of HKCAAVQ). As the stakeholders' meetings are part of the evidence for the Panel to make the accreditation recommendations, it is the responsibility of the partnership to ensure that the requested interviewees are available to meet the Panel.
- 4.17 The visit programme, including the schedule of persons to be met, will be determined in the light of the full Panel's examination of the Accreditation Document. The content of the visit programme will be designed to enable the Panel to pursue any relevant issues according to the accreditation criteria and standards as stipulated in these Guidance Notes. It is likely that the visit programme will comprise the following activities for the purpose of triangulation.
- Meetings with the senior management of the partnership, teaching and other relevant staff, learners, graduates and external stakeholders;
  - Review of documentary evidence;
  - Review of facilities;
  - Panel's private meetings, during which the representatives of the partnership are required to withdraw from the Panel's meeting room;
  - Any other session(s) to be requested on-site at the discretion of the Panel as and when deemed necessary; and
  - Exit meeting with the senior management of the partnership.
- 4.18 HKCAAVQ will determine the criteria for the selection of people to be interviewed, and the size of the interview groups for efficient interaction with the Panel. The partnership is expected to collaborate with HKCAAVQ in the prescribed arrangements to ensure a smooth conduct of the site visit for the purpose of triangulation of evidence.
- 4.19 The Panel will organise an exit meeting with the senior management representatives of the partnership. The exit meeting will provide a general overview of the Panel's key observations. The partnership will be informed of the Panel's recommended outcome of the exercise in writing as soon as possible after the site visit.

#### Panel's Evaluation and Accreditation Judgement

- 4.20 The Panel's evaluation will be based on the Accreditation Document and other relevant information gathered throughout the accreditation process, drawing reference from the accreditation criteria stipulated in these Guidance Notes.

- 4.21 The Panel takes collective responsibility for its evaluation and findings and may resort to different means to reach a decision including but not limited to meetings before and after the site visit.

## **5. Possible Accreditation Outcomes**

- 5.1 HKCAAVQ will issue an accreditation report to the partnership setting out the Panel's conclusion and HKCAAVQ's determination. The possible determinations of an accreditation exercise are:
- Approval
  - Approval with conditions (pre-conditions and/or requirements)
  - Non-approval
- 5.2 The partnership may use the accreditation outcome in their public announcements or publicity materials. It, however, may not in any manner whatsoever claim the qualifications obtainable from the learning programme(s) are recognised at a particular QF Level under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.
- 5.3 The accreditation report will stipulate the approved teaching/training venues in Mainland China and the validity period. The accredited programmes will be published on a list maintained on the HKCAAVQ website.
- 5.4 If the accredited Hong Kong Operator is aggrieved by the determination and/or decision(s) of HKCAAVQ made in the accreditation report, then pursuant to Part IVA of Cap. 1150, it has a right to apply for a review. An application for a review must normally be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of the relevant accreditation report.

## 6. Follow-up before Expiry of Accreditation Status

### Fulfilment of Pre-condition(s) and Requirement(s)

- 6.1 Where Pre-condition(s) and/or Requirement(s) apply, the fulfilment of the Pre-condition(s) and/or Requirement(s) within a specified timeframe is mandatory to obtain and to maintain a valid accreditation status.

### Substantial Changes to Accreditation Status

- 6.2 It is the responsibility of the partnership to inform HKCAAVQ of any substantial change(s) to the accreditation status of the programme, before the change is made. In case of doubt, the partnership should consult HKCAAVQ on the need for seeking approval on substantial change(s) as soon as feasible, and prior to making any change(s).

### Expiry of Validity Period

- 6.3 The partnership should submit the request letter for re-accreditation **at least nine months** before the expiry date of the validity period of their learning programmes. Accredited programmes with no learners admitted during the validity period are not eligible for re-accreditation.
- 6.4 If re-accreditation is not completed by the expiry date, the accreditation status will automatically lapse.

## **7. Accreditation Fee**

- 7.1 The accreditation fees vary according to various factors, e.g. the nature of partnership, the accreditation status of the learning programme(s), the composition of the Panel, and the site visit location etc. For fee quotation enquiries, please contact:-

Academic Accreditation: (852) 36580127 / [aaa@hkcaavq.edu.hk](mailto:aaa@hkcaavq.edu.hk)  
Vocational Accreditation: (852) 36580183 / [vpa@hkcaavq.edu.hk](mailto:vpa@hkcaavq.edu.hk)

## 8. Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation Criteria	The elements for consideration in an accreditation exercise, as specified in the relevant set of guidance notes on non-QF accreditation.
Accreditation Document	Prepared by the Operator to substantiate its claim of meeting the required standards when seeking non-QF accreditation of learning programmes.
Accreditation Panel	The Panel consisting of specialists with expertise in the relevant discipline/industry/quality assurance issues. Under the guiding principle of 'peer review', the Panel is formed to assess the learning programmes offered by the partnership. A HKCAAVQ staff member will serve as the Panel Secretary.
Accreditation Report	A report issued by HKCAAVQ after conducting the accreditation tests.
Accreditation Standards	The standards specified for the respective accreditation criteria, listed in the relevant sets of guidance notes on non-QF accreditation.
Condition	A condition forms part of the accreditation determination(s), to be fulfilled by the partnership 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).
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 Outcome	The knowledge, skills and application ability attained by a learner as a result of completing the learning programme.
Non-Qualifications Framework (non-QF) Accreditation	It refers to an accreditation which does not lead to any recognition of a learning programme under the Qualifications Framework (QF) in Hong Kong. The QF is a 7-level 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.
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.
Partnership	It refers to the collaborating operators, including the accredited Hong Kong Operator and its branch/subsidiary in Mainland China and/or external partner(s) in Mainland China, responsible for the collaborative provision of a learning programme.
Pre-condition	A pre-condition forms part of the accreditation determination, to be fulfilled by the partnership 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. It is granted on the basis of formal assessment.
Recommendation	A recommendation forms part of the accreditation determination. It has a continuous improvement purpose and is directly related to the accreditation criteria. It is non-binding in nature but the partnership should explain if/how recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation.

Requirement	A requirement forms part of the accreditation determination, to be fulfilled by the partnership 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 partnership by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period of the approved accreditation status. The partnership's ability to fulfil the restriction is dependent on actions taken by third parties.
Service Agreement	A contract between HKCAAVQ and the partnership to undertake an accreditation exercise.
Site Visit	A visit to the learning centre/campus used for the purpose of delivering the learning programme(s) seeking non-QF accreditation. This is an integral part of an accreditation exercise, conducted primarily to collect evidence for evaluating whether the accreditation criteria are met.
Terms of Reference	The Terms of Reference set out the services that will be provided to the partnership, the fee and the conditions under which the services will be provided.