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

Thematic Analysis
of Accreditation Outcomes in
Learning Programme Accreditation
and Re-accreditation

December 2025

Table of Content

Executive Summary

In 2021, HKCAAVQ underwent an Agency Review conducted by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and was confirmed to obtain "substantial compliance" with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The ENQA Agency Review recommended that HKCAAVQ publish regular and data-driven thematic analyses to identify trends, areas of good practices, common challenges and persistent difficulties, with detailed analysis of selected topics under *ENQA ESG 3.4 Thematic Analysis*. In response, HKCAAVQ has implemented a plan to conduct regular thematic analyses. This initiative not only addresses the requirements under the ENQA Standard, but also aims to provide valuable insights to foster collaboration between institutions and industry, and shape our strategies for enhancing services and support for the sector by highlighting development needs, emerging trends, and challenges faced by operators.

This report analyses the outcomes of selected accreditation conducted by HKCAAVQ, with an aim to identify shared and recurring challenges and improvement priorities across Hong Kong's self-financing post-secondary education sector. It presents a comprehensive thematic analysis of 1,205 accreditation determinations and advice drawn from published accreditation reports of 101 Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Re-accreditation (re-LPA) exercises issued between October 2020 and May 2025. These accreditation exercises correspond to Stage 2 of HKCAAVQ's Four-stage Quality Assurance Process and cover programmes from undergraduate (HKQF Level 5) to postgraduate levels (HKQF Levels 6 and 7). The analysis employed an inductive qualitative approach to analyse the accreditation determinations and advice at the programme level.

Key Findings of this thematic analysis include:

1. The analysis shows a higher concentration of accreditation determinations and advice in LPA-4: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (234 decisions) and LPA-3: Programme Structure and Content (206 decisions). This pattern highlights an emphasis on programme design and delivery in the accreditation exercises to ensure alignment with programme objectives and intended learning outcomes.

2. The main gaps, as evidenced by a high concentration of Pre-conditions and Requirements, concentrate on four themes that together account for over 60% of such determinations: Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review (LPA-7), Curriculum Design and Coherence (LPA-3),

1

Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise (LPA-5), and Student Admission Mechanism (LPA-2).

3. The most frequent themes of Recommendations and Advice are Curriculum Design and Coherence (LPA-3), Staff Development and Management (LPA-5), and Pedagogy and Student Support (LPA-4), highlighting the emphasis on continuous improvement and quality enhancement in curriculum design, learning and teaching effectiveness, and staff development.

The findings of this thematic analysis will provide operators with valuable insights into the common issues, challenges and difficulties identified through programme accreditation exercises, strengthen alignment with HKCAAVQ's accreditation standards, and support the ongoing development and sustainable enhancement of programme quality. For HKCAAVQ, this analysis will inform the design and development of targeted training initiatives for both operators and specialists, with a focus on capacity building and the promotion of effective quality enhancement practices. This report serves as a tool to facilitate the sector to address shared challenges and foster the sector's continuous growth and enhancement.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) was established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150) and may conduct accreditation tests generally or as authorised under any other local enactment.

Under the Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap. 592), HKCAAVQ performs the dual roles of a gate-opener and a gate-keeper. As a gate-opener, HKCAAVQ supports operators *(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)* in understanding the accreditation requirements through the provision of information and training about the accreditation standards and process. HKCAAVQ also performs its gate-keeping role through the accreditation process to ensure that HKQF-recognised programmes and qualifications meet the HKQF standards under the specified level of the HKQF as described in the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF).

Figure 1 summarises the accreditation tests conducted under the AAVQO (Cap. 592) and those conducted under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150).
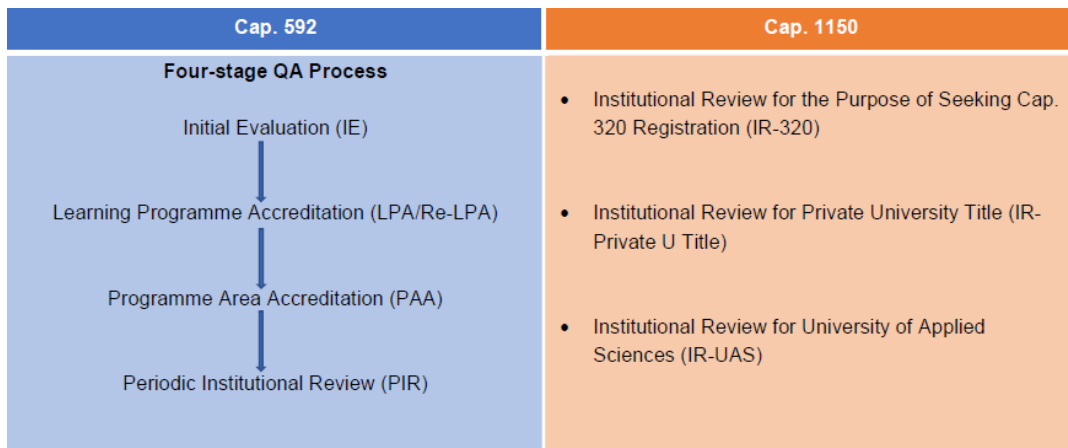

Cap. 592	Cap. 1150
Four-stage QA Process Initial Evaluation (IE) ↓ Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA/Re-LPA) ↓ Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) ↓ Periodic Institutional Review (PIR)	• Institutional Review for the Purpose of Seeking Cap. 320 Registration (IR-320) • Institutional Review for Private University Title (IR-Private U Title) • Institutional Review for University of Applied Sciences (IR-UAS)

Figure 1: Accreditation tests conducted under Cap. 592 and Cap. 1150

HKCAAVQ has developed the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process (the "Process") for operators who wish to seek accreditation services under the HKQF, including the methods, procedures and standards of accreditation. To perform HKCAAVQ's role as the gate-keeper and gate-opener, the Process maintains a minimum level of competence requirements for meeting the HKQF

standards when an Operator first enters the Process. The Process then allows the Operator to demonstrate higher levels of competence in terms of effective delivery and QA for continuous enhancement of their learning provisions. The four stages of progression in the Process are illustrated below:
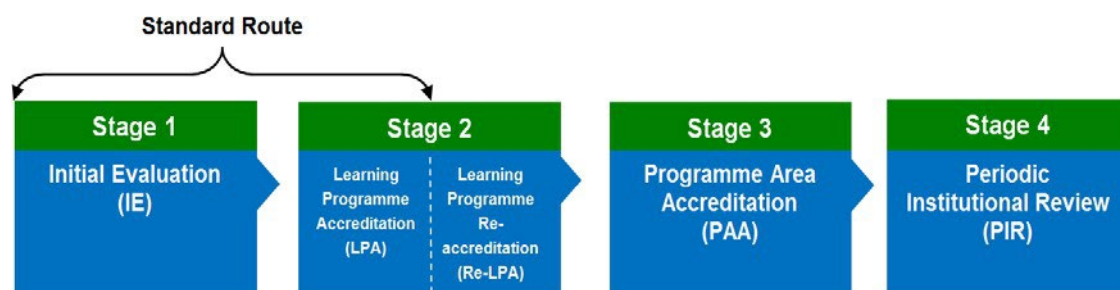

Figure 2: The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

The following table summarises the purpose of each stage in the Process:

Stage	Purpose Statement
Initial Evaluation	To ascertain whether an Operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) that meet HKQF standards up to a certain HKQF level.
Learning Programme Accreditation/ Re-accreditation	The purpose is twofold: To ascertain whether a learning programme (proposed or accredited) meets an HKQF standard to achieve the claimed objectives. To ascertain whether the Operator of a learning programme is competent to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of its programme operation to achieve the claimed programme objectives.
Programme Area Accreditation	To ascertain whether an Operator is competent to quality assure its learning programme(s) within a programme area up to a certain HKQF level, as demonstrated from the track record of its operation of accredited learning programmes in a particular discipline or industry area, and its capacity to enhance its organisational effectiveness to achieve the educational/training objectives.
Periodic Institutional Review	To ascertain whether an Operator continues to be effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation by formulating and implementing actions based on evidence.

This report conducts a thematic analysis focusing on published accreditation reports from Stage 2 of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process, including Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA).

1.2. Purpose of the Thematic Analysis

This thematic analysis is a strategic initiative undertaken by HKCAAVQ in response to the 2021 ENQA Agency Review. It moves beyond case-by-case findings to identify common themes and shared challenges in programme accreditaion across Hong Kong's self-financing post-secondary education sector.

By aggregating accreditation determinations and advice across LPA and re-LPA, this analysis provides evidence-based insights for operators and highlights recurring challenges and priorities for quality enhancement. It also informs HKCAAVQ's strategies for strengthening services and support to the sector.

1.3. Scope of the Analysis

This thematic analysis focuses on the findings from Stage 2: Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Re-accreditation (re-LPA). While the purpose of LPA is (i) to ascertain whether a learning programme meets an HKQF standard to achieve the claimed objectives, and (ii) to ascertain whether the Operator of a learning programme is competent to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of its programme operation to achieve the claimed programme objectives, re-LPA is the cyclical re-evaluation of an accredited learning programme which shares the same purpose and standards of LPA, but with a focus on improvements and demonstrated outcomes since the LPA or the last re-LPA.

In LPA and re-LPA, the following seven domain competencies are assessed:
LPA-1: Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
LPA-2: Learner Admission and Selection
LPA-3: Programme Structure and Content
LPA-4: Learning, Teaching and Assessment
LPA-5: Programme Leadership and Staffing
LPA-6: Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services
LPA-7: Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance

The dataset for this analysis comprises pre-conditions, requirements, recommendations and advice extracted from 101 LPA and re-LPA accreditation reports published between October 2020 and May 2025. These reports cover a total of 156 learning programmes from HKQF Levels 5 to 7, reflecting the

breadth of academic provision in the self-financing sector across several key dimensions:

- Programme level: The analysis includes 112 undergraduate (UG) programmes (Bachelor's degrees at HKQF Level 5) and 44 postgraduate (PG) programmes (including Master's degrees at HKQF Level 6 and Doctoral degrees at HKQF Level 7).

- Programme type: The scope covers 85 local programmes, and 71 non-local programmes delivered through partnerships between a local Operator and a non-local degree-awarding institution.

- Programme discipline: The programmes analysed in this report encompass 13 Areas of Study and Training, including Business and Management, Education, Computer Science and Information Technology, and other disciplines.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data Source

The dataset consists of Pre-conditions, Requirements and Recommendations, as part of the accreditation determination, and Advice offered by accreditation panels to support improvements to the operators and/or its learning programmes:

- **Pre-condition** is part of the accreditation determination which must be fulfilled by the Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status.
- **Requirement** is part of the accreditation determination which must be fulfilled by the Operator by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period so as to maintain the accreditation status.
- **Recommendation** is part of the accreditation determination, which has continuous improvement and quality enhancement purposes, in relation to the accreditation standards. It is non-binding in nature but an Operator should explain if/how the recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation or PIR.
- **Advice** is an opinion of the Accreditation Panel for the continuous quality enhancement and excellence of an Operator and/or learning programme(s) in specific areas of education and training. It is non-binding and the Operator may choose whether or not to report follow-up actions taken, if any, in the next accreditation exercise.

Restrictions are also part of the accreditation determination which is to be complied with by an Operator by the specified deadline(s) before the validity period and/or to be complied with during the validity period. However, in consideration that the Operator's ability to comply with a Restriction is normally dependent on actions taken by Third Parties, such as government departments or professional bodies, Restrictions are intentionally excluded from this analysis.

Each accreditation exercise may cover one or multiple programmes. Pre-conditions, requirements, recommendations, and advice may apply to one or more programmes and are counted per programme to reflect the programme-based analysis. In total, 1,205 entries comprising accreditation determinations and advice are recorded.

2.2. Analytical Approach

This thematic analysis uses an inductive and data-driven qualitative approach. While accreditation determinations and advice are categorised under the seven LPA domains of competence, themes were derived from the dataset rather than pre-specified. The analysis yields Key Analytical Themes and Sub-theme

Clusters for each domain, presented in Appendix A as the Thematic Framework of the Analysis. Following the qualitative analysis, the categorised data was aggregated using Pivot Tables to provide a quantitative overview of the findings, allowing the identification of frequencies and the comparison of themes across key variables such as programme type (Local/Non-local), programme level (UG/PG), and accreditation stage (LPA/re-LPA).

3. Overall Findings and Analysis

This section presents a holistic overview of the analysis of the entire dataset, highlighting the trends and patterns observed across the seven LPA domains.

3.1. Distribution of Accreditation Determinations and Advice by LPA Domains

An analysis of the 1,205 accreditation determinations and advice across the seven LPA domains indicates where accreditation scrutiny was most concentrated. As shown in Figure 3, **LPA-4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment** and **LPA-3 Programme Structure and Content** together account for 36.5% of all accreditation determinations and advice, indicating that programme curriculum, and the associated learning, teaching and assessment approaches were the domains most frequently considered by panels. These findings highlight an emphasis on programme design and delivery in the accreditation exercises to ensure alignment with programme objectives and intended learning outcomes.
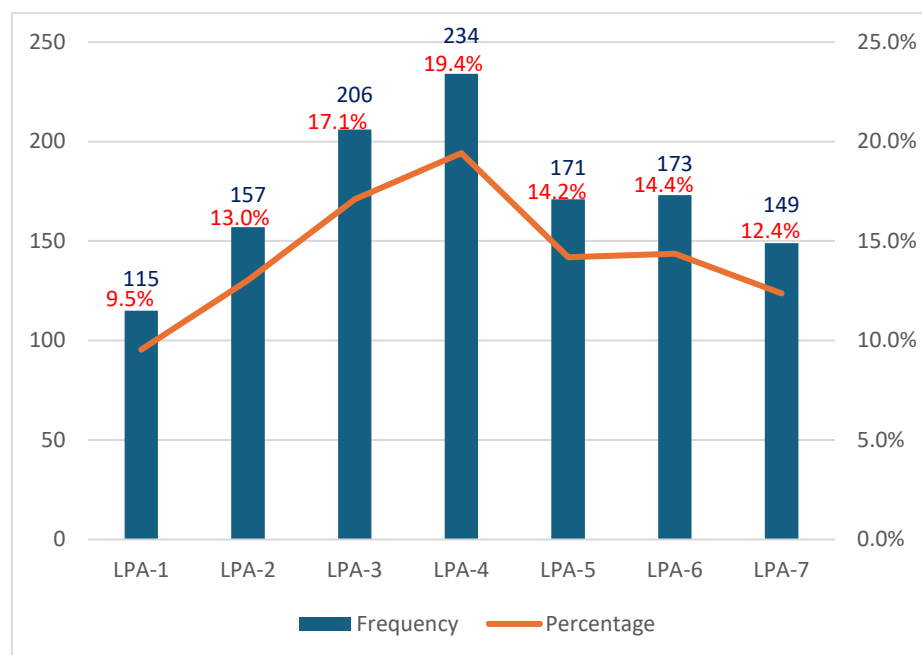

Figure 3: Distribution of Accreditation Determinations and Advice by LPA Domains (n=1,205)

3.2. Analysis of Conditions (Pre-conditions and Requirements)

A decision to impose Conditions, either as pre-conditions or requirements, forms part of HKCAAVQ's accreditation determination. Conditions are stipulated in the accreditation determination when HKCAAVQ, based on the panel's recommendation, considers that the Operator is to fill certain critical gaps in order to fully and holistically meet the accreditation standards through

the fulfilment of specified Condition(s). Accordingly, if the accreditation report includes Conditions, the approval determination by HKCAAVQ has effect subject to the fulfilment of those Conditions.

A total of 98 Conditions (Pre-conditions and Requirements) were analysed, with the results presented in Figure 4. The results indicate that 50% of all Conditions were concentrated on four key themes: **Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review** under LPA-7 (21.4%), **Curriculum Design and Coherence** under LPA-3 (15.3%), and **Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise** under LPA-5 (13.3%).
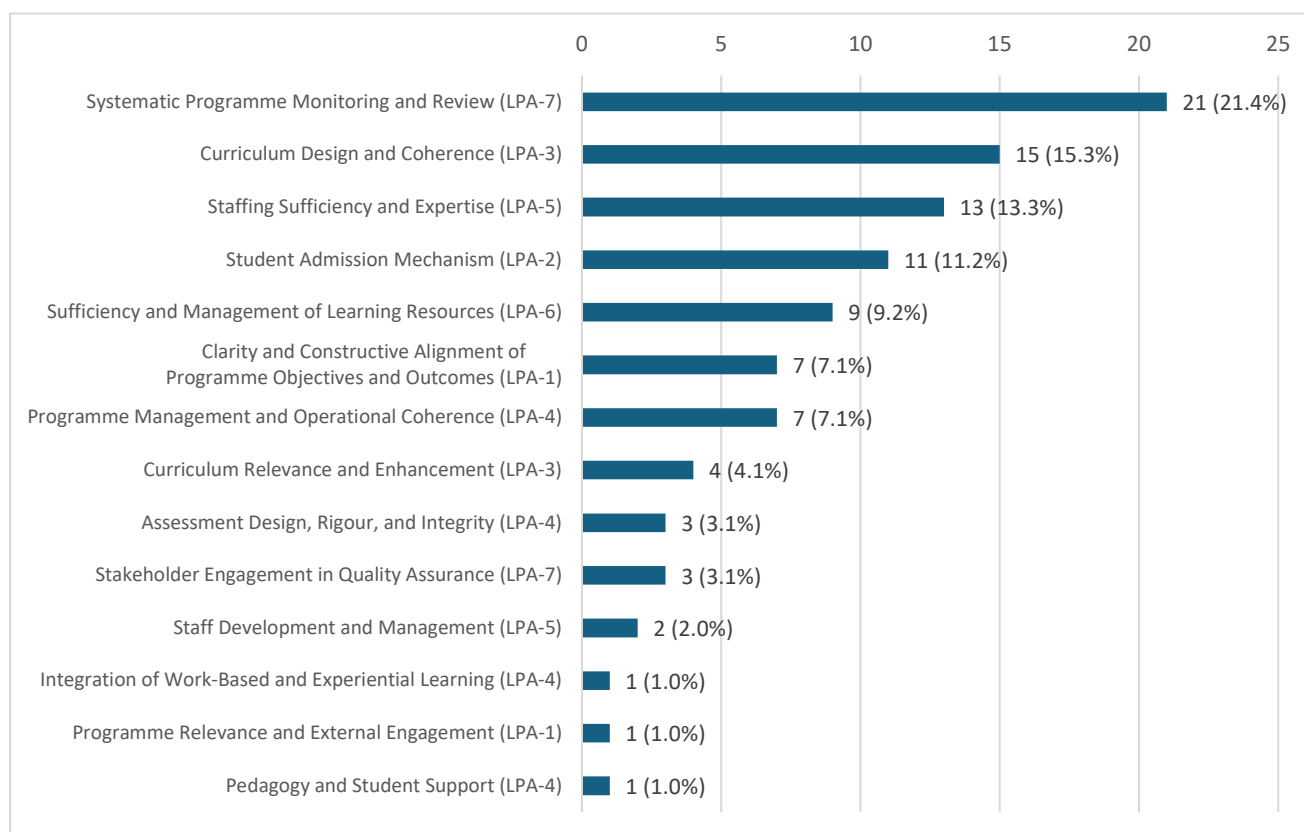

Figure 4: Distribution of Conditions by Key Analytical Theme (n=98)

3.3. Key Comparative Insights

Comparative analysis was conducted by programme type (Local/Non-local), programme level (UG/PG), and accreditation stage (LPA/re-LPA) to provide additional insights into the accreditation outcomes across different types of programme accreditations.

- **Local vs Non-local Programmes:**
  The dataset includes 752 accreditation determinations and advice for local programmes and 453 for non-local programmes delivered via partnership.

- Local programmes had a higher rate of Conditions (9.0% for local programmes vs 6.6% for non-local programmes).
- **Curriculum Design and Coherence** under LPA-3 was a more salient issue for local programmes (13.3% for local programmes vs 7.5% for non-local programmes).
- Non-local programmes faced more challenges with adaptation and collaborative delivery. **Pedagogy and Student Support** under LPA-4 was a more prominent issue (11.7% for non-local programmes vs 3.5% for local programmes), reflecting challenges in adapting pedagogies to the Hong Kong context.

- **Undergraduate (UG) vs Postgraduate (PG) Programmes:**
  The dataset includes 745 accreditation determinations and advice for UG programmes and 460 for PG programmes.
  - **Programme Relevance and External Engagement** under LPA-1 was a more overwhelming issue for undergraduate programmes (6% for UG programmes vs 1.7% for PG programmes).
  - PG programmes showed a much higher concentration of findings related to academic rigour and faculty expertise. **Staff Development and Management** under LPA-5 was a significantly greater focus (12.4% for PG programmes vs 5.2% for UG programmes). Similarly, **Clarity and Constructive Alignment** under LPA-1 was proportionally a greater challenge at the postgraduate level (8.3% for PG programmes vs 3.2% for UG programmes).

- **Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) vs Re-accreditation (re-LPA):**
  The dataset includes 276 accreditation determinations and advice for LPA and 929 for re-LPA.
  - **Curriculum Design and Coherence** under LPA-3 was a more dominant theme for LPA (18.1% for LPA vs 9.0% for re-LPA).
  - **Strategy and Planning in Student Recruitment and Admission** under LPA-2 (2.2% in LPA vs 5.8% for re-LPA), **Provision of Student Support Services** under LPA-6 (2.5% for LPA vs 6.1% for re-LPA), **Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review** under LPA-7 (4.0% for LPA vs 7.0% for re-LPA) and **Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance** under LPA-7 (3.6% for LPA vs 6.8% for re-LPA) constituted a noticeably larger share of the accreditation determinations identified in re-LPA compared to LPA.

4. Domain-Specific Analysis

4.1. LPA-1: Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes

LPA-1 serves as the cornerstone of the accreditation process. An examination of the 115 accreditation determinations and advice in this domain reveals two key themes: **Clarity and Constructive Alignment of Programme Objectives and Outcomes** and **Programme Relevance and External Engagement**. As shown in Figure 5 below, the findings are relatively even between these two themes.
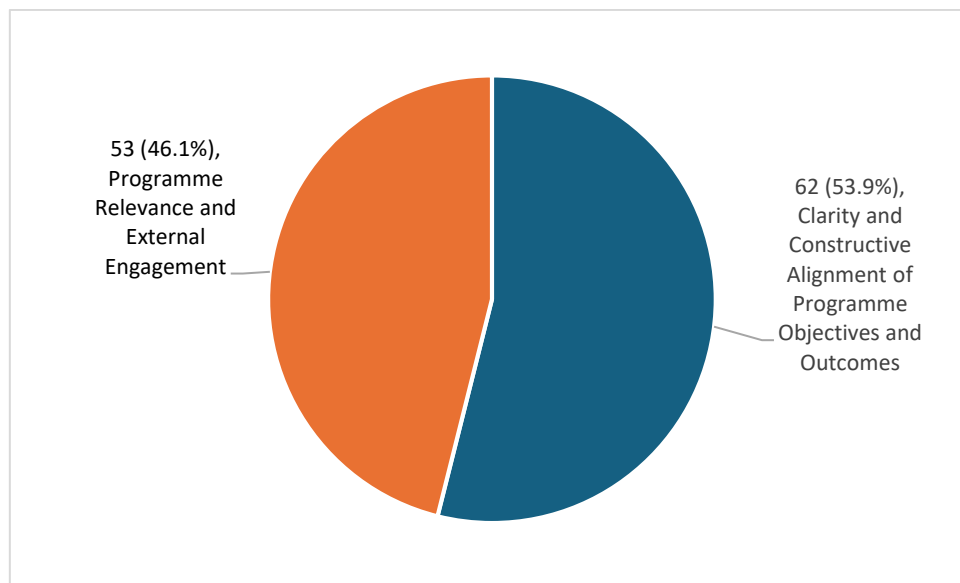

Figure 5: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-1 (n=115)

- **Key Theme 1: Clarity and Constructive Alignment of Programme Objectives and Outcomes (n=62)**
  - The largest sub-theme cluster was **Alignment of POs/PILOs with Curriculum (n=27)**. Accreditation determinations and advice frequently required operators to ensure a coherent alignment among the programme title, programme objectives, programme intended learning outcomes, and the content being delivered.

  > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to review and amend the Programme to ensure a coherent alignment between the positioning of the programme in its title, Programme Objectives (POs), Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and corresponding curriculum design."*

  - Another notable cluster was **Wording and Measurability of POs/PILOs (n=21)**. Panels required operators to refine programme objectives and programme intended learning outcomes by using

clearer, more precise action verbs to ensure that outcomes were measurable.

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to review and revise, as appropriate, the aspect of 'To be' of the PILOs. All the intended learning outcomes should be measurable with clear outcome indicators."*

- The cluster on **Clarity of Programme Positioning and Graduate Pathways (n=14)** identified the need for greater clarity in defining the programme's unique focus and graduate outcomes.

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to specify substantively the meaning of 'prepare students to serve as a pastor' in PO 5 and PILO 5. The inclusion of a parenthetical clause to clarify that 'becoming a pastor should require undergoing further training after graduation' is needed."*

- **Key Theme 2: Programme Relevance and External Engagement (n=53)**
  This theme pertains to programme relevance to the community, industry, and professional landscape, and to the evidence of robust mechanisms for engaging with and responding to external stakeholders. It was a particular concern for **Undergraduate programmes**, which accounted for 45 of the 53 findings in this theme. The emphasis was especially pronounced in highly vocational disciplines, such as **Sciences**, **Engineering & Technology**, and **Services**, where 100% of accreditation determinations and advice under LPA-1 were related to this theme.
  - The largest sub-theme cluster was **Alignment with Industry/Community Needs (n=33)**, focusing on the need for programmes addressing community / industry needs.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should develop mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of institution-industry collaboration and engagement through regular and sustainable dialogue with industry partners and employers..."*

  - The sub-theme cluster, **Alignment with External Stakeholders (Professional/Regulatory/Academic) (n=10)**, focused on the need to engage professional and regulatory bodies to ensure the programme meets external standards and provides clear pathways to professional recognition for graduates.

> *Example (Advice): "The Panel advised the Operator to actively pursue this intention to obtain professional recognition for the Programme."*

- o The cluster on **Programme Communication to the Public (n=10)** focused on how a programme's relevance was communicated to the public, including the need for clear marketing propositions and accurate descriptions of employment pathways.

> *Example (Advice): "The Operator is advised to promote the distinctiveness of the Professional Diploma as a recognised qualification... through both formal and informal networking and engagement with industry leaders to enhance student enrolment and employability."*

4.2. LPA-2: Learner Admission and Selection

An analysis of 157 accreditation determinations and advice in this domain reveals three key themes: **Student Admission Mechanism**, **Strategy and Planning in Student Recruitment and Admission**, and **Post-Admission Monitoring and Review**. As shown in Figure 6, the findings are concentrated on student selection, admission policy and strategy, which together account for 84.7% of accreditation determinations and advice. Notably, the data shows that all Conditions issued in this domain fell under the **Student Admission Mechanism** theme, highlighting persistent issues in student admission and selection.
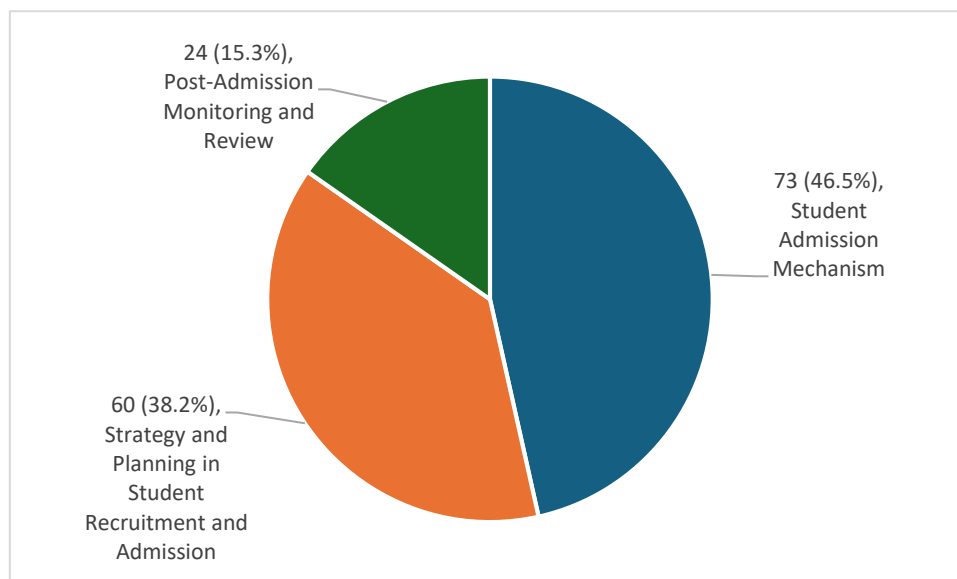

Figure 6: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-2 (n=157)

- **Key Theme 1: Student Admission Mechanism (n=73)**
  This theme addresses the mechanism of admission process, including the clarity and appropriateness of entry requirements, the procedural rigour of selection methods, and the management of non-standard and advanced standing pathways. It also accounted for 60.7% of the LPA-2 accreditation determinations and advice for non-local programmes.
    - The largest sub-theme cluster was **Defining and Assessment of Entry Requirements (n=35)**, focusing on the need for clearly articulated and appropriate admission criteria, including the assessment of applicants' language proficiency and relevant subject knowledge.

      > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to review the language aspects in the admission requirements and curriculum, and devise appropriate arrangements to ensure that students admitted to the Programme have adequate language proficiency..."*

    - Another critical cluster was **Management of Non-Standard and Advanced Standing Pathways (n=24)**, highlighting the challenges in managing admissions for applicants admitted via non-standard entry route. A significant number of Conditions were related to the need for rigorous assessment, such as module-by-module mapping, for granting advanced standing.

      > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to provide the evidence of module-by-module mapping for graduates of sub-degree programmes seeking Year 2 and Year 3 entry..."*

    - The cluster on **Procedural Rigour of Selection (n=14)** focused on the robustness of selection processes, including verification of applicant credentials and assurance of fairness through measures such as interview panels.

      > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to strengthen its admission process to ensure adherence to the approved student quota of the Programmes."*

- **Key Theme 2: Strategy and Planning in Student Recruitment and Admission (n=60)**
  This theme is concerned with the strategic aspects of student recruitment and the clarity of communication with prospective students. Panels expected operators to have a coherent, evidence-based recruitment strategy and to provide accurate and accessible information to the target student body.

o The dominant cluster was **Recruitment Strategy and Market Analysis (n=51)**, wherein operators should develop coherent and effective recruitment strategies based on market analysis and a clear understanding of the programme's positioning and niche.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should reconsider the niche of the programme in the market and target students before developing a coherent and effective strategy... to ensure long-term sustainability and growth..."*

o The cluster on **Clarity and Accuracy of Communication with Applicants (n=9)** focused on ensuring that information provided to prospective students in promotional materials and handbooks is clear and accurate.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should ensure that the prospectus, website and promotional materials, provide clear advice to prospective students that, without either a cognate undergraduate degree or significant work experience..., it would be difficult to undertake either of the Programmes."*

- **Key Theme 3: Post-Admission Monitoring and Review (n=24)**
  This theme emphasises the systematic monitoring of student cohorts to validate the appropriateness of entry requirements and to identify any support needs. All 24 accreditation determinations and advice in this theme fell under the **Monitoring of Student Performance** cluster.

> *Example (Advice): "The Operator is advised to monitor students' performance throughout the Programme and adapt entry requirements as appropriate."*

4.3. LPA-3: Programme Structure and Content

The analysis of 206 accreditation determinations and advice in this domain reveals two key themes: **Curriculum Design and Coherence** and **Curriculum Relevance and Enhancement**. As shown in Figure 7, the results indicate that **Curriculum Design and Coherence** was the predominant area of scrutiny, accounting for 65% of all accreditation determinations and advice and the vast majority of Conditions (79%) of this domain.
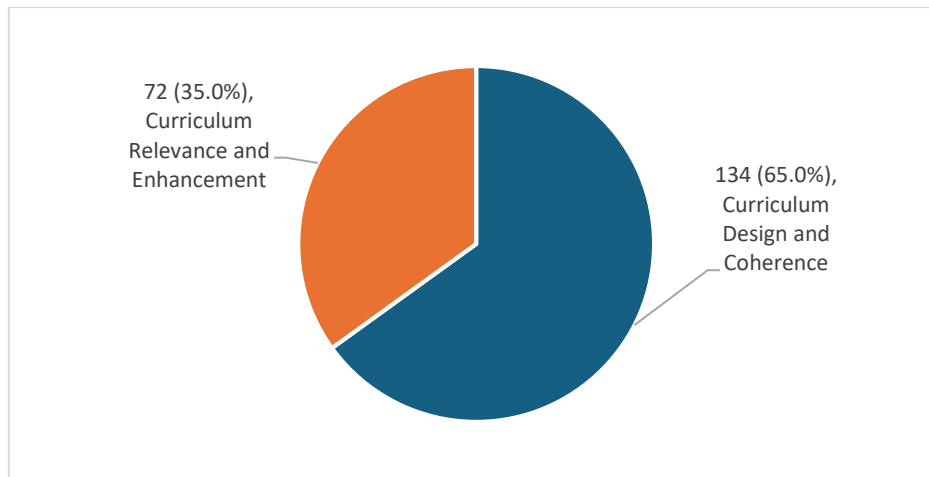
Figure 7: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-3 (n=206)

- **Key Theme 1: Curriculum Design and Coherence (n=134)**
  This theme is concerned with curriculum design, programme structure, and overall coherence. The high concentration of Conditions indicates that the issues related to this theme were considered critical.
  - ○ The largest sub-theme cluster was **Programme Coherence and Integration (n=56)**. Accreditation determinations and advice frequently required operators to ensure a clear alignment between the programme's title, its outcomes, and the content of its modules, including capstone projects.

    > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to review and revise the two programmes to ensure alignment between programme title, aims, Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and curriculum..."*

  - ○ The second largest cluster was **Programme Structure and Flexibility (n=37)**, which addressed the overall organisation of the curriculum, including the provision of sufficient elective choices, the use of bridging or foundation modules, and the alignment of student workload with the assigned credit value.

    > *Example (Requirement): "For the benefit of students, the... programme is required to provide choices of elective modules for full-time and part-time students each semester..."*

  - ○ **Content Balance and Sufficiency (n=22):** This cluster concerned the breadth and depth of the curriculum, ensuring the coverage of fundamental concepts and the provision of sufficient training in key skills.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should review the curriculum to ensure that they are adequately addressing the fundamentals of data visualisation..."*

- **Integration of Practical/Work-based Learning (n=19):** This cluster addressed the need to clearly define and integrate practical learning components such as internships, practicums, and work-based learning.

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to define and differentiate clearly between Practicum and Internship, which constitute significant learning components in the Programme."*

- **Key Theme 2: Curriculum Relevance and Enhancement (n=72)**
  This theme is concerned with programme relevance to industry trends, contextualisation for the local environment, and the robust processes for continuous improvement.
    - The most significant cluster was **Content Relevance and Currency (n=41)**, emphasising the need for the curriculum to reflect contemporary knowledge and practice, including incorporating local content and case studies, embedding emerging technologies, and ensuring reading lists are up-to-date.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should consider including more local (Hong Kong and Greater Bay Area) content and case studies in the programme, particularly in relation to regulatory issues."*

  - **Curriculum Review and Governance (n=21):** This cluster focused on the formal processes for curriculum review and enhancement. Accreditation determinations and advice pointed to the need for systematic curriculum reviews informed by industry developments and clear communication of programme changes.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should regularly review the programme curriculum so as to ensure that industry updates are integrated into the curriculum."*

  - **Stakeholder Engagement in Curriculum Development (n=10):** This cluster highlighted the importance of collecting external input from the relevant industries, practitioners and other stakeholders to inform curriculum design and review.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should fully engage subject experts and academic advisors and external advisors for consultation in programme content design, development, management and review."*

4.4. LPA-4: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

An analysis of the 234 accreditation determinations and advice in this domain identified five key themes, with **Pedagogy and Student Support** emerging as the most frequent area for recommendations. The quantitative breakdown is provided in Figure 8. While advice on teaching was common, the majority of Conditions (58.3%) were concentrated under **Programme Management and Operational Coherence**, indicating that panels considered programme management and delivery as critical matters requiring mandatory action.
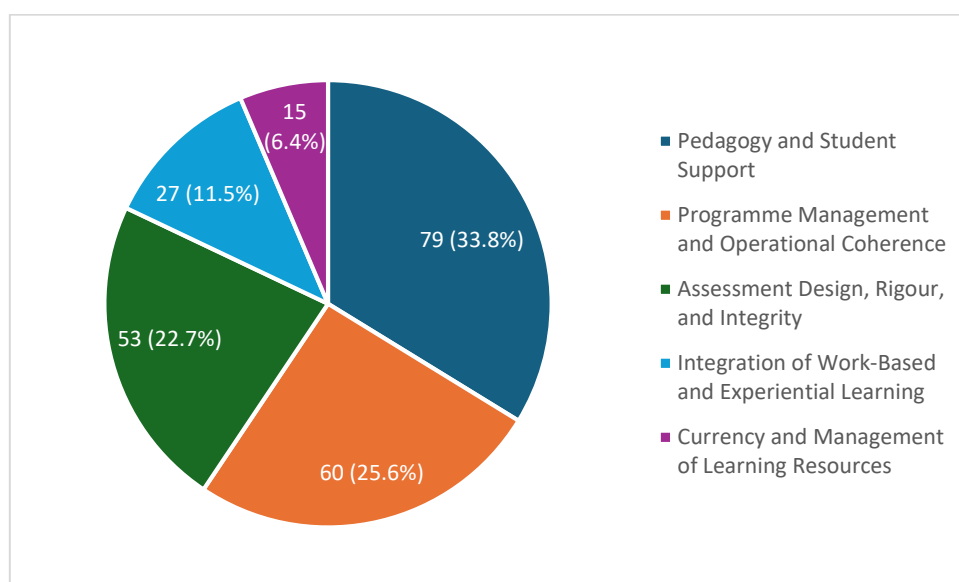

Figure 8: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-4 (n=234)

- **Key Theme 1: Pedagogy and Student Support (n=79)**
  This theme is concerned with the approaches to teaching and learning, including teaching strategies and the provision of support to develop student competencies. It was the most prominent theme for non-local programmes, accounting for nearly half (47.8%) of all determinations and panel opinions under LPA-4.
  - The largest sub-theme cluster was **Student Support and Competency Development (n=47)**, where operators should strengthen support for students, particularly in developing specific skills like English language proficiency, academic writing, and research methods.

> *Example (Requirement): "The Operator is to review the teaching and learning methods and revise relevant documentations... showing that essential topics on research methodologies are to be covered in a more comprehensive and structured way..."*

- o The second major cluster was **Teaching and Learning Strategies (n=32)**, which focused on the pedagogical methods employed. Accreditation determinations and advice in this area encouraged operators to review the balance of different teaching approaches, monitor the effectiveness of delivery modes, and enhance strategies to promote critical thinking and student engagement.

> *Example (Advice): "The Panel advised the Operator to develop new pedagogies to improve students' learning experience as well as to strengthen their communication, interpersonal and leadership skills."*

- **Key Theme 2: Programme Management and Operational Coherence (n=60)**
  This theme is concerned with the systems and policies that ensure the consistent, fair, and orderly delivery of programmes. The accreditation determinations and advice within this theme covered a range of operational matters, including the need for robust moderation processes, clear policies for providing timely and constructive feedback to students, ensuring student workload is aligned with credit value, and strengthening communication between collaborative partners.

> *Example (Requirement): "The Operator is to set up a policy for the provision of feedback to students in all forms of learning, teaching and assessment activities of the Programmes."*

- **Key Theme 3: Assessment Design, Rigour, and Integrity (n=53)**
  This theme focuses on the quality, appropriateness, and fairness of assessment methods. It covers the alignment of assessments with learning outcomes, the need for a balanced variety of assessment tasks, and the critical importance of maintaining academic integrity.
  - o The most frequent concern was the **Variety and Alignment of Assessment Methods (n=26)**, where panels scrutinised whether the assessment strategy was fit for purpose and effectively measured the intended learning outcomes at the appropriate QF level.

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to review and revise its assessment mechanisms and/or designs to ensure that all assessments align with the appropriate QF Level and intended learning outcomes."*

- The second cluster, **Assessment Standards and Consistency (n=15)**, focused on the development and use of detailed assessment rubrics to ensure fairness and transparency in marking.

> *Example (Condition): "The Programme Team is required to prepare the assessment rubrics of all Specialist Study modules and enhance the current rubrics, to ensure alignment with the claimed QF standards..."*

- The final cluster, **Academic Integrity and Standards (n=12)**, addressed the need for robust mechanisms to uphold academic honesty. Accreditation determinations and advice in this area included the use of plagiarism detection tools and, more recently, the development of policies to address the use of Generative AI.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should investigate in detail the root cause(s) of the academic misconduct cases and devise preventive measures to safeguard the robustness of online examination and assessment..."*

- **Key Theme 4: Integration of Work-Based and Experiential Learning (WIL) (n=27)**
Determinations under this theme are primarily concerned with quality assurance and management of WIL opportunities, as well as the pedagogical approaches used to integrate this practical experience into the curriculum.
  - The cluster on **Quality and Management of WIL Opportunities (n=14)** addressed the logistical and quality aspects of providing WIL placements, including contingency planning and training for industry partners.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should review the policy and work processes of Work-integrated Learning (WIL)... to ensure its proper and sustainable management..."*

  - The cluster on **WIL Pedagogy and Integration (n=13)** focused on how WIL was integrated into the learning process to ensure a clear connection *between theory and practice.*

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to demonstrate how the Drama Project can enable the transfer of learning from theory to practice and vice versa."*

- **Key Theme 5: Currency and Management of Learning Resources (n=15)**

This theme covers the essential need for up-to-date, relevant, and accessible learning materials that support the curriculum.

- All 15 accreditation determinations and advice fell under the single cluster of **Management of Learning Resources**. The most common recommendation was for operators to ensure the currency and relevance of reading lists and reference materials in course documentation.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should regularly review and update the reference information in the teaching and learning materials of the Programme, to maintain the currency and relevance..."*

4.5. LPA-5: Programme Leadership and Staffing

An analysis of 171 accreditation determinations and advice in this domain identifies two key analytical themes: **Staff Development and Management** and **Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise**. A critical finding is that the vast majority of Conditions (86.7%) fell under **Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise**, highlighting that having an adequate and appropriately qualified teaching team is a fundamental threshold for accreditation.
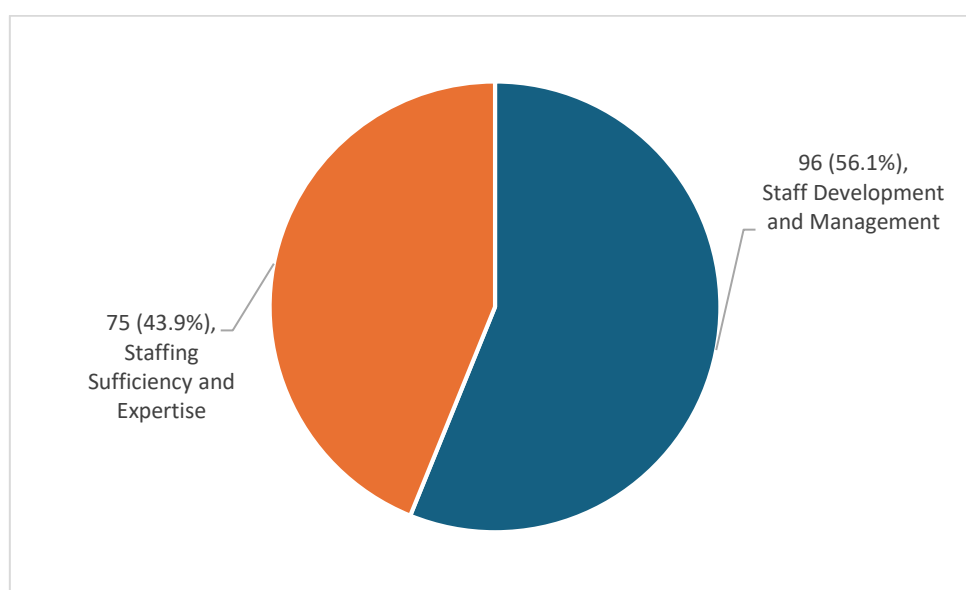

Figure 9: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-5 (n=171)

- **Key Theme 1: Staff Development and Management (n=96)**
  This theme focuses on the ongoing management and enhancement of the teaching team, including professional development, workload management, and collaboration. It is a particularly prominent theme for **Postgraduate programmes**, suggesting a heightened expectation for continuous scholarly development among staff teaching at advanced levels.

o The largest sub-theme cluster was **Staff Professional Development (n=59)**, emphasising the need for structured opportunities for staff to enhance their skills in both pedagogy and subject expertise.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should have a staff development plan on how to enhance teaching staff's supervisory skills and up-to-date research competence to support the project and dissertation supervision."*

o Another significant cluster was **Staff Workload Management (n=28)**, which addressed the critical issue of ensuring that staff workloads were reasonable and effectively managed to safeguard quality.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should closely monitor the workload of teaching staff and the ratio of students to supervisors, in order to ensure consistent support for students and appropriate supervision..."*

- **Key Theme 2: Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise (n=75)**
  This theme is concerned with having adequate staffing with appropriate qualifications and experience to deliver a programme to a specified standard.
  o The dominant sub-theme cluster was **Staffing Profile and Sufficiency (n=50)**, focusing on the need to have adequate staff to support the planned student intake and to maintain a stable teaching team with an appropriate balance of full-time and part-time staff.

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to provide evidence of the completed approval process by [the home institution] on [the Operator's] teaching staff to ensure that the two programmes have sufficient qualified teaching staff to support the maximum number of new enrolments..."*

  o Other sub-themes were **Programme Leadership and Management (n=13)** and **Staff Qualifications and Expertise (n=12)**, which addressed the need for clear, competent programme leadership and for the teaching team to possess the appropriate blend of academic qualifications and industry experience.

> *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to appoint the Programme Leader with industry specific knowledge and skills... and relevant experience in programme management and implementation."*

4.6. LPA-6: Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services

An analysis of the 173 accreditation determinations and advice in this domain identifies three key themes: **Sufficiency and Management of Learning Resources**, **Provision of Student Support Services**, and **Enhancement of the Learning Experience**. As detailed in Figure 10, a crucial finding is that all Conditions stipulated in this domain fell under the theme of **Sufficiency and Management of Learning Resources**, demonstrating that the provision of adequate and appropriate resources is a fundamental threshold for accreditation.
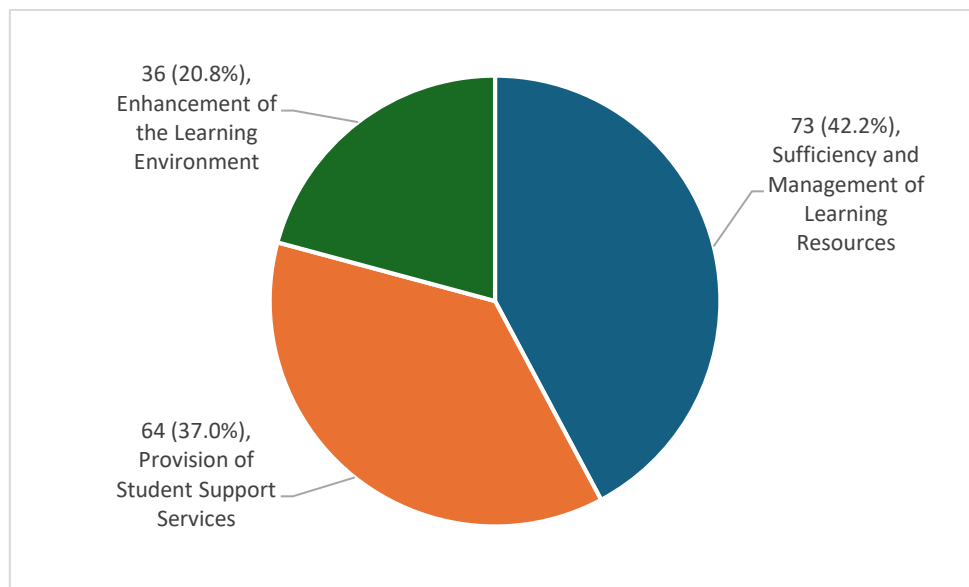

Figure 10: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-6 (n=173)

- **Key Theme 1: Sufficiency and Management of Learning Resources (n=73)**
  This theme addresses the adequacy, currency, accessibility, and financial planning for resources required for programme delivery. It is the most critical theme in the domain, accounting for 100% of all Conditions. This theme was particularly prominent during re-LPA exercises (71.2 of their findings), indicating that panels rigorously scrutinise the resource planning not only for new programmes but also during programme re-accreditation.
  - o The largest sub-theme cluster was **Physical and Technological Resources (n=38)**, focusing on the hardware, software, and physical spaces for learning.

    > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to develop a detailed and documented plan on equipment, laboratory and specialised teaching spaces, which should... demonstrate that students will have access to sufficient contemporary and appropriate equipment..."*

24

- The other sub-theme was **Library and Information Resources (n=30)**, which addressed the need for sufficient and up-to-date library holdings.

> *Example (Requirement): "The Operator is to review and expand the library holdings to include more journals related to the disciplines of arts, creativity, and the social and cultural impacts of arts, technology and creativity."*

- **Key Theme 2: Provision of Student Support Services (n=64)**
  This theme focuses on the support provided to students beyond direct classroom teaching, including academic, skills-based, and pastoral support.
  - The dominant cluster was **Academic and Skills Support (n=51)**, where panels frequently recommended operators to provide targeted support to enhance students' academic competencies, particularly in English language and academic writing.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should provide more workshops to students for (a) intensive English language training and (b) enhancement of business communication skills..."*

  - The other sub-theme was **Career and Pastoral Support (n=13)**, which focused on students' professional development.

> *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should provide students with targeted and practical career advice, including the possibility of further studies."*

- **Key Theme 3: Enhancement of the Learning Experience (n=36)**
  This theme encompasses broader strategies to enrich the overall student experience. The vast majority of accreditation determinations and advice fell under the **Alumni and Industry Engagement (n=34)** cluster, highlighting the value panels place on connecting students with practitioners and graduates.

> *Example (Advice): "The Panel considered that the students would benefit from having more frequent and closer contact with the sector, and advised the Operator to consider adopting an external mentorship scheme with experienced practitioners..."*

4.7. LPA-7: Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance

The final domain, **LPA-7: Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance**, accounts for 149 accreditation determinations and advice. Two analytical themes are identified: **Systematic Programme Monitoring and**

Review and **Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance**. While both themes are critical, the majority of the Conditions (87.5%) was related to **Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review**.
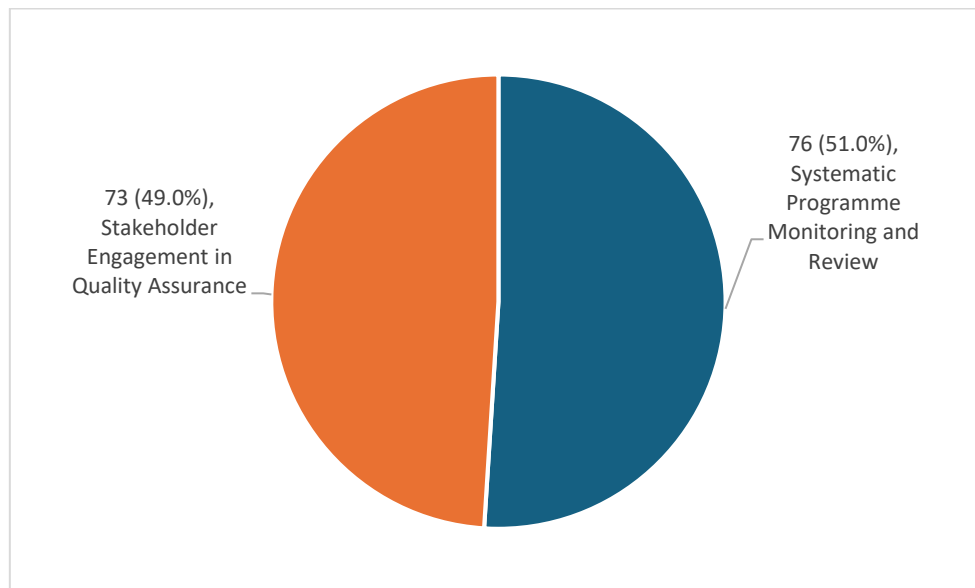

Figure 11: Distribution of Key Themes for LPA-7 (n=149)

- **Key Theme 1: Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review (n=76)**
  This theme addresses the internal mechanisms for programme review, data analysis, and documentation. It was the most critical area of compliance in this domain, accounting for 87.5% of all Conditions. Panels consistently required operators to demonstrate that the internal QA systems were not only appropriately designed but also effectively and consistently implemented.
  - o The dominant sub-theme cluster was **Programme Review Processes and Documentation (n=60)**, focusing on the rigour and accuracy of QA procedures and documents.

  > *Example (Condition): "The Operator is to review and revise quality assurance documents, including the definitive programme specifications, module specifications and programme handbooks to ensure consistent understanding among different stakeholders."*

  - o Another key cluster was **Data Collection and Analysis for Programme Review (n=16)**, which focused on the need for systematic, data-driven review.

  > *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should consider developing appropriate systems to capture annual graduation numbers and percentages by cohort to review the trends and manage retention and graduation rates."*

- **Key Theme 2: Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance (n=73)**
  This theme focuses on the crucial role of both external and internal stakeholders in the quality cycle. It was a major area for recommendations, highlighting that operators should have formal and effective mechanisms for incorporating both external and student feedback into the QA processes.
  - The largest sub-theme cluster was **External Input and Advisory Mechanisms (n=55)**, emphasising the need to establish and effectively utilise external expertise from industry advisors and external advisors/examiners.

  > *Example (Recommendation): "The Operator should form an external advisory board consisting of local academics and industry..."*

  - The second cluster, **Student Feedback and Participation (n=18)**, focused on ensuring that student feedback is systematically collected, considered, and acted upon.

  > *Example (Requirement): "The Operator is to review and revise the actions taken to ensure the proper representation of student representatives at the Staff-Student Liaison Meetings... to ensure the students... have full opportunity for participation in providing feedback..."*

5. Implications for Operators and HKCAAVQ

The preceding analysis provides a data-driven overview of the findings from accreditation exercises. This chapter discusses the implications of those findings, first by providing a comprehensive and domain-by-domain guide for operators' continuous quality enhancement, and second, by offering a focused reflection on the most critical challenges identified.

5.1 Implications for Operators: An Overview

The domain-specific analysis provides a holistic overview of findings across all seven LPA domains. These findings, encompassing pre-conditions, requirements, recommendations and advice, highlight the following key areas for operators' continuous quality enhancement.

LPA-1 Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The analysis highlights challenges in both a programme's design and its positioning. Findings point to the need for clear and constructive alignment between programme objectives, outcomes, and curriculum; precise wording and measurability of outcomes; and clarity in the programme's positioning and graduate pathways. Alongside this, the analysis shows a frequent emphasis on external relevance, including alignment with industry needs and professional standards. A key implication is that a programme's foundation should consist of clear, measurable and internally coherent learning outcomes that are demonstrably responsive to external needs, with its overall positioning, graduate pathways and intended graduate outcomes clearly articulated.

LPA-2 Learner Admission and Selection

The analysis reveals challenges across the entire admission lifecycle. These include clear definition of appropriate entry requirements; procedural rigour of learner selection and admission; the need for a recruitment strategy supported by market analysis and for clear public information; and the systematic monitoring of student performance post-admission. Enhancing quality in this domain therefore involves attention to several key areas: a recruitment strategy informed by market analysis; clear and accurate public information; well-defined entry requirements; procedurally rigorous and consistently applied admission mechanisms; and systematic reviews of student performance data to inform the ongoing review of the admission process.

LPA-3 Programme Structure and Content

The analysis in this domain highlights challenges relating to both the curriculum's design and its review processes. Findings point to the need for

programme coherence and integration, a logical structure with appropriate flexibility, a balance and sufficiency of content, and the integration of practical learning. In addition, there is a focus on maintaining the programme's relevance and currency through systematic curriculum review and stakeholder engagement. A robust approach to curriculum quality therefore involves both the establishment of a coherent, well-structured and balanced curriculum that integrates practical learning where appropriate, and a systematic, stakeholder-informed review process to ensure that it is maintained and enhanced over time.

LPA-4: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The analysis in this domain, accounting for the highest number of determinations and advice, highlights a broad spectrum of challenges. These include teaching and learning strategies and student support; procedures for assessment moderation and feedback; design, standards and integrity of assessments; integration and management of work-based learning; and currency of learning resources. The implication is that enhancing quality in this domain requires operators to focus on several areas, including fostering effective teaching and student support; establishing clear operational procedures for assessment moderation and feedback; implementing a robust assessment strategy that uses a variety of methods aligned with learning outcomes and standards; ensuring a well-managed integration of practical experience; and maintaining access to up-to-date learning materials.

LPA-5 Programme Leadership and Staffing

The analysis in this domain highlights challenges related to both the ongoing management of the teaching team and its fundamental staffing provision. Findings point to the need for effective systems for staff professional development and workload management. Concurrently, the analysis shows a focus on ensuring staffing sufficiency, qualifications and appropriate programme leadership. The implication is that a robust approach to staffing addresses both the provision of a team with the requisite leadership, qualifications and sufficient staffing, and the ongoing systems for continuous professional development and structured workload management.

LPA-6 Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services

The analysis highlights challenges related to the various resources and support. These include the sufficiency of physical, financial, technological, library and information resources. Alongside these essential resources, there is a focus on the provision of academic, career, and pastoral support, and the enhancement of the learning experience through alumni and industry engagement. Enhancing quality in the domain therefore involves ensuring that well-planned physical, financial, technological, and library resources are in place,

complemented by a comprehensive provision of academic, career, and pastoral support, and enriched by meaningful opportunities for alumni and industry engagement.

LPA-7 Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance

The analysis highlights challenges related to both the robustness of internal review mechanisms and the integration of external perspectives. Findings point to the need for robust programme review processes and documentation, including management of changes, and systematic collection and analysis of data. In addition, the analysis shows a focus on the formal mechanisms for gathering expert input from external stakeholders and collecting feedback from students. The implication is that enhancing quality in this domain requires both systematic, well-documented and data-informed internal review processes, and formal and active integration of both external input and student feedback in the quality cycle.

5.2 Implications for HKCAAVQ

While the preceding overview serves as a guide for continuous quality enhancement across all findings, this section focuses specifically on the Conditions which represent the most critical issues identified. The following analysis of the five most frequently occuring Conditions offers insights into the sector's key challenges and areas of concern. These insights are also crucial for informing HKCAAVQ's priorities in strengthening its quality assurance and quality enhancement efforts, for example, through the development of targeted professional development initiatives for accreditation panel members and specialists, and the enhancement of training for operators, thereby further supporting the continuous quality enhancement of the post-secondary education sector. The nature and implications of each of these key challenges are discussed below.

Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review (LPA-7)

As the largest source of Conditions, this area represents a primary challenge for operators in the effective implementation of their internal quality assurance systems. The findings are overwhelmingly concentrated on the mechanism and documentation for programme review. The recurring issues highlight a critical need for operators to ensure that their quality assurance procedures, particularly for managing programme documents, programme changes and review, and collaborative agreements, are both robustly implemented and clearly and accurately documented.

Curriculum Design and Coherence (LPA-3)

As the second most frequent source of Conditions, this area highlights a significant and recurring challenge for operators in the design of the curriculum. The findings are primarily concentrated on ensuring Programme Coherence and Integration. The recurring issues point to a critical need for operators to ensure that all components of a programme, from its title and intended outcomes to its modules, are demonstrably aligned. Other related challenges include ensuring an appropriate programme structure and the effective integration of practical learning.

Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise (LPA-5)

This area points to a foundational challenge for operators in the provision of the teaching team. The findings are primarily concentrated in three key aspects: ensuring the sufficiency of the overall staffing level and composition to support the planned student intake; the qualifications and expertise of the teaching staff to cover the curriculum; and the appointment of appropriate programme leadership. This underscores that demonstrating a sufficient and appropriately qualified team, with clear leadership, is a fundamental threshold for assuring quality delivery.

Student Admission Mechanism (LPA-2)

The critical findings in this area indicate that challenges are distributed across the admission process. While the management and monitoring of student admission and advanced standing pathways is the most frequent source of Conditions, issues related to the clear defining and assessment of entry requirements and the procedural rigour of selection are also significant and recurring challenges. This highlights a critical need for operators to ensure their admission mechanisms are not only well-defined but are also applied with demonstrable rigor and consistency.

Sufficiency and Management of Learning Resources (LPA-6)

This area highlights a fundamental challenge for operators in the provision of adequate and current resources. The Conditions are frequently concentrated on the need for physical and technological resources, such as specialised equipment and facilities, as well as for library and information resources. This underscores that demonstrating the provision of sufficient, accessible, and financially sustainable learning resources is a critical and foundational aspect of accreditation.

In summary, this focused analysis of the most critical findings pinpoints the sector's most significant challenges. The findings provide useful reference on

the sector's key challenges, and insights informing quality assurance and continuous enhancement for the sector and the focus of HKCAAVQ's training and support to operators.

6. Conclusion

This thematic analysis presents a comprehensive and evidence-based synthesis of findings from accreditation reports issued between October 2020 and May 2025, covering 101 Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Re-accreditation (re-LPA) exercises. The analysis identifies key challenges, as reflected in the concentration of Conditions, along with a broad spectrum of recommendations and advice across all seven LPA domains. These findings illustrate the ongoing and dynamic nature of quality enhancement, which extends beyond fulfilling minimum standards.

The results aim to provide a robust and data-driven foundation for strategic quality enhancement by operators and the self-financing higher education sector. By identifying shared challenges under each domain, the analysis supports operators in reviewing and benchmarking their practices, stregnthening alignment with accreditaion standards, and prioritising areas for further improvement. At the same time, the insights across all domains serve as a valuable reference for continuous quality enhancement, enabling operators to contiuously strengthen their quality assurance mechanisms and pursue broader opportunities for programme and institutional development.

The analysis also offers important insights for HKCAAVQ to further enhance its support for the sector. The findings will inform the design and development of targeted training initiatives for both operators and specialists, with a focus on capacity building and the promotion of effective quality enhancement practices in response to the sector's key challenges. Through fostering an evidence-based and collective awareness among all stakeholders, the aim is to enhance the effectiveness of the accreditation process and reinforce a culture of continuous improvement.

Overall, this thematic analysis reflects HKCAAVQ's commitment to support the sector's continuous quality assurance and quality enhancement. By reflecting on these findings, both HKCAAVQ and operators can work collaborately to address common challenges and further strengthen the overall quality of higher education provision in Hong Kong.

Appendix A: Thematic Framework of the Analysis

The following framework lists the Key Analytical Themes and their constituent Sub-theme Clusters that were inductively derived from the analysis of the 1,205 accreditation determinations and advice across all seven LPA domains.

LPA-1: Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
- **Key Theme 1: Clarity and Constructive Alignment of Programme Objectives and Outcomes**
  - Alignment of POs/PILOs with Curriculum
  - Wording and Measurability of POs/PILOs
  - Clarity of Programme Positioning and Graduate Pathways
- **Key Theme2 : Programme Relevance and External Engagement**
  - Alignment with External Stakeholders (Professional / Regulatory / Academic)
  - Alignment with Industry/Community Needs
  - Programme Communication to the Public

LPA-2: Learner Admission and Selection
- **Key Theme 1 : Student Admission Mechanism**
  - Defining and Assessment of Entry Requirements
  - Management of Non-Standard and Advanced Standing Pathways
  - Procedural Rigour of Selection
- **Key Theme 2: Strategy and Planning in Student Recruitment and Admission**
  - Recruitment Strategy and Market Analysis
  - Clarity and Accuracy of Communication with Applicants
- **Key Theme 3: Post-Admission Monitoring and Review**
  - Monitoring of Student Performance

LPA-3: Programme Structure and Content
- **Key Theme 1: Curriculum Design and Coherence**
  - Programme Coherence and Integration
  - Programme Structure and Flexibility
  - Content Balance and Sufficiency
  - Integration of Practical/Work-based Learning
- **Key Theme 2: Curriculum Relevance and Enhancement**
  - Content Relevance and Currency
  - Curriculum Review and Governance
  - Stakeholder Engagement in Curriculum Development

LPA-4: Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- **Key Theme 1: Pedagogy and Student Support**
  - Student Support and Competency Development
  - Teaching and Learning Strategies
- **Key Theme 2: Programme Management and Operational Coherence**
  - Programme Management and Operational Coherence
- **Key Theme 3: Assessment Design, Rigour, and Integrity**
  - Academic Integrity and Standards
  - Assessment Standards and Consistency

- o   Variety and Alignment of Assessment Methods
- **Key Theme 4: Integration of Work-Based and Experiential Learning (WIL)**
  - o   Quality and Management of WIL Opportunities
  - o   WIL Pedagogy and Integration
- **Key Theme 5: Currency and Management of Learning Resources**
  - o   Management of Learning Resources

LPA-5: Programme Leadership and Staffing
- **Key Theme 1: Staff Development and Management**
  - o   Staff Professional Development
  - o   Staff Workload Management
- **Key Theme 2: Staffing Sufficiency and Expertise**
  - o   Staffing Profile and Sufficiency
  - o   Programme Leadership and Management
  - o   Staff Qualifications and Expertise

LPA-6: Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services
- **Key Theme 1: Sufficiency and Management of Learning Resources**
  - o   Financial and Resource Planning
  - o   Library and Information Resources
  - o   Physical and Technological Resources
- **Key Theme 2: Provision of Student Support Services**
  - o   Academic and Skills Support
  - o   Career and Pastoral Support
- **Key Theme 3: Enhancement of the Learning Experience**
  - o   Alumni and Industry Engagement
  - o   Campus Environment and Student Life
  - o   Comparability of Student Experience

LPA-7: Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance
- **Key Theme 1: Systematic Programme Monitoring and Review**
  - o   Programme Review Processes and Documentation
  - o   Data Collection and Analysis for Programme Review
- **Key Theme 2: Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance**
  - o   External Input and Advisory Mechanisms
  - o   Student Feedback and Participation

Appendix B: Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation Authority (AA)	HKCAAVQ is specified in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap. 592) to accredit operators and learning programmes for the purpose of entering their qualifications into the Qualifications Register (QR), for recognition under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF).
Accreditation Panel	A panel consisting of specialists with expertise in the relevant discipline/industry/quality assurance issues. It is formed to assess the Operator/learning programmes in each stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the guiding principle of 'peer review', with a HKCAAVQ staff member, who is also a Panel Member, serving as the Accreditation Panel Secretary.
Accreditation Report	A report issued by HKCAAVQ pursuant to section 5 of the AAVQO on completion of any stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process after conducting the relevant accreditation tests.
Accreditation Standards	The level of competence or quality that an Operator or a learning programme has to demonstrate in an accreditation test, for operation of learning programmes that meet HKQF standards.
Advice	An opinion of the Accreditation Panel for the continuous quality enhancement and excellence of an Operator and/or learning programme(s) in specific areas of education and training. It is non- binding and the Operator may choose whether or not to report follow-up actions taken, if any, in the next accreditation exercise.
Condition	Part of the accreditation determination which is to be fulfilled by an Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status (pre-condition), or by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period (requirement).
Four-stage Quality Assurance Process (the Process)	A quality assurance mechanism with four stages, i.e. Initial Evaluation (IE), Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Re-accreditation (re-LPA), Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) and Periodic Institutional Review (PIR). It forms the means through which HKCAAVQ evaluates operators and their learning programmes under the HKQF.
Hong Kong Qualifications	A seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational and continuing education

Framework (HKQF)	sectors with level, credit and award title as the key features.
Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Level	A level assigned to a qualification to indicate its position in the hierarchy relative to others under the HKQF. The level is determined in accordance with a set of Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) which specifies the outcome standards expected of the qualification at that level.
Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Standards	The skills, knowledge or experience acquired upon the completion of the learning programme that are commensurate with the requirements under the specified level of the HKQF.
Initial Evaluation (IE)	The first stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that ascertains whether an Operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) that meet HKQF standards up to a certain HKQF level.
Learning Outcome	The knowledge, skills and application ability attained by a learner as a result of completing the learning programme.
Learning Programme	A programme of study or training defined by a curriculum (which may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements) that includes, where the context permits, any proposed programme of such studies or training.
Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)	The second stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process, the purpose of which is twofold: (i) to ascertain whether a learning programme (proposed or accredited) meets an HKQF standard to achieve the claimed objectives; and (ii) to ascertain whether the Operator of a learning programme is competent to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of its programme operation to achieve the claimed programme objectives.
Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA)	The cyclical re-evaluation of an accredited learning programme which shares the same purpose and standards of LPA, but with a focus on improvements and demonstrated outcomes since the LPA or the last re-LPA.
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.
Periodic Institutional Review (PIR)	The fourth stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that ascertains whether an Operator continues to be effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation by formulating and implementing actions based on evidence drawn from programmes across an Operator's approved programme areas and other

	relevant sources contributing to attainment of institutional objectives and quality of programme provisions.
Pre-condition	Part of the accreditation determination which must be fulfilled by the Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status.
Programme Area	A defined scope of area of the programme(s) applying for Programme Area Accreditation (PAA). A programme area can be an Area of Study and Training, a Sub-area in full or a Sub-area in part, one subject matter or a combination of subject matters under the same Sub-area, but not a combination of Areas of Study and Training or Sub-areas.
Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)	The third stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that ascertains whether an Operator is competent to quality assure its learning programme(s) within a programme area up to a certain HKQF level, as demonstrated from the track record of its operation of accredited learning programmes in a particular discipline or industry area, and its capacity to enhance its organisational effectiveness to achieve the educational/training objectives.
Recommendation	Part of the accreditation determination, which has continuous improvement and quality enhancement purposes, in relation to the accreditation standards. It is non-binding in nature but an Operator should explain if/how the recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation or PIR.
Requirement	Part of the accreditation determination which must be fulfilled by the Operator by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period so as to maintain the accreditation status.
Restriction	Part of the accreditation determination which is to be complied with by an Operator by the specified deadline(s) before the validity period and/or to be complied with during the validity period.
Validity Period	The period of time in which an approved accreditation status is effective as specified in the accreditation report.

Appendix C: List of Figures