



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

Guidelines
On
Accreditation
Of
Non-local Learning Programmes

Version 1.4

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Abbreviations:

Cap 493	Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance
Cap 592	Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO)
EDB	Education Bureau
FASP	Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students
GLD	Generic Level Descriptors
HKCAA	Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
IE	Initial Evaluation
IR	Institutional Review
LPA	Learning Programme Accreditation
NLP	Non-local Learning Programme
NLSPS	Non-means Tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students
QF	Qualifications Framework
QR	Qualifications Register
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SCS	Specification of Competency Standards

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Introduction:

1. The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) is established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Chapter 1150) as a statutory body responsible for conducting accreditation activities generally or as authorised under any other local enactment. The HKCAAVQ has statutory powers under the provisions of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap 592) to perform the roles of the Accreditation Authority and the Qualifications Register (QR) Authority. Qualifications of learning programmes that have been granted accreditation status by the Accreditation Authority may be entered into the QR for recognition under the Qualifications Framework (QF) in Hong Kong.
2. These Guidelines have been developed for use by educational institutions (Operators) planning to apply for the accreditation of a non-local course (learning programme), registered or exempted from registration under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap 493).
3. Registration / exemption from registration under Cap 493 and accreditation of non-local learning programmes (NLPs) under Cap 592 are conducted under different ordinances and administered by different authorities. Registration / exemption is based on comparability of the standards of the non-local course with the standards of the home course under the home country education system. Accreditation benchmarks the learning programme against the Hong Kong education system including the QF. Registration / exemption from registration is compulsory whereas accreditation of NLPs is voluntary. The accreditation of NLPs will not affect their registration / exemption status.
4. Provision of a NLP involves a Hong Kong Operator (local Operator) and a non-local Operator jointly operating a programme of learning in Hong Kong, which leads to a qualification awarded by the non-local Operator. The local Operator and the non-local Operator are treated as acting in partnership as the Operator of the NLP to be accredited.
5. These Guidelines are by no means exhaustive. These Guidelines also supersede any prior guidelines or handbook that the HKCAAVQ or the former Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) has published or issued previously regarding accreditation of NLPs.
6. These Guidelines also serve as reference for the Accreditation Panel (Panel). Under the principle of 'peer review', the Panel will evaluate the quality of the partnership and the NLP and exercise its professional judgement according to the principles laid down in these Guidelines.
7. Whilst the HKCAAVQ endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the information contained herein, the HKCAAVQ reserves the right to delete, suspend or edit all information at any time in its absolute discretion without giving any prior notice. To obtain the most up-to-date information, users may consult the

electronic version of these Guidelines from the website of HKCAAVQ at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

8. For enquiries, please contact Mr. Calvin Chan on 3658 0193 or email to calvinchan@hkcaavq.edu.hk.

1. Who should read these Guidelines?

- 1.1 These Guidelines apply to non-local courses (learning programmes) that have been registered, or exempted from registration, under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap 493). Operators who wish to have the qualifications of registered / exempted non-local courses accredited for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR) leading to recognition under the Qualifications Framework (QF) in Hong Kong should read these Guidelines.

2. What are the Qualifications Framework and Qualifications Register?

- 2.1 The Qualifications Framework (QF) is a hierarchy of qualifications of academic, vocational and continuing education and qualifications attained by employees through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme. It consists of seven levels, characterised by outcome-based Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Education Bureau (EDB). The GLD describes the common features of qualifications at the same level and helps locate a qualification at a specific level on the QF. Information about the QF and the GLD is available at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.
- 2.2 The Qualifications Register (QR) is a centralised online database of QF recognised qualifications. The QR can be accessed via <http://www.hkqr.gov.hk>.

3. What is the HKCAAVQ's role in the QF?

- 3.1 The QF is underpinned by a quality assurance mechanism as provided for under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap 592). In the capacity of the Accreditation Authority and QR Authority as specified in the AAVQO, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) assures the quality of the learning programmes and the qualifications awarded by the accredited Operators before the qualifications can be considered for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR).

4. Why seek recognition under the QF?

- 4.1 Upon successful accreditation, the qualifications of NLPs may be entered into the QR for recognition under the QF, in accordance with the terms and procedures stipulated by the QR Authority. Such qualifications attained by individual students will be recognised as meeting the same standard of comparable qualifications at approved QF level(s) obtained in Hong Kong.
- 4.2 The Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students (FASP) (<http://www.sfaa.gov.hk/eng/schemes/fasp.htm>) and Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students (NLSPS) (<http://www.sfaa.gov.hk/eng/schemes/nls3.htm>) extend to accredited full-time non-local learning programmes at tertiary level, subject to the terms and conditions as stipulated by the Student Financial Assistance Agency.
- 4.3 Government policy requires all new applications for CEF registration, including those from regulated non-local courses, submitted after May 2008, to be on the QR with a valid QR registration number. To this end, the non-local courses offered through CEF will also need to go through the NLP accreditation conducted by the HKCAAVQ.

5. What is Accreditation of Non-local Learning Programmes?

- 5.1 Accreditation of non-local learning programmes (NLPs) is a voluntary quality assurance process that comprises two stages.
- 5.2 The first stage is Initial Evaluation (IE) to determine whether the partnership is able to achieve their objectives and to operate the learning programmes under the collaborative provision that meet the claimed QF standards. The partnership must demonstrate that it has the competency to effectively manage and resource the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of its NLPs related to all the disciplines covered in the partnership at the claimed QF level(s).
- 5.3 The second stage is Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA). The purpose is to determine whether the learning programme meets the required standards to achieve its claimed objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes. The required standards specified in these Guidelines include but are not limited to the competency standards of the QF and those prescribed / generally accepted standards of the local education system.
- 5.4 In the standard route, IE and LPA will be conducted in the same exercise. The accreditation criteria for both IE and LPA will be reviewed by the same Accreditation Panel. The process will be quicker than going through IE and LPA separately. Subsequent LPA under the same partnership and at approved QF level(s) will be conducted independently.

6. Initial Evaluation for Collaborative Provision of Non-local Learning Programmes

Operators in Partnerships

- 6.1 Each partnership between the local and the non-local Operators is unique in terms of the quality assurance and / or other contractual and operational arrangements in operating non-local courses registered / exempted under Cap 493. Therefore, the IE of NLP is separate from, and additional to, any IE / Institutional Review (IR) of the HKCAAVQ which the local Operator may have undergone in respect of its local learning programmes or in connection with another non-local Operator in another partnership.
- 6.2 Where the non-local Operator operates as a branch campus in HK (whether or not established as a separate legal entity) rather than in collaboration with a local Operator, the IE reviews the collaborative provision under the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution.

IE Status

- 6.3 The granting of an IE status is per partnership, covering all disciplines in operation at approved QF level(s) within the partnership. The status does not extend to partnerships entered into by the Operators concerned with other non-local / local Operators outside the accredited partnership. If a local / non-local Operator wishes to seek accreditation for more than one partnership, a separate application must be made in respect of each partnership.
- 6.4 IE is QF level specific. This is because the teaching skills and academic qualifications of staff, and the physical resources needed for successful delivery of learning programmes change between levels. Partnerships applying for IE must specify the corresponding QF level(s) intended for the NLPs covered by the partnerships.
- 6.5 IE status at lower QF levels cannot be extended upwards. IE status attained at a higher QF level can however be extended downwards.
- 6.6 The IE status grants permission for the partnership to proceed with LPA. The IE status alone does not grant any accreditation status of the NLPs covered in the partnership for QF recognition.

IE Criteria

- 6.7 To attain IE status, the partnership must demonstrate that it has attained the threshold standard of IE in respect of the four key criteria outlined below:

1. Organisational Management

- (a) Institutional Strategy and Authority to Establish the Collaboration

- (b) Accreditation Status of the Non-local Operator
- (c) Contractual Considerations
- (d) Policy and Operational Framework
- (e) Assessment and Management of Risk

2. Financial and Physical Resources

3. Staffing and Staff Development

4. Quality Assurance

The non-local Operator as the awarding body should bear the overall and final responsibility for the implementation of policies and monitor the effectiveness of quality assurance. The non-local Operator's constitutional / legal provision and accreditation status for awarding qualifications in Hong Kong, i.e. outside its home country, is one of the key and essential conditions for a successful NLP accreditation exercise.

Given that the contractual agreement between the local and non-local Operators forms the basis of the partnership, where appropriate, the agreement should clearly spell out the responsibilities of parties including adequate monitoring and quality assurance measures. The local and non-local Operators are advised to make reference to the IE criteria when preparing the contractual agreement.

- 6.8 For each criterion, there is an indication of possible sources of evidence. A *Submission Guide and an electronic template for preparing an Accreditation Document for Initial Evaluation* are available on the HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes>.

Validity Period

- 6.9 IE status has a validity period of two years. Within the two-year validity period, the partnership must have at least one of its NLPs accredited. The IE status will not expire if the partnership continues to have NLP(s) accredited.

7. Learning Programme Accreditation of Non-local Learning Programmes

LPA vs IE

- 7.1 LPA assesses how the partnership (reviewed at the IE stage) delivers the NLP(s) that meets the accreditation standards. For partnerships that have adopted different operational arrangements for different learning programmes under the same partnerships, the system and operational arrangements relevant to the learning programme being evaluated at the LPA stage need to be elaborated and supported by documentary evidence if they are different

from what is / has been presented in the IE exercise. Under this circumstance, the LPA will also cover all relevant IE accreditation criteria as well.

LPA Principles

- 7.2 The principles for LPA of NLPs are similar to those for local learning programmes, as all learning programmes, regardless of origin and nature, must meet the stated objectives and the standards for the QF before their qualifications can be entered into the QR and be recognised under the QF.
- 7.3 In view of the recognition of the non-local Operator and NLP in the home country, the emphasis of LPA of NLPs is on whether the programmes meet the QF standard (e.g. the intended learning outcomes of the programmes meet the standard at the relevant QF level), noting the comparability of standards of the NLP with the standards of the home course delivered under the home country education system as required by Cap 493.

Key Features of LPA

- 7.4 LPA is a quality assurance process to ensure that:
- Learning outcomes and QF standards of the NLPs are appropriate for the qualifications to which they lead;
 - Content and design of the NLPs and the methods of delivery are likely to achieve their objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes for the target students;
 - Other arrangements, including programme management, facilities, staffing and student services are appropriate for the NLPs and will facilitate successful delivery of the stated objectives and learning outcomes at the proposed QF level(s);
 - Assessment aligns with the content, design and delivery of the NLPs and is valid and appropriate to test the intended learning outcomes based on relevant standards at the proposed QF level(s); and
 - The partnerships have systems, resources and operational processes in place to effectively plan, develop, manage, quality assure and improve their NLPs.

LPA Criteria

- 7.5 To demonstrate that the NLP meets the required QF standards, the partnership is required to address the following key LPA criteria listed below.
1. Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
 2. Programme Content and Structure
 3. Admission Requirements and Student Selection
 4. Teaching and Learning

5. Student Assessment
6. Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes
7. Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes
8. Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)
9. Student Support Services
10. Student Records and Information Management

As in IE, the contractual agreement between the local and non-local Operators should clearly spell out the responsibilities of parties including the allocation of resources for the programmes. The local and non-local Operators are advised to make reference to the LPA criteria when preparing the contractual agreement.

- 7.6 For each criterion, there is an indication of possible sources of evidence. A *Submission Guide and an electronic template for preparing an Accreditation Document for Learning Programme Accreditation* are available on the HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes>. Issues to be considered when determining the QF level of an outcome-based learning programme can also be found on the website.

LPA Application by a Previously Approved Partnership

- 7.7 Upon approval of a NLP for a particular partnership between the local and the non-local Operators, track records of the partnership will be considered in cases of an application for LPA of another NLP by the same partnership. Where appropriate, a streamlined approach may be adopted.

LPA Status

- 7.8 Successfully accredited NLP will be granted an accreditation status which is QF level specific with a stipulated validity period, and subject to prescribed conditions and restrictions, if any.

Learning Programme Re-accreditation

- 7.9 Re-accreditation of the learning programme will take place prior to the expiry of the validity period of the accredited learning programme and will be subject to the same LPA process, having regard to the findings of the previous accreditation exercise and follow-up actions taken by the partnerships.

Re-accreditation Principles and Criteria

- 7.10 The principles for Re-accreditation of NLPs are similar to those for LPA as the

learning programmes must meet the stated objectives and the standards for the QF and can continue to be offered as accredited programmes.

- 7.11 Given that the accredited NLPs have been offered for a specified period, in addition to meeting the stated objectives and the standards for the QF, the emphasis of Re-accreditation would be on improvements / enhancements made to the programmes through the years of operation since the last LPA / Re-accreditation. Hence, key changes made and the reasons / rationale / background for the changes under the LPA criteria during the validity period will be evaluated.
- 7.12 The key criteria for Re-accreditation of NLPs are the same as those for LPA (see paragraph 7.5). For each criterion, there is an indication of possible sources of evidence. *A Submission Guide and an electronic template for preparing an Accreditation Document for Learning Programme Re-accreditation* are available on the HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes>.

8. Guiding principles of HKCAAVQ Accreditation

8.1 The guiding principles for the NLP accreditation are as follows.

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

Peer Review

8.2 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 NLPs, quality assurance and QF matters. The role of the Panel is to assess the competency of the partnership in provision and quality assurance of the NLP(s) under consideration, evaluate evidence and form a judgement as to whether the partnership and the learning programme(s) meet the required accreditation standards.

Fitness for Purpose

8.3 Under the principle of 'fitness for purpose', the partnership and the NLP(s) are accredited 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

- 8.4 Accreditation decisions are to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the partnership to support its claim that it meets the accreditation standards stipulated in these Guidelines. Judgement will be made independently of any other previous accreditation decision(s) made on the same local or non-local Operator and / or the relevant NLP(s).

Threshold Standards

- 8.5 Accreditation decisions are made against threshold standards. The benchmark for NLP accreditation is the minimum requirements of the stipulated accreditation criteria in these Guidelines including but not limited to local (Hong Kong) standards generally accepted and adopted by the local education sector and the QF standards, as prescribed in the GLD and any other relevant policy intention / regulations / guidelines / common descriptors / specification of competency standards (SCS) promulgated by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
- 8.6 In addition to verifying that the partnerships and their NLPs meet the minimum standards required in these Guidelines, the accreditation process is also a combined effort for quality enhancement. The accreditation exercises should be helpful in assisting partnerships to develop internal mechanisms aimed at further enhancing the programme quality.

Transparency in Accreditation

- 8.7 The accreditation process is guided by the “no surprise” principle. This refers to adopting a transparent approach throughout the process so that all parties involved (i.e. the partnership and the Accreditation Panel) have a common understanding of these Guidelines. 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.

9. How is the accreditation process conducted?

Initiating the Process

- 9.1 The interested partnership should return a signed Statement of Intent to the HKCAAVQ indicating that it is ready to undergo the IE, LPA or re-LPA of their collaborative NLP(s). In the Statement of Intent, a person / representative should be nominated jointly by the local and the non-local Operators as the authorised liaison point with the HKCAAVQ on all matters related to the accreditation exercise.
- 9.2 On the basis of the Statement of Intent, the 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 Statement of Intent and the Service Agreement must be signed by both the local Operator and the non-local Operator. The HKCAAVQ will only enter into a Service Agreement with the partnership whose NLP(s) is / are permitted to operate legally in Hong Kong. This refers to non-local courses that have been registered / exempted from registration under Cap 493 with current valid registration / exemption status.

- 9.3 Upon signing the Service Agreement, the partnership should proceed to prepare a self-contained Accreditation Document for submission to the HKCAAVQ by the stipulated deadline. The partnership may attend an Operator Workshop organised by the HKCAAVQ to gain a better understanding of the accreditation criteria, standards and process, with a view to making preparations for the self-evaluative Accreditation Document and the on-site visit.

The Panel

- 9.4 An Accreditation Panel will be formed to consider both the IE (if relevant IE status has not been attained by the partnership concerned) and the relevant LPA included in the exercise or the re-LPA in the exercise. The Panel consists of members with the requisite profiles and expertise.
- 9.5 The HKCAAVQ has full authority in the selection of members of the Panel for a particular exercise, after seeking views from the partnerships on any conflict of interest of the potential Panel Members. The Panel will include a HKCAAVQ professional staff member as the Panel Secretary. The Panel Secretary has a full voting right.

Preparing for Accreditation

- 9.6 A thorough understanding of what is required of 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 on-site visit.
 - To prepare the on-site visit.
 - To participate in the meeting sessions and engage in the discussions with the Panel during the on-site visit.
 - To provide the basic protocol and logistical support.
 - To provide feedback on factual accuracy of the draft accreditation report.
- 9.7 Accreditation is conducted by the HKCAAVQ on the assumption 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

- 9.8 To prepare an Accreditation Document that addresses the relevant accreditation criteria, local and non-local Operators are advised to make reference to the *Submission Guides and electronic templates for IE, LPA and re-LPA* on the HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes>. The partnership is required to present evidence to support its claim. As partnerships are diverse in nature, collaborative mode and operational arrangements, the possible sources of evidence listed in the Submission Guides 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. The HKCAAVQ understands that some of the information requested may be sensitive and of a confidential nature. All Panel Members sign a confidentiality statement and any confidential documents will be treated as such by the Panel.
- 9.9 Prior to submission of the Accreditation Document, the 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 Document should also be a searchable file. If needed, the HKCAAVQ will specify the number of hard copies of the Document that are required to be submitted, which should be printed double-sided and ring-bound. 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

- 9.10 The 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 the 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, the HKCAAVQ may terminate the accreditation exercise and any unused accreditation fee will be refunded to the partnership.
- 9.11 If the Panel concludes that there is adequate evidence contained in the Accreditation Document for it to reach a decision without conducting a meeting or on-site visit, then the HKCAAVQ may make the accreditation decisions without a meeting or on-site visit.

Initial Comments and Partnership's Responses

9.12 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 on-site visit or on site.

The On-site Visit

9.13 The on-site accreditation visit will be planned by the 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 students and employers.

9.14 Personnel from the partnership attending the visit should include representatives of the local and the non-local Operators. Such representatives should be persons with decision-making authority and be familiar with the NLPs, in relation to the partnership.

9.15 The timeframe for the on-site visit will be agreed with the partnership and included in the Service Agreement.

9.16 It is the responsibility of the partnership to ensure that there are suitable facilities available to the Panel during the on-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 the 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.

9.17 The precise 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 of the Initial Evaluation and / or Learning Programme Accreditation or Learning Programme Re-accreditation. 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, students, graduates and external stakeholders (If applicable, meetings with some of the stakeholders of the non-local Operator can be arranged via video-conferencing or any other feasible means to reduce the travelling time and cost.)
- 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
 - Exit meeting with the senior management of the partnership
- 9.18 The 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 the HKCAAVQ in the prescribed arrangements to ensure a smooth conduct of the on-site visit for the purpose of triangulation of evidence.
- 9.19 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 Operator will be informed of the Panel's recommended outcome of the exercise in writing within seven days after the on-site visit.

Panel's Evaluation and Accreditation Judgement

- 9.20 The Panel's evaluation will be based on the Accreditation Document and other relevant information gathered throughout the accreditation process, drawing reference from the NLP accreditation framework stipulated in these Guidelines.
- 9.21 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 on-site visits.

10. Preparing an Accreditation Report

- 10.1 On the basis of the findings and observations put forth by the Panel on completion of the on-site visits, the HKCAAVQ will make accreditation decisions to be presented in the accreditation report. A report with a positive outcome will also specify the validity period of an accreditation decision and the condition(s) or restriction(s), if any, subject to which the decision is to have effect.
- 10.2 If the partnership considers that there is any factual inaccuracy in the draft report, there will be an opportunity to draw this to the attention of the HKCAAVQ.
- 10.3 Upon clearance of factual accuracy, the finalised accreditation report stating the outcome for IE and / or LPA or re-LPA will be released to the partnership.
- 10.4 The HKCAAVQ may vary or withdraw the accreditation report if it is satisfied that the report has been produced in reliance on any misleading or false statement, representation or information, either oral or in writing, and / or if the partnerships are no longer competent to achieve the objectives as claimed in

the case of IE and / or if the NLP(s) no longer meet the standards of the claimed objectives and / or the QF standards in the case of LPA or re-LPA.

11. Accreditation Outcomes

11.1 Having regard to the Terms of Reference of the accreditation as stipulated in the signed Service Agreement and in its capacity as the Accreditation Authority under Cap 592, the HKCAAVQ will consider the Accreditation Panel's recommendations and make accreditation decisions in respect of the partnership and the NLP(s) concerned. Condition(s) (i.e. Pre-conditions and / or Requirements) and restriction(s) may be specified.

The accreditation outcome will be one of the following:

- Accreditation is approved at specified QF level(s) within a stipulated validity period without any Pre-condition(s) and / or Requirements; or
- Accreditation is approved at specified QF level(s) within a stipulated validity period subject to the fulfillment by the partnership of certain Pre-conditions and / or Requirements by the stipulated deadline(s); or
- Accreditation as sought is not approved.

11.2 Pre-conditions are to be fulfilled by the partnership prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status while Requirements are to be fulfilled by the partnership by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period.

11.3 Restrictions may be specified in the decision. Under such circumstances, the partnership is expected to comply with the restriction(s) on an on-going basis unless otherwise advised by the HKCAAVQ.

11.4 If the qualification of a learning programme is determined not to be meeting the level of the QF that corresponds to the qualification title of the learning programme, the accreditation decision shall be non-approval. For example, if a bachelor's degree programme is determined to be not meeting QF level 5 under the QF, the degree programme cannot be accredited with a qualification title bearing bachelor degree. Under such circumstances the accreditation decision shall be non-approval.

11.5 Statements of Accreditation confirming the granting of the accreditation status to the partnership and the NLP(s) concerned will be issued together with the Accreditation Report(s) for approval cases, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all of the Pre-condition(s) for relevant cases with Pre-condition(s). In the latter case, the validity period will only commence after satisfactory fulfilment of the Pre-condition(s).

11.6 Qualifications of accredited NLPs may be entered into the QR in accordance with the terms and procedures stipulated by the QR Authority. The accreditation status will lapse should the learning programme concerned cease to be a registered / exempted course under Cap 493.

12. Possible follow-up after accreditation

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

- 12.1 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**.

Appeal

- 12.2 If the partnership is aggrieved by the decision of the HKCAAVQ, the partnership can lodge an appeal to the Appeal Board against the accreditation decision, the validity period of the decision, the condition(s) or restriction(s) as stated in the Accreditation Report. Details of the Appeal Procedure are published in accordance with Part 3 (Section 13) of Cap 592 and can be accessed at the QF website at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.

Substantial Changes to Accreditation Status

- 12.3 It is the responsibility of the partnership to inform the HKCAAVQ of any substantial change(s) to the accreditation status of the partnership or the programme, before the change is made. In case of doubt, the partnership should consult the HKCAAVQ on the need for seeking approval on substantial change(s) as soon as feasible, and prior to making any change(s).
- 12.4 *Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status* are available on the HKCAAVQ website. The accreditation status of IE of the partnership in collaboration or of the programme will lapse if substantial changes have been introduced without the HKCAAVQ's prior approval.

Advertisements Relating to the QF and the QR

- 12.5 The partnership is required to comply with Section 18 of Cap 592 when publishing advertisements that relate to the QF and the QR.

Entry of Qualifications of Accredited NLPs into the QR

- 12.6 Information about how to enter the qualification of an accredited learning programme into the QR is available on the QR website at <http://www.hkqr.gov.hk>.

Expiry of Validity Period

- 12.7 An accredited partnership which has not applied for LPA within the range of the approved QF level(s) within the two-year validity period but would wish to retain the granted IE status will have to apply to the HKCAAVQ to extend the status. An application for extension has to be substantiated with justification and reach the HKCAAVQ at least three months before the expiry of the two-

year validity period. The HKCAAVQ will exercise its discretion to approve such an extension, taking into consideration whether the partnership can demonstrate its capabilities and competency to run an NLP operation in the extended period. Acceptable evidence of its capabilities and competency may include reasonable future plans and an indication of which registered / exempted NLP(s) will be put forth for LPA. An extension will be granted ONCE only. The extended IE status will automatically lapse when the extended validity period expires.

- 12.8 Partnerships must have their NLPs re-accredited by the HKCAAVQ before the expiry date of the validity period unless otherwise notified. Operators are to seek re-accreditation of the accredited programmes ten months prior to the expiry date of the validity period. If re-accreditation is not successfully completed by the expiry date, the accreditation status will automatically lapse and the registration of the related qualifications of the NLPs in the QR will be expired.

13. What are the accreditation timeline and fees?

- 13.1 The schedule for accreditation of NLPs normally takes 20 weeks to complete, counting from the date of submission of Accreditation Document by the partnership to the release of the Accreditation Report. The following is an indicative timeline.

Steps	Action	Responsible Parties
Preparation Stage	Submission of Statement of Intent	Partnership
	Operators' Training Workshop	HKCAAVQ, Partnership
	Signing of Service Agreement	HKCAAVQ, Partnership
	Preparation of Accreditation Document	Partnership
	Formation of Panel	HKCAAVQ, Partnership

Indicative Accreditation Timeline

Steps	Action	Responsible Parties
Weeks 1 – 3	HKCAAVQ's initial examination of the adequacy of the Accreditation Document and state of readiness of the partnership to confirm that the accreditation can proceed	HKCAAVQ

Weeks 4 – 8	Panel's Initial Comments and Partnership's Response	HKCAAVQ, Partnership
Weeks 9 – 11	On-site Visits	HKCAAVQ, Partnership
Weeks 12 – 18	Drafting of Accreditation Reports	HKCAAVQ
Week 19	Checking of Factual Accuracy	Partnership
End of Week 20	Release of Accreditation Report	HKCAAVQ

13.2 The HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit self-financed body. The accreditation fee is levied on the basis of a full cost recovery principle. The accreditation fee for IE will be charged per partnership. The fees for LPA and re-LPA vary according to QF level. The standard accreditation fee schedule, as approved by the Secretary for Education, is available on the HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes>.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation Document	A self-evaluative document, with supporting evidence, prepared by a partnership to address the accreditation criteria.
Accreditation Panel	A Panel consisting of experts with the requisite profiles and expertise formed for the purpose of the Initial Evaluation of collaborative provision and / or Learning Programme Accreditation or Learning Programme Re-accreditation of the non-local learning programmes under the relevant collaborative provisions. A HKCAAVQ staff member will play the role of the Panel Secretary.
Awarding Body	In relation to a qualification, meaning the person, school, institution, organisation or other body which grants the qualification.
Collaborative Provision	It involves a Hong Kong Operator (local Operator) and a non-local Operator jointly operating a programme of learning in Hong Kong, which leads to a qualification awarded by a non-local Operator. The local Operator and the non-local Operator are regarded as acting jointly as the partnership of the learning programme to be accredited.
Condition	A condition is part of the accreditation decisions to be fulfilled by the partnership in Initial Evaluation and / or Learning Programme Accreditation or Learning Programme Re-accreditation prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status (Pre-condition) or by specified deadline(s) during the validity period (Requirement).
Criteria	The elements for consideration during an accreditation exercise. These elements are related to the “input”, “process”, “output”, “context” and “outcome” of the subject of accreditation (i.e. the partnerships / learning programmes) and are expressed as the four areas for accreditation under Initial Evaluation and ten areas for accreditation under Learning Programme Accreditation in paragraphs 6.7 and 7.5 of these Guidelines respectively.

Evidence-based	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means that accreditation decisions are to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the partnership to support its claim that it meets the accreditation standards stipulated in these Guidelines.
Fitness for Purpose	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means that the partnership and the learning programme(s) are accredited on the basis of their stated objectives, in view that partnerships are different in nature, size, operational complexity and scope of expertise.
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.
Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)	It is an overall evaluation of the non-local learning programme to determine whether the learning programme meets the required standards to achieve its claimed objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes commensurate with the competency standards prescribed in the Generic Level Descriptors (QF standards).
Learning Outcome	A student's attained knowledge, skills and application ability as a result of completing the learning programme.
Local Operator	An Operator whose base of operation is in Hong Kong (including the local office of a non-local educational institution).

Non-local Courses (learning programmes)	Learning programmes that are registered / exempted under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap 493) on the basis of comparability with the home courses delivered in the home countries of the non-local Operators.
Non-local Operator	A local Operator's partner whose base of operation is outside Hong Kong.
On-site Visit	A visit to the partnership's premises in Hong Kong which is an integral part of an accreditation exercise conducted primarily to collect evidence for evaluating whether the accreditation criteria are met.
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.
Peer Review	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means involving academic and professional experts with relevant expertise and experience as Panel Members in the accreditation.
Pre-condition	A Pre-condition is part of the accreditation decisions to be fulfilled by the partnership prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status.
QF Level	The level of the learning programme pitched against the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Government at http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_GLD.asp .
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.
Re-accreditation	It is similar to Learning Programme Accreditation to be conducted prior to the expiry of the validity period of the former learning programme accreditation / re-accreditation. The re-accreditation exercise will take into account the findings of the previous accreditation / re-accreditation exercise and follow-up actions taken by the partnership.

Requirement	A Requirement is part of the accreditation decisions to be fulfilled by the partnership by specified deadline(s) during the validity period of the approved accreditation status.
Restriction	A restriction is any limitation which may be attached to the HKCAAVQ's determination as stated in the accreditation report.
Standards	The qualitative or quantitative benchmarks under individual accreditation criteria for the Panel's assessment as to whether the accreditation subject (i.e. the partnerships / learning programmes) meets the quality requirements. They are expressed in greater detail under each accreditation criterion in the Submission Guides on the HKCAAVQ website.
Statement of Accreditation	It confirms the granting of the accreditation status to the partnership and the non-local learning programme(s) concerned. It will be issued together with the Accreditation Reports for approval cases, or upon satisfactory fulfillment of all of the Pre-condition(s) for relevant cases with Pre-condition(s).
Substantial Change	Any changes which may have an impact on meeting the criteria for accreditation. For details, please refer to <i>Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status</i> available at the HKCAAVQ website.
Threshold Standard	It refers to the minimum quality requirements stipulated in these Guidelines and to local prevailing requirements for higher education providers operating in Hong Kong such as the Generic Level Descriptors in the QF and any other relevant policy intention / regulations / guidelines / common descriptors / specification of competency standards (SCS) promulgated by the Hong Kong SAR Government.
Validity Period	The period of time in which an approved accreditation status is effective as stipulated in the accreditation report.