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

MANUAL FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - 320

(For the Purpose of Seeking Registration and Continuing Registration under Cap. 320)

For consultation | Jul 2025

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1. PREAMBLE

1.1. Under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320), all Post Secondary Colleges seeking registration are subject to the attainment of institutional review (IR-320) status at the degree or sub-degree levels and are required to maintain the status in order to remain on the register of Post Secondary Colleges registered under Cap. 320 (registered colleges) thereafter. Cyclical reviews on the IR-320 status are normally conducted by HKCAAVQ in every five years.

1.2. HKCAAVQ was established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150) and may conduct accreditation tests generally or as authorised under any other local enactment. HKCAAVQ is the named Accreditation Council to conduct Institutional Review (IR-320) for Post Secondary College as part of the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320.

1.3. The authority for registration under Cap. 320 rests with the Government which, in deciding whether to approve an application for registration, may take into account of the outcome of IR-320, the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320/320A, and other considerations as deemed necessary. A registered Post Secondary College is to comply with all requirements under Cap. 320 and related legislations.

1.4. IR-320 focuses on whether a Post Secondary College has the overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the degree and/or sub-degree level(s). The IR-320 status is specific to either sub-degree or degree level. In conducting IR-320, HKCAAVQ shall take into account all the relevant requirements under Cap. 320 and related legislations.

1.5. A registered college at the respective level can seek accreditation of their learning programmes (LPA), which is the second stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance (QA) Process, without going through the first stage, i.e. Initial Evaluation (IE), up to Qualifications Framework (QF) Level 4 for sub-degree status, and QF Level 5 for degree status.

1.6. While a registered college with an IR-320 status at degree level may offer degree and sub-degree programmes, a registered college with an IR-320 status at sub-degree level can offer learning programmes up to sub-degree level only. If the college wishes to offer degree programmes, it has to go through another IR-320 at the degree level, subject to any differentiation approach as determined by HKCAAVQ, based upon the track records of the college in line with the standing accreditation processes. If a registered college with an IR-320 status at degree level wishes to offer learning programmes at QF Level 6 or above, the college

is subject to Initial Evaluation (IE) at QF Level 6 before seeking programme accreditation.

1.7. All registered colleges need to maintain their IR-320 status to remain on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320 with successful cyclical reviews. For registered colleges without Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status at relevant QF level, they are required to undertake cyclical reviews using the IR-320 standards after the first registration. For registered colleges with PAA status at the relevant QF level, they are required to undertake cyclical reviews using the Periodic Institutional Reviews (PIR-320) standards, after the first registration.

1.8. In sum, Post Secondary Colleges need to go through the following quality assurance processes for registration and to remain on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320:

Post Secondary Colleges WITH PAA status at relevant QF level	
Institutional Level (i) For first registration (ii) For cyclical review	(i) IR-320 (ii) PIR-320
Programme Level (iii) New programme not covered by PAA status (iv) Programme re-accreditation (not covered by PAA status) (v) New Programme or Programme Re-accreditation (covered by PAA status)	(iii) LPA (iv) Re-LPA (v) PIR-320
Post Secondary Colleges WITHOUT PAA status at relevant QF level	
Institutional Level (i) For first registration (ii) For cyclical review	(i) IR-320 (ii) IR-320
Programme Level (iii) New programme (iv) Programme re-accreditation	(iii) LPA (iv) Re-LPA

1.9. At programme level, registered colleges should observe the relevant requirements as set out in Cap. 320, as well as any prevailing administrative measures implemented by the Education Bureau (EDB), before any programmes can be launched. In particular, sub-degree programmes are required to observe the Common Descriptors for Sub-degree Programmes published by EDB.

1.10. Cap. 320 sets out the specified requirements for registration concerning the overall competence of Post Secondary Colleges for offering self-financing post-secondary programmes at the degree and/or sub-degree level(s). Such requirements are reflected in the standards for obtaining an IR-320 status detailed in this document.

1.11. Registered colleges are required to observe the requirement to undertake cyclical reviews for maintaining their IR status to remain on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320 when planning for IR-320 or PIR-320, after the first registration.

1.12. It is the responsibility of the Post Secondary Colleges to inform HKCAAVQ of any significant change which might have an impact on its competency to continue meeting the standards of IR-320 or PIR-320 in accordance with the established mechanism on notification of changes.

1.13. Upon registration under Cap. 320, it is also the responsibility of the registered colleges to inform EDB of any substantial change which may affect the continued compliance with any registration requirements under Cap. 320.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose and scope of an IR-320 exercise is stipulated in a service agreement to be signed by both parties. The terms of reference of an IR-320 exercise are to:

a) *assess and determine the College's abilities to comply with the requirements under Cap. 320 for the purpose of being registered as a registered college; and*

b) *ascertain whether the College has an overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the degree (QF Level 5) and / or sub-degree (QF Level 4) level(s).*

3.   GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1.   HKCAAVQ conducts Institutional Review (IR-320) by means of the standards developed to ensure that a Post Secondary College has the overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the sub-degree and/or degree level(s). HKCAAVQ adopts the following guiding principles in conducting the IR-320:

Peer Review

3.2.   The principle of 'peer review' is to engage academic/professional experts who have the expertise and experience in institutional governance, management and quality assurance of a Post Secondary College. The role of the panel is to assess the capability and capacity of the College, collect and evaluate evidence and form a judgment as to whether the College meets the required standards and stated aims, and has the competence to operate self-financing programmes at the sub-degree and/or degree level. The panel will include a HKCAAVQ professional staff, in the capacity of member and secretary of the panel. HKCAAVQ has full authority in making decisions on the membership of the panel for the IR-320 exercise.

Standards-based

3.3.   HKCAAVQ has developed IR-320 standards, provided in Chapter 4 of this Manual, which collectively set out the requirements with reference to the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320 and related legislations, that a Post Secondary College is to demonstrate it has the competence to operate self-financing programmes at the degree and/or sub-degree level(s).

Evidence-based

3.4.   The judgement and decision are made on the basis of the substantial evidence provided by the College to support its claimed attainment of the standards and its own objectives. The IR-320 exercise will call for substantial evidence from the College which should demonstrate a high level of institutional maturity in the development and implementation of an efficient and effective institutional governance structure and management processes, academic planning, staffing and quality assurance mechanisms supported by appropriate financial resource for the planning, delivery and continuous improvement of degree and/or sub-degree programmes.

Fitness for purpose

3.5.   As Post Secondary Colleges have individual visions and missions, and are different in size, complexity in operation and scope of expertise, the review process will take these differences into account, while ensuring the College has an overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the degree and/or sub-degree level(s).

Transparency

3.6.   The IR-320 is conducted through a 'transparent' approach. A Post Secondary College should provide full disclosure of information so that the panel and the College will have a common understanding of the relevant issues in the review. Throughout the process, the College will have opportunities to respond to the panel's questions and / or concerns.

Avoidance of conflict of interest situations

3.7.   Panel members are required to abide by the HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels (Appendix 2) to avoid conflict of interest situations. The implementation of the Code is supported by a dual procedure for checking of potential conflict of interests. Prior to the confirmation of panel membership, both the potential panel members and the College are asked to declare if potential panel members have any potential conflict of interests with regard to their participation in a particular IR exercise. A Post Secondary College may inform HKCAAVQ on any potential conflicts of interest supported by reasons and explanations. HKCAAVQ will carefully consider the reasons, and make the final decision on panel membership.

3.8.   The HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels lists out some examples of potential conflict of interests, including (i) the panel member served / is serving, with or without pay, as an adviser, examiner, or consultant to the College; (ii) the panel member has other close association / partnership with the College. Under the guiding principle of 'peer review', the involvement of panel members from local institutions that offer similar programmes is not a conflict of interests.

Confidentiality of information

3.9.   All parties involved in the IR shall treat as proprietary and confidential any information or material made available to them either through HKCAAVQ or the College if the information is not in the public domain. Such a duty of confidentiality is specified in the HKCAAVQ Code of

Conduct for Panels which the panel members agree to abide by. Apart from panel members, participants in the site visit such as representatives of the College and observers must not disclose the facts gathered and views discussed with the panel during the site visit.

4.   STANDARDS FOR IR-320

4.1.   The purpose of IR-320 and domains of competence are listed below. The standard and requirements under each domain are elaborated in the following sections.

Purpose Statement	Domain
• To assess and determine whether the College has the abilities to comply with the requirements under Cap. 320 for the purpose of being registered as a registered college. • To assess and determine whether the College has an overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the degree and/or sub-degree level(s).	IR-1 Governance and Management Structure IR-2 Academic Leadership, Planning and Environment IR-3 Financial and Physical Resources IR-4 Staffing and Staff Development IR-5 Quality Assurance and Enhancement IR-6 Student Services and Support

IR-1 Governance and Management Structure

Standard

The College must have an efficient and effective governing body with clear delegations of authority for academic and corporate governance, the composition of which is adequate to provide independent leadership and the necessary oversight and accountability for all aspects of the operation and development of the College including academic standards and general conduct, guided by its vision and mission. The College should comply with the specified requirements for registration provided in Cap. 320.

Context

Governance of an institution is typically divided into corporate governance and academic governance, together they provide the strategic leadership for an institution to achieve its vision and mission, by setting directions, allocating resources, defining targets and reviewing performance. Corporate management concerns the day-to-day operation within the context of the strategies and policies established by the governing body. While it is not uncommon for an institution to have a close affiliation with religious, commercial or other entities, any such relationship must not compromise the independence of the College in terms of academic governance and management, either in form or in substance. The corporate and academic governance and management structures must reflect the division of labour and well-defined lines of accountability and delegation.

Requirements

IR-1.1 The College has an effective governing body which is the active policy-making group to ensure viable and sustainable development of the College on an on-going basis, and is ultimately responsible for all activities performed in the name of the College.

IR-1.2 The College is free from affiliation with or control by any foreign government or organisation outside Hong Kong.

IR-1.3 The governing body has ensured that the name of the College adequately represents the nature of its operation (reflecting the learning programmes and the corresponding awards).

IR-1.4 The organisational structure of the governing body has appropriate representation and independent external members to ensure satisfactory academic and general standards and conduct.

IR-1.5 The governing body has the authority and responsibility in all circumstances to make decisions in the best interest of the College, including its staff and students.

IR-1.6 The College has mechanisms for declaring and avoiding potential conflict of interest between the roles of members of the governing body and other functions/duties performed by them outside the College.

IR-1.7 The College has policies to ensure that all members of the governing body are fit and proper persons, collectively possessing the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to discharge their duties.

IR-1.8 The governing body regularly reviews the effectiveness of its own operations, including the use of adequate and reliable data to support its decision-making.

IR-1.9 The College has mechanisms to ensure sufficient checks-and-balances between the governing body and management to ensure a separation of powers for monitoring performance and avoiding conflict of interest.

IR-1.10 The College is managed by standing committees under procedures established by the governing body. Such instruments should cover general administration, academic administration, financial management, staff, and students.

IR-1.11 The governing body has strategies, targets and performance measures developed in alignment with the vision and mission of the College, and regularly monitors the effectiveness of actual implementation.

IR-1.12 The College has mechanisms to conduct risk assessments regularly and takes follow-up actions in relation to its operation.

IR-1.13 The College has a well-managed approach to its engagement with stakeholders in supporting institutional development and evaluation.

IR-1.14 The College has formal mechanisms for receiving and handling student and staff grievances and complaints in a timely and transparent manner.

IR-1.15 The College has student records systems which can provide accurate and up-to-date information for monitoring students' attainment and conferring of awards.

IR-1.16 The College publishes key information about its operations including (i) abstract of the strategic plan annually which contains an academic development plan, expected goals and performance targets; (ii) abstract of the annual report which includes a review of activities undertaken during the year, and the performance of the College with reference to its strategic plan; and (iii) relevant key financial information (e.g. the aggregate income, tuition fee income, aggregate income from sources other than tuition fees, aggregate expenditure, and aggregate reserve).

IR-2 Academic Leadership, Planning and Environment

Standard

The College must have efficient and effective academic leadership and structures to plan, develop and implement programmes with meaningful student learning experience and environment that meet the learning objectives of the programmes offered, which are consistent with its strategic and business plans of the College, and in line with its vision and mission.

Context

Academic leadership, at both institutional and programme levels, is responsible for translating the vision and mission of a College as reflected in its strategic and business planning, into meaningful student learning experience and environment. In this connection, the number of students, in aggregate for the College and in a specific programme, is an important consideration. To achieve this, academic planning provides the important linkage among community and industry needs, admission, graduate profiles, student characteristics and pedagogies, with due consideration of possible risks and contingency actions. The academic standards are set and maintained by the academic leadership at levels acceptable to the relevant industries and/or disciplines for maintaining the academic integrity of its programmes and awards.

Requirements

IR-2.1   Guided by its vision and mission, the College has defined its educational objectives, which are appropriate in the context of Hong Kong for meeting the needs of the community, industries and disciplines.

IR-2.2   The College has an academic board, which is the supreme academic decision-making body of the College responsible for approving learning programmes and for making decisions on matters of academic policy, academic strategy, academic standards, and awards.

IR-2.3 * The College has defined its expectations for research/consultancy, scholarship, professional and learning activities for its staff and students, relevant to the QF level of programmes they are engaged in, to foster institutional values in alignment with its educational objectives.

IR-2.4   The College has identified the desired graduate profiles within the context of its educational objectives.

IR-2.5   The College has developed a systematic approach for ensuring that programme design and development support the achievement of the desired graduate profiles.

IR-2.6   The College has defined institutional admission policies and graduation requirements, as well as the necessary procedures for effective implementation, which are in line with the relevant prevailing local admission requirements and standards.

IR-2.7   The College has mechanisms which can sustain the development and succession of effective academic leadership at institutional and programme levels.

IR-2.8   The College has contingency plans in its business plan for managing risks, including termination of programmes and relevant teaching out arrangement where appropriate, closure of campus or College in protecting student interests.

IR-2.9 * The College adopts a student-centred approach in the formulation of its learning and teaching strategies relevant to the QF level of the programmes offered, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, blended and online learning, etc..

IR-2.10   The College has policies and procedures to identify, plan and develop the resources required to provide the student learning experience and environment for its programmes on an on-going basis.

IR-2.11 * The College has institutional policies for ensuring that the programme design, delivery and assessment meet the requirements of the relevant QF level(s) and award standards.

IR-2.12 The College has a policy in actively engaging academic staff in activities aimed at developing industry connections and/or collaborations to enhance the student learning experience.

* Standard or requirement which provides explicit reference to the QF level of programmes.

IR-3 Financial and Physical Resources

Standard *

The College must have an adequate financial and physical resource base for delivery of its learning programmes at an acceptable level of quality appropriate to the relevant QF levels on an on-going basis, regardless of locations and / or modes of delivery.

Context

A College creates a high-quality academic environment for learning by ensuring that its resources align with its academic plan and educational objectives. These resources may include financial, technological, library, equipment and campus facilities. To ensure that these resources meet the needs on an on-going basis, the College must regularly evaluate the quality of and need for its educational provision as well as the utilisation, and take necessary actions to address any gaps. An essential asset of a Post Secondary College is the campus which forms an important element of the identity of the College, provides the space required for academic/social activities to take place, and fosters the interaction between different members of the College.

Requirements

IR-3.1   The College has a campus which is fit-for-purpose and is conducive to the development of the College, and the student learning experience is in alignment with its academic plan.

IR-3.2 * The College has a realistic financial and resource plan demonstrating the availability of adequate resource support for the planned programmes of study and planned student numbers. The resource plan should include consideration of adequate and appropriate campus space, learning information resources, specialised equipment including software and hardware, laboratories, library and general facilities, such as private meeting space for teaching staff and learners, for effective teaching and learning at the relevant QF levels.

IR-3.3 * The College has access to the physical resources, including facilities, equipment, campus and other assets, necessary to support its programmes and services at the required standards and QF levels.

IR-3.4   The College has sufficient learning support for students to undertake quantitative and qualitative researches relevant to the level of studies.

IR-3.5   The College has oversight of quality assurance measures on the physical and online resources at all locations where it offers programmes and services to ensure access, safety, security, and a purposeful learning and working environment.

IR-3.6   The College has mechanisms to monitor the quality and utilisation of all its physical resources and has procedures to take necessary actions to address any gaps.

IR-3.7   The College has a sufficient financial reserve for implementing the contingency plan(s), e.g. termination of programmes or non-renewal of lease of campus.

* Standard or requirement which provides explicit reference to the QF level of programmes.

IR-4 Staffing and Staff Development

Standard

The College must have staffing and staff development policies and plans to ensure that adequate number of suitably qualified personnel are available to perform research/consultancy and scholarly activities, and to lead, manage and support the delivery of learning programmes on an on-going basis.

Context

A College typically engages a range of personnel which may be paid/voluntary, full-time/part-time, internal/external, to carry out academic, support and administrative functions. Regardless of the mode of engagement, the College must ensure that those performing the assigned functions possess the necessary knowledge, skills and experience through a system of open, transparent and fair policies and procedures for staff recruitment, appraisal and development. It is essential that academic staff are provided with the support to maintain the currency of their relevant discipline and pedagogical knowledge and skills through research and other scholarly activities.

Requirements

IR-4.1   The College has a staffing policy that aims at maintaining a fit and proper staff group and strategies to attract, retain and motivate staff with the required qualifications and experience to support the attainment of its educational objectives.

IR-4.2   The College has open, fair and transparent policies, criteria and procedures for the appointment, appraisal and promotion of staff.

IR-4.3   The College has institutional policies and measures for providing adequate orientation/training to existing/newly appointed staff.

IR-4.4 * The College has formal policies to encourage scholarly and developmental activity, including research and innovation relevant to QF level of the programmes offered. These policies may cover financial support, work arrangement, promotion merit, etc.

IR-4.5   The College has formal policies to encourage consultancy and collaboration with industry and/or professional collaboration with local and non-local institutions, professional bodies, and/or companies in research and development work.

IR-4.6   The College has mechanisms to ensure that staff development and wellness activities are used to the benefit of learning and teaching and the development of the programmes and the College.

IR-4.7   The College has policies to ensure that its teaching team possesses the qualifications and industry or professional experiences appropriate for the learning outcomes and the QF level of the programmes to be taught. For teaching Bachelor degree programmes, academic staff typically should have at least a Master/MPhil degree and preferably possess post-qualification teaching/industry experience in a relevant discipline. For sub-degree programmes, the typical qualifications of academic staff should be Bachelor degree and preferably with relevant teaching/industry experience, or equivalent.

IR-4.8 * The College has policies to ensure that a sufficient pool of full-time staff is in place to provide learning and teaching support, and counselling for students appropriate to their levels of study. The pool of full-time staff should be large enough to cater for foreseeable and other circumstances.

IR-4.9   The College has defined criteria for measuring teaching effectiveness of teaching staff and the corresponding actions to handle unsatisfactory teaching performance.

IR-4.10   The College has policies on the engagement of casual staff, covering induction, training and performance management, to ensure that those engaged are competent to support the operation of the College and/or learning programmes.

* Standard or requirement which provides explicit reference to the QF level of programmes.

IR-5 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Standard

The College must have a good standing and track records as a provider of post-secondary education and have established policies and procedures to develop, monitor and ensure the quality of its activities, in particular the standards and integrity of its learning programmes and awards. These policies and procedures are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness in enabling the College to achieve its educational objectives.

Context

A good standing and track records can be defined by a number of indicators, such as successful outcomes in accreditation history, external recognition, performance in other types of assessment, compliance to rules and regulations under accreditation and assessment, contractual arrangements with other parties, which contribute to the building up of the College's profile and reflects its institutional effectiveness in programme development and management. Quality assurance covers a range of systematically organised activities, the purpose of which is to ensure that standards, policies and processes are met. Quality enhancement focuses on meeting the objectives of an institution by improving its quality, effectiveness and relevancy as a learning organisation. Therefore, quality enhancement also includes the review of standards and the effectiveness of the activities conducted to ensure the standards are met. Key quality assurance and enhancement activities aim at ensuring the alignment between educational objectives and student learning experience and outcomes.

Requirements

IR-5.1   The College has a good standing as a provider of post-secondary education and demonstrates its quality with sound track records.

IR-5.2   The College has institutional policies and procedures for monitoring the quality of the College's educational provision and the effectiveness of its operation.

IR-5.3   The College has a quality assurance system for programme approval, determination of outcome standards and QF level, monitoring, management and review.

IR-5.4   The College has processes to determine that a proposed programme meets a community and/or industry need.

IR-5.5   The College has assessment policies and procedures to ensure assessments are fair, consistent and transparent, with moderation and feedback, and to include moderation and feedback processes, in particular feedback to students.

IR-5.6   The College has mechanisms to review the effectiveness of its quality assurance system.

IR-5.7   The College has appointed senior personnel or committees, with appropriate academic background and experience, to take responsibility for the monitoring, control, review and continuous enhancement of the quality of programmes and educational services.

IR-5.8   The College has policies and procedures to obtain feedback from students on the quality of teaching and on programmes, student support and facilities, and there are processes to monitor and act upon the feedback for the improvement of teaching and the enhancement of programmes.

IR-5.9   The College has policies and procedures for collecting feedback from staff, external advisors, external examiners, employers and other key stakeholders, and to monitor and act upon the results.

IR-5.10 The College has effective mechanisms to ensure that findings from any reviews, either conducted internally or by the external accrediting agencies or professional bodies, are acted upon.

IR-6 Student Services and Support

Standard

The College must have provision for student facilities/services, pastoral care, counselling services and learning support, which are designed to support students' educational success, wellness and whole person development.

Context

Student services refer to a range of facilities and services relating to academic and co-curricular experience such as sports, career consulting and study skills and which are available for all students. Student support focuses on students with particular needs which may be academic, financial, personal, wellness or cultural. Student services and support play an important role in the holistic development of students, complementary to acquisition of knowledge and skills, to assist them to engage with their learning and the College and to become good citizens. The level of student support should be appropriate and relevant to the QF level(s) of the programmes offered. In general, the level of student support should be greater for sub-degree students.

Requirements

IR-6.1   The College systematically identifies the characteristics and needs of its students, taking into account of the levels of their study, and makes adequate provision for student services and support accordingly.

IR-6.2   The College has policies and regulations governing students' rights and responsibilities.

IR-6.3   The College has processes to monitor students' progress and identify at-risk-students in relation to their academic performance and personal well-being.

IR-6.4   The College provides adequate student counselling, financial assistance, academic and career advising, and recreational and other communal facilities/services and life skills development that meet the students' needs, including students with special needs.

IR-6.5   The College provides induction to newly recruited students.

IR-6.6   The College makes adequate provision for the encouragement of social life and for recreation.

IR-6.7   The College has mechanisms for students to voice their grievances, and to provide feedback on the quality and adequacy of student services and support.

IR-6.8   The College has policies and procedures to ensure that co-curricular activities are designed to align with its educational objectives, and relevant to the QF level of its programmes.

5. THE IR-320 PROCESS

5.1 Preparation

Conducting Self-evaluation

5.1.1. IR-320 is conducted by HKCAAVQ on the assumption that the Post Secondary College concerned has good standing and sound track records as an education and training provider, and has policies and procedures for continuous self-review.

5.1.2. In preparation for IR-320, a College should undertake a critical and comprehensive self-evaluation for the purpose of assessing its own readiness to meet the intended purpose of the exercise. The self-evaluation should incorporate relevant information including qualitative data, quantitative data on student outcomes and stakeholders' feedback collected over an extended period of time. The self-evaluation process is intended to help the College assess its readiness for an IR-320 and to prepare the Institutional Submission and undertaking any necessary improvements to any aspects of institutional governance, management, operation, quality assurance and resources planning.

5.1.3. The process of self-evaluation should be a constructive one, and should enable the College to identify its own strengths and weaknesses having regard to the IR-320 standards and requirements. The self-evaluation stage can be shorter or longer depending on the circumstances of the individual College, its stage of readiness, its plans for programme development, and the internal procedures adopted, etc. It may either be a stand-alone evaluation or be based on the College's on-going internal review activities.

5.1.4. The College's self-evaluation should engage the existing personnel of the College at different levels, with input from external stakeholders and experts, as appropriate. It is a good practice to engage advisers, students, and employers, in the self-evaluation.

Initiating the Process

5.1.5. A College that intends to apply for IR-320 should indicate its intention through a written request to HKCAAVQ. HKCAAVQ will liaise with the College in determining the time schedule for the exercise, including the dates for the Institutional Submission, the site visit and the completion of the IR-320 Report. The time schedule will take into account of the need for the College to conduct a self-evaluation before the exercise. Early planning conducted by a College on the IR-320 exercise certainly support the process. Upon agreeing on the time schedule for the

exercise, HKCAAVQ will issue a Service Agreement setting out the terms of reference, time schedule and fee.

Compiling an Institutional Submission

5.1.6. Based on the outcome of the self-evaluation, the College should compile a submission document which provides information and documentary evidence for the purpose of demonstrating and supporting its claims of meeting the IR-320 standards at degree or sub-degree level, and its own stated aims and objectives.

5.1.7. The College is advised to follow the broad guidelines below to structure the Institutional Submission.

Part A: Main Submission
Each of the following chapters should include an evaluation of how the standard and requirements are met and will continue to be met, the main strengths and areas for improvement and how these will be addressed. This analysis should be supported by relevant evidence.

The suggested structure of the Main Submission is:

Chapter 1: Introduction – an overview of the College, such as its vision and mission statements, staff and student population and programme provisions, etc.
Chapter 2: Governance and Management Structure
Chapter 3: Academic Leadership, Planning and Environment
Chapter 4: Financial and Physical Resources
Chapter 5: Staffing and Staff Development
Chapter 6: Quality Assurance and Enhancement
Chapter 7: Student Services and Support
Chapter 8: Conclusion – a summary of the strengths and areas for improvement of the College and the College's readiness for compliance or continuing compliance with the IR-320 standards at degree or sub-degree level and the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320.

Part B: Supplementary Materials
- Supporting materials to substantiate the evaluation and outcomes presented in the Main Submission.

Forming the Panel

5.1.8. One of the guiding principles in the IR-320 process is 'peer review'. HKCAAVQ engages academic / professional experts who have the expertise and/or experience in institutional governance / management / finance and/or quality assurance to be members of the panel. The panel comprises a Panel Chair, Panel Members and the Panel

Secretary. The Panel Secretary, who is a professional staff of HKCAAVQ acting as HKCAAVQ Case Officer, is also a Panel Member.

5.1.9. HKCAAVQ identifies potential panel members from its Specialists Register and other relevant sources. As explained in Chapter 3 of this Manual, specialists have to declare that there is no potential conflict of interests. HKCAAVQ then sends the list of potential panel members to the College for checking of potential conflict of interest. After considering the College's reply, HKCAAVQ makes the final decision on the appointments of the panel to the exercise, and sends the confirmed panel membership list to the College.

5.2 Review Process

Review of Institutional Submission by Panel

5.2.1. HKCAAVQ will send the Institutional Submission to the panel for review. The panel will then provide initial comments on the Institutional Submission. The initial comments consist of requests for clarification of particular parts of the Submission and/or requests for additional information or supporting documents. These comments are intended to help the College understand the areas of concern of the panel and to prompt reflection and further thought before the site visit. The College will be given adequate time to prepare and submit a written response to the initial comments, including any additional information and/or documents requested by the panel.

Site Visit

5.2.2. The site visit is a key part of the review process as it allows for interaction between the panel and relevant personnel from the College, and other stakeholders such as students, graduates, employers, and external advisors of the College, and discussion about key aspects of the College with respect to the standards and requirements to be met.

5.3 Reporting

5.3.1. The outcome of the IR-320 will be presented in an IR-320 Report issued by HKCAAVQ. The rationale for the panel's recommendation together with the supporting evidence obtained by the panel throughout the review process will be documented in the Report. The Report includes HKCAAVQ's determinations which are delineated in Chapter 6.

5.3.2. The draft IR-320 Report will be forwarded to the College for comment on factual accuracy. After that, HKCAAVQ will finalise and issue the report to the College.

5.4 Indicative Timeline

The main steps and indicative timeline for each stage of the Process are outlined below:

Institutional Review Process	Week No.
1. College conducts self-evaluation	Preparation
2. College indicates Intention for IR-320 to HKCAAVQ	
3. HKCAAVQ and College sign Service Agreement for IR-320	
4. College compiles submission documents	
5. HKCAAVQ forms Review Panel and seeks College's clearance on conflict of interest	
6. College sends Institutional Submission to HKCAAVQ	1
7. Review Panel conducts site visit or meeting with College's key personnel and stakeholders	10
8. HKCAAVQ sends draft Review Report to College for checking of factual accuracy	20
9. HKCAAVQ issues Review Report to College	24
10. Follow-up Actions taken by College (fulfilment of conditions and/or restrictions), if any.	According to the fulfilment dates stipulated in the Report

6. OUTCOME OF THE IR-320

6.1. HKCAAVQ's determination, taking into account of the panel's recommendations, will be one of the following:

   (i)   The College has met the IR-320 standards and be granted the IR-320 status at degree or sub-degree level; or

   (ii) The College will have met the IR-320 standards and can be granted the IR-320 status at degree or sub-degree level, upon fulfillment of the conditions stipulated; or

   (iii) The College did not meet the IR-320 standards and cannot be granted the IR-320 status.

6.2. Upon granting of the IR-320 status, a College will be considered as:

   a)   having the abilities to comply with the requirements under Cap. 320 for the purpose of being registered as a registered college; and

   b)   having an overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at degree and/or sub-degree level(s).

6.3. After the IR-320 exercise is successfully completed, the College may follow the relevant procedures to make an application to EDB for registration under Cap. 320. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the College to provide further information or clarification as requested by EDB, and EDB will consider all factors pertaining to the application in approving or not approving the application for registration under Cap. 320.

6.4. The IR-320 status, if granted, will have a validity period of five years. All registered colleges need to maintain their IR-320 status to remain on the register of registered colleges with successful cyclical reviews in every five years. For colleges with PAA status, they can undertake PIR-320 every five years after the first registration. For colleges without PAA status, they are required to undertake the cyclical review using IR-320 standards every five years after the first registration.

6.5. Within the validity period, registered colleges need to submit their accredited or PAA covered new degree programmes to EDB for approval in accordance with the relevant requirements under Cap. 320 before the programmes can be launched.

6.6. It is the responsibility of the College to inform HKCAAVQ of any significant changes which might have an impact on its competence to

continue to meet the standards of IR-320 in accordance with the established mechanism on notification of changes.

6.7.   Upon registration under Cap. 320, it is also the responsibility of the college to inform EDB of any substantial change which may affect the continued compliance with any requirements under Cap. 320 and related legislations.

Review of HKCAAVQ Determination

6.8.   As provided in section 17A of Cap. 1150, a college which is aggrieved by a determination of HKCAAVQ as stated in an IR Report may apply to HKCAAVQ for a review of the relevant determination.

6.9.   All applications for review must be made with the designated Application Form and submitted within 30 days of receipt of the IR Report.

6.10.   The review fee is one-third of the original fee for the IR exercise. Payment of the review fee must be made together with the completed Application Form. The review fee will not be refunded regardless of the review outcomes.

6.11.   The processing of an application for a review is governed by sections 17B to 17D of Cap. 1150. The Application Form for Review of Accreditation Determination and/or Decisions under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150) is available on HKCAAVQ website.

7. FEE FOR IR-320

7.1. HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit self-financed body. HKCAAVQ's fee schedule is published on the HKCAAVQ website at https://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

7.2. The fee for an IR-320 is per institution and will be set out in the Service Agreement to be signed between the college and HKCAAVQ. The Accreditation Grant Scheme under the QF Fund provides grant to colleges that have successfully gone through the IR-320. More information, including the level of subsidy, is available at https://www.hkqf.gov.hk.

Roles and Responsibilities of Panel Members

1. Under the 'peer review' principle, decisions on review findings are made by HKCAAVQ after consideration of recommendations made by peers involved in the exercise as members of a panel.

2. The role of the panel is to review and evaluate evidence and form a judgment in respect of the IR-320 standards. The panel works according to the principles set out within the relevant sections of HKCAAVQ Manual for IR-320 for the fulfillment of the Terms of Reference for the review exercise.

3. In order to perform their duties effectively and efficiently, panel members attend training and / or briefing session(s) and panel meetings, make themselves familiar with HKCAAVQ review requirements and processes, read thoroughly the Institutional Submission and materials submitted by the Colleges, make initial comments on the Institutional Submission and other materials, participate in the site visit, share views and put forward recommendations to HKCAAVQ as a panel. Panel members are also expected to share their views on the draft Review Report.

4. The respective roles of the Panel Chair, the Panel Members and the Panel Secretary are outlined below:

    Panel Chairperson
    - To lead the panel in the review exercise;
    - To advise on the site visit programme and adjust the programme as necessary;
    - To chair the panel meetings;
    - To provide overall guidance for satisfactory completion of the exercise;
    - To lead panel deliberations of the review findings for recommendation to HKCAAVQ. When unavoidable, to put the matter to the vote; in the case of equality of votes, the Chairperson shall have a second vote;
    - To assume overall authority of the accuracy and appropriateness of the Review Report, representing the view of the panel, before submitting it to HKCAAVQ for making decisions on review outcome.
    - To perform all other roles as panel member.

    Panel Members
    - To make preparation for the review exercise in good time;
    - To follow the process set out in the HKCAAVQ Manual for IR-320 and HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels;
    - To provide observations and findings throughout the review exercise including but not limited to initial comments, participation in the full

programme of the site visit, sharing of views during the panel meetings, and provide comments on the Review Report;

- To deliberate on the review outcome and make recommendation to HKCAAVQ.

Panel Secretary (HKCAAVQ Case Officer)
- To be a member of the panel;
- To assist the panel to understand HKCAAVQ's review policies, standards, criteria and practices, local educational system and development, special features of the review exercise at hand, and any precedents that may be relevant to the exercise;
- To provide professional support to the Panel, and to prepare the Review Report.

5. Before confirming the membership of the panel, there is a checking procedure for conflict of interest with each potential panel member, and also with the College, in writing.

6. The panel is subject to the code of conduct and compliance with confidentiality applicable to all HKCAAVQ Panel Members. For details, please refer to the HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels in **Appendix 2**.

HKCAAVQ Code of Conduct for Panels

1.   Preamble

1.1.   This document sets out general guiding principles for the Panel Chairs and members of HKCAAVQ panels conducting accreditation, audit, review or other assessment activities (hereafter referred to generally as accreditation activity) regarding possible conflict of interests, the duty of confidentiality and prevention of bribery.

2.   Conflict of Interests

General Principles

2.1.   HKCAAVQ Panel Chairs and members (hereafter referred to generally as panel members) may experience conflict of interests between their role(s) with HKCAAVQ and their other professional activities.

2.2.   Panel members should advise HKCAAVQ of any possible conflict of interests which may arise either before, during or following the accreditation activity, and make full disclosure of their interests to HKCAAVQ at the earliest available opportunity.

2.3.   If the conflict of interest issue is only identified in the course of their engagement in the accreditation activity, the panel member should immediately place such matter before the respective panel and seek instructions. Depending on the circumstance, he / she might be required by the panel to withdraw from the exercise or be excused from the discussion or decision-making of a particular subject matter. In some cases, where the conflict is slight or only perceived possible, the panel member may be allowed to continue in the panel's work but both the declaration and the reason for the special treatment must be on record.

2.4.   It is however not intended that a panel member should make a declaration of interest simply because he or she has particular knowledge or experience on a subject matter.

3.   Potential Conflict of Interest Situations

3.1.   For illustration, the following are examples of potential conflict of interests:
    (a)   The panel member was / is serving, with or without pay, as an adviser, examiner, consultant to the client organisation concerned; or if he / she has recently been an applicant for a position (irrespective of whether the outcome is known to the applicant),

or is a current applicant or intending applicant for a position in the client organisation.

(b) The panel member has any other close association / partnership with the client organisation concerned. Examples of such could include any joint commercial or professional activity carried out by the panel member in a personal capacity in conjunction with staff member(s) in the client organisation concerned and who are closely associated with the accreditation activity in question, or any potential involvement of a similar nature.

(c) The panel member who, as a barrister, solicitor, accountant or other professional adviser, has personally or otherwise advised or represented or had frequent dealings with the client organisation concerned, or any person or body closely connected with the client organisation.

(d) Pecuniary interests in a matter under consideration by HKCAAVQ, held either by the panel member or by any close relative of his / hers.

(e) Kinship or some friendship which might be so close as to warrant declaration in order to avoid situation where an objective observer might believe that an advice from the panel member could have been influenced by the closeness of the association.

(f) Personal conflicts could also include animosity or any interest likely to lead an objective observer to believe that the panel member's advice might have been motivated by personal interest rather than a duty to give impartial advice.

(g) Where the panel member is working in a client organisation that is in competition with one which is subject to the accreditation activity by HKCAAVQ, such situation will normally not be considered as to constitute a potential for conflict of interest, as long as the connection is known to HKCAAVQ, the panel and the client organisation concerned.

(h) In order to avoid a conflict-of-interests situation arising, panel members are advised to abstain from accepting or negotiating consultancies or performing other services for the client organisation which is subject to the accreditation activity by HKCAAVQ, and to abstain from accepting hospitality from the organisation concerned, before, during and immediately after the accreditation activity until the relevant report has been issued.

4.   Confidentiality of Documents

General Principles

4.1.   All documents generated through the HKCAAVQ accreditation activities are confidential information and should be used solely for the purpose of the exercise concerned.

4.2.   Panel Chairs or members shall treat as proprietary and confidential any information or material made available to them either through HKCAAVQ

or the client organisation in question for the purpose of conducting the exercise concerned.

4.3.   Panel members have a right to ask for (and receive) through HKCAAVQ any information and explanation they need in order to discharge their roles in the context of the accreditation activity.

4.4.   However, these privileges and rights must not be abused and must be exercised with care and integrity so that requests for personal or commercial information of a sensitive nature would be kept to the essential minimum.

4.5.   The materials collected from the client organisation subject to the accreditation activity or the report produced by HKCAAVQ for the purpose of the exercise, and the copyright therein shall be and shall remain the exclusive property of HKCAAVQ or the client organisation concerned, as the case may be.

4.6.   Panel members may make notes during the course of exercise in order to help them understand the issues being discussed and to facilitate the performance of their roles in the exercise as required by HKCAAVQ. These notes should not be divulged to any other party unrelated to the accreditation activity.

4.7.   Panel members shall not communicate, or make known, any information or documents collected in the exercise or views expressed by another member or any person met in the course of the accreditation activity at any time without prior approval by HKCAAVQ.

4.8.   Upon the completion of the exercise with the issuance of the HKCAAVQ accreditation report, panel members are expected to destroy all information gathered for the exercise, except for any information which is in the public domain.

5.   **Prevention of Bribery**

5.1.   All HKCAAVQ Specialists / Accreditation Panel Members are invited to take note of the provisions of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap 201), which is applicable to HKCAAVQ.

5.2.   You are kindly reminded not to offer any advantage to HKCAAVQ staff in connection with your appointment as a specialist / panel member and serving as a panel member.

5.3.   You must not solicit or accept any advantage and/or entertainment from an operator in relation to an accreditation exercise that you are engaged in. Panel members should not participate in entertainment (e.g. lunch and dinner) offered by the operator during the course of the accreditation exercise or before the issuance of the relevant accreditation report.

Specimen Site Visit Programme[1]

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (IR)- 320

Hong Kong ABC College
Visit Programme (Date)

Day One :
Venue :

Session	Time	Programme	Participants
1.	9:00 am	Panel Private Meeting and review of tabled documents	
2.	12:00 nn	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of Board of Governors	
3.	12:45 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
4.	1:00 pm	Panel Lunch	
5.	2:30 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
6.	2:45 pm	Tour of facilities	
7.	3:30 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
8.	3:45 pm	Meeting with senior management	
9.	4:30 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
10.	4:45 pm	Meeting with external Members of Academic Advisory Boards and External Programme Advisors and/or Assessors	
11.	5:30 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
12.	6:15 pm	**End of Day One Programme**	

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[1] The specimen site visit programme provides an indication on the operation and key areas of coverage. Case specific adjustments will be made, if appropriate.

Specimen Site Visit Programme

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (IR) - 320

Hong Kong ABC College
Visit Programme (Date)

Day Two :
Venue :

Session	Time	Programme	Participants
13.	9:00 am	Panel Private Meeting and review of tabled documents	
14.	9:45 am	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of Academic Board and Chairman of its major committees (except committees on quality assurance and research)	
15.	10:30 am	Panel Private Meeting	
16.	10:45 am	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of committees on quality assurance and research	
17.	11:30 am	Panel Private Meeting	
18.	11:45 am	Meeting with heads of academic units of selected programmes / disciplines	
19.	12:30 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
20.	12:45 pm	Panel Lunch	
21.	2:15 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
22.	2:30 pm	Meeting with representatives of teaching staff	
23.	3:15 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
24.	3:30 pm	Meeting with employers of graduates	
25.	4:15 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
26.	4:30 pm	Meeting with selected personnel (optional)	
27.	5:00 pm	Panel Private meeting	
28.	5:45 pm	**End of Day Two Programme**	

Specimen Site Visit Programme

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (IR) - 320

Hong Kong ABC College
Visit Programme (Date)

Day Three :
Venue :

Session	Time	Programme	Participants
29.	9:00 am	Panel Private Meeting and review of tabled documents	
30.	9:30 am	Meeting with Chairman and/or Members of committees on finance, human resources and physical resources	
31.	10:15 am	Panel Private Meeting	
32.	10:30 am	Meeting with the Registrar, Librarian and representatives from IT and units providing student support services	
33.	11:15 am	Panel Private meeting	
34.	11:30 am	Meeting with students and graduates	
35.	12:15 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
36.	12:30 pm	Panel Lunch	
37.	2:00 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
38.	2:15 pm	Meeting with selected personnel (optional)	
39.	2:45 pm	Panel Private Meeting	
40.	5:45 pm	Exit Meeting with Senior Management (Only broad observations will be given)	
41.	6:00 pm	**End of Day Three Programme**	

End of Site Visit Programme