



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

# **MANUAL FOR PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - 320**

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

For Consultation | Jul 2025

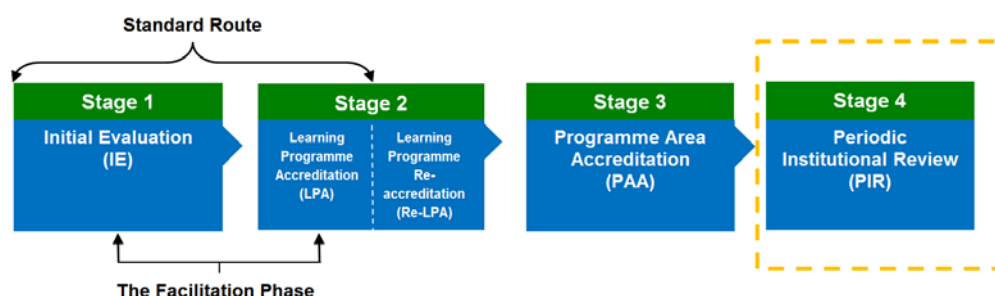
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## 1. PREAMBLE

### PIR in the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

- 1.1. Periodic Institutional Review (PIR) is the fourth stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. The maintenance of Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status is subject to PIR. PIR places emphasis on institutional effectiveness and enhancement based on evidence from programme development and delivery across an Operator's approved programme areas contributing to attainment of institutional objectives and strategic plan.



- 1.2. An Operator granted with a PAA status may develop and operate learning programme(s) within the approved scope of programme area(s) at or below the specified Qualifications Framework (QF) level(s) within the validity period of its PAA status without undertaking Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)/Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA). Maintenance of the PAA status is subject to successful PIR before expiry of the validity period.

### PIR-320 for continuing registration under Cap. 320

- 1.3. Under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320), all Post Secondary Colleges seeking registration are subject to the attainment of an Institutional Review (IR-320) status at the degree and/or sub-degree level(s) and is 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 every five years.
- 1.4. 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 Colleges as part of the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320.
- 1.5. 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 or its equivalent

Periodic Institutional Review (PIR-320), the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320, and other considerations as deemed necessary. A registered college is to comply with all requirements under Cap. 320 and related legislations.

- 1.6. For registered colleges with Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status at the appropriate QF level, they are required to undertake cyclical reviews using the PIR-320 standards after the first registration. For registered colleges without PAA status, they are required to undertake cyclical reviews using the IR-320 standards after the first registration. All PIR-320 are conducted with reference to the QF level which must commensurate with the corresponding registration under Cap. 320.
- 1.7. This Manual is produced for the use of registered colleges with PAA status planning to undergo PIR-320 for the purpose of remaining on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320.
- 1.8. Registered colleges with PAA status can plan for seeking maintenance of their PAA status in the same PIR-320 exercise. They are required to observe the 5-year interval of cyclical review requirement for remaining on the register of registered colleges.
- 1.9. Post Secondary Colleges need to go through the following quality assurance processes for remaining on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320:

Registered Colleges <b>WITH</b> PAA status at relevant QF level	
<b><u>Institutional Level</u></b>	
(i) For Cyclical review	(i) PIR-320
<b><u>Programme Level</u></b>	
(ii) New programme not covered by PAA status	(ii) LPA
(iii) Programme re-accreditation (for programme <u>not</u> covered by PAA status)	(iii) Re-LPA
(iv) Programme re-accreditation (for programme covered by PAA status)	(iv) PIR-320
Registered Colleges <b>WITHOUT</b> PAA status at relevant QF level	
<b><u>Institutional Level</u></b>	
(i) For Cyclical review	(i) IR-320

<b><u>Programme Level</u></b>	
(ii) New programme	(ii) LPA
(iii) Programme re-accreditation	(iii) Re-LPA

- 1.10. At the 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.
- 1.11. 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 PIR-320 standards detailed in this document.
- 1.12. Registered colleges are required to observe the requirement to undertake cyclical reviews for remaining on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320 when planning for PIR-320, after the first registration.
- 1.13. It is the responsibility of the Post Secondary Colleges to inform HKCAAVQ of any significant changes which might have an impact on its competency to continue to meet the standards of IR-320 or PIR-320 in accordance with the established mechanism on notification of changes.
- 1.14. 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 requirements under Cap. 320.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose and scope of an PIR-320 exercise is stipulated in a service agreement to be signed by both parties. The terms of reference of an PIR-320 exercise for the purpose of seeking continuing registration under Cap. 320 are to:

- a) *assess and determine the College's abilities to comply with the requirements under Cap. 320 for the purpose of remaining on the register of registered colleges; and*
- b) *ascertain whether the College continues to have an overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the sub-degree (QF Level 4) and/or degree (QF Level 5) level(s); and*
- c) *ascertain whether the College continues to be competent and effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation in the approved programme area(s).*

### **3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 HKCAAVQ adopts the following guiding principles in conducting the PIR-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 institution, collect and evaluate evidence and form a judgment as to whether the Operator meets the required standards and stated aims, and has the competence to operate self-financing programmes at the sub-degree and/or degree level(s). 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 PIR-320 exercise.

#### **Standards-based**

- 3.3 HKCAAVQ has developed the PIR-320 standards, provided in Chapter 4 of this Manual, which collectively set out the competence requirements of a Post Secondary College in systematically enhancing the quality of its operation in the approved programme area(s), in operating self-financing programmes at the sub-degree and/or degree level(s) in compliance with the specified requirements for registration under Cap. 320 and related legislations.

#### **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 PIR-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 sub-degree and/or degree-level programmes and programmes in the approved programme area(s).

### **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 sub-degree and/or degree level(s).

### **Transparency**

- 3.6 The PIR-320 is conducted through a 'transparent' approach. The 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 PIR exercise. The 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 listed 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 PIR-320 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 PIR-320

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

Purpose Statement	Domain of Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To assess and determine the College's abilities to comply with the requirements under Cap. 320 for the purpose of remaining on the register of registered colleges.</li><li>• To ascertain whether the College continues to have an overall competence to operate self-financing programmes at the sub-degree (QF Level 4) and/or degree (QF Level 5) level(s).</li><li>• To ascertain whether the College continues to be competent and effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation in the approved programme area(s).</li></ul>	<p>PIR-1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning</p> <p>PIR-2 Organisational Leadership and Staffing</p> <p>PIR-3 Programme Area Development and Management</p> <p>PIR-4 Management of Resources and Services</p> <p>PIR-5 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement</p>

## **PIR-1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning**

### **Accreditation Standard**

The College must demonstrate that it is meeting its educational/training objectives, which are aligned with its vision and mission, and informed by comprehensive review of organisational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives. The College should comply with the specified requirements for registration provided in Cap. 320.

### **Minimum requirements**

- PIR-1.1 The College has clear delegation of authority in its governance structure for corporate and academic management.
- PIR-1.2 The College has an active academic decision-making body responsible for programme planning, approval and review. It is accountable for programme standard, quality and risks involved.
- PIR-1.3 The College is free from affiliation with or control by any foreign government or organisation outside Hong Kong.
- PIR-1.4 The College has policies and processes that plan, direct, monitor and improve organisational effectiveness.
- PIR-1.5 The College is able to substantiate its attainment of educational/training objectives, using information such as organisational goals/outcomes and/or performance indicators, including those in the approved programme area(s).
- PIR-1.6 \* The College has effective internal quality assurance system to ensure programme design and implementation meet the standard and requirements at the relevant QF level(s) and drive for operational and educational/training enhancement.
- PIR-1.7 Planning and implementation for programmes should be aligned with the organisation strategic plan in line with its vision and mission with supporting evidence of effectiveness.
- PIR-1.8 \* The College actively drives the achievement of its vision and mission through programme review mechanisms to maintain programme standard and the effectiveness of learning and teaching at relevant QF level, and meeting the needs of the community, industries and disciplines.
- PIR-1.9 The College has used information and data from multiple sources to inform and enhance the quality of educational/training provisions and services.
- PIR-1.10 The College has protocols and mechanisms to identify risks and to provide advice and guidance to the governing bodies and management groups. Contingency planning is effectively integrated in business and programme planning.
- PIR-1.11 The College provides easy access by the community, e.g. on a website, an overview of the College, such as abstract of the strategic plan, abstract of the annual reports, key financial information, quality assurance activities, accreditation and/or regulatory status, etc. in line with the relevant requirements under Cap. 320.

## **Explanatory Notes for PIR-1**

### ***Why this accreditation standard is important***

This standard is to ensure that the College continuously enhances its organisational effectiveness through evidence-based decision-making to achieve the organisational vision and mission. As a result, the organisation remains competent and able to sustain a high quality of education/training services that meets the needs of its learners on an on-going basis. Planning at the organisational level is required to ensure alignment between programme area planning, staff planning, financial and resource planning, in anticipation of the foreseeable risks, changes and challenges.

### ***Matters for consideration***

- Enhancement of organisational effectiveness is evident and is linked to strategic planning.
- Policies on education/training development, quality assurance and resource allocation are proved to be coherent, appropriate and responsive to changes.
- Stakeholders are engaged in evaluation of organisational effectiveness and strategic planning.
- Appropriate technologies such as qualitative and quantitative analytical tools and reporting tools are adopted effectively to support strategic planning.
- Up-to-date, relevant and accurate information about learning programmes is available for prospective learners to make informed decisions before enrolment. This may include graduate statistics and employability data.

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

## PIR-2 Organisational Leadership and Staffing

### Accreditation Standard

The College must demonstrate that it continues to have a sufficient number of qualified and competent management and education/training staff, including programme leaders, teaching and support staff, as a result of effective staffing policy and procedures for planning and development, and that these arrangements align with the strategic and business plans and the development of the programme area(s).

### Minimum requirements

- PIR-2.1 The programme management team is effective in planning, development and review of the learning programme(s) they are responsible for, by providing directions and making key decisions relating to programme offering/termination, staff management, resource allocation and quality assurance.
- PIR-2.2 The effectiveness of staff planning is supported by analysis of the established staff profile and the needs of the internal and external environment. The pool of full-time staff should be large enough to cater for foreseeable and other circumstances for sustainable and effective academic leadership at institutional and programme levels.
- PIR-2.3 The policy and practices of the College in staff recruitment, appraisal and development at various levels are open, fair, transparent, effective and efficient.
- PIR-2.4 \* The appointment and deployment of teaching and support staff individually and as a team of the College are effective in ensuring that they have appropriate academic, vocational or professional qualifications and experiences relevant to the QF level of the programmes to be taught. They should also possess relevant and up-to-date experience/knowledge and skills in the development, management, delivery and assessment of outcome-based learning programmes and in the review and quality assurance of programmes they are engaged in. 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 a Bachelor degree and preferably with relevant teaching/industry experience, or equivalent.
- PIR-2.5 The College has effective measures to ensure that staff workload is maintained at a reasonable level to ensure wellness, staff development, professional and scholarly activities are feasible.

## **Explanatory Notes for PIR-2**

### ***Why this accreditation standard is important***

This standard is to ensure that the College has a high quality and committed workforce which shares the vision and mission of the organisation, and is able to translate the vision and mission into concrete plans, actions and outcomes at the organisational and programme area levels. This requires identification of the desirable attributes of the workforce and careful planning to acquire and/or develop those attributes. Organisational leadership should be embedded within the governance and management system and not be solely reliant on individual staff.

### ***Matters for consideration***

- The staff profile has an appropriate mix of full-time/part-time, teaching/non-teaching, academic/industry practitioners, and staff at different stages of their career development.
- Staff members are active in research, publication, consultancy, and academic/professional/scholarly activities and they are relevant to the QF level of programmes they are engaged in.
- The College identifies a relevant set of measures of teaching effectiveness and applies them effectively to inform staff appraisal and development.
- Staff engagement is high in programme planning, development and review processes.
- There are mechanisms to facilitate and support exchange and development of pedagogical experience and skills among staff members.

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

## **PIR-3 Programme Area Development and Management**

### **Accreditation Standard**

The College must demonstrate that the processes for programme approval, development, review, as well as the formulation of strategic plans at both the organisational and programme area levels, are aligned and continue to remain effective to meet its educational/training objectives generally and within the approved programme area(s).

### **Minimum requirements**

- PIR-3.1 Programme development and approval are aligned with the strategic direction and business plan of the College.
- PIR-3.2 Throughout the programme design, development and approval processes, input from stakeholders is fully considered and taken into account in the continuous enhancement processes for meeting the needs of the community, industries and disciplines.
- PIR-3.3 The design of the learning programmes is effective in terms of QF level, admission criteria, coherence, balance and progression for ensuring the achievement of the desired graduate profiles.
- PIR-3.4 The learning and teaching pedagogy and assessment activities are learner focused and remain effective to support learners' attainment of the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes.
- PIR-3.5 The learning programmes remain current and valid in the light of developments in the related field of disciplines, industries or professions.
- PIR-3.6 The College has appropriately benchmarked the outcome standards and quality with the claimed QF level(s) with organisations or learning programmes in a similar context.

## **Explanatory Notes for PIR-3**

### ***Why this accreditation standard is important***

This standard is to ensure that the College organises programme development and programme area development as a long-term undertaking. Effective alignment of all planning activities is essential for ensuring successful development of programme and programme areas. This kind of alignment happens at the level of strategic planning where decisions on resources and priorities are made. Appropriateness of programme development and programme area development would be recognised by the learners, employers, academic/industry partners and the community at large.

### ***Matters for consideration***

- There are mechanisms to collect and procedures to consider input and feedback from different stakeholders in the programme development, delivery and review processes.
- The learning and teaching pedagogy adopted are fit for purpose, with due consideration of up-to-date technology and pedagogy, e.g. online and/or blended mode learning, work-based learning, etc.
- The learning and teaching activities are learner focused which support different student learning styles, including students with special needs, and relevant to QF level of the programmes to ensure appropriate progression in intellectual demands on students as they move through their programmes.
- Assessment policy and procedures are effective to ensure assessments are balanced, fair, consistent and transparent.
- Moderation and feedback processes (including in particular feedback to students) are included in the assessment procedures.
- There is a mechanism for appeals that allows students to raise their concern on assessment results.
- Depending on the purpose of the approach adopted for benchmarking, an appropriate benchmarking methodology is adopted accordingly. Results of benchmarking are considered at the right level(s) for improvement actions.
- Internal / external quality assurance, accreditation or professional recognition confirms the quality of learning programmes, including attainment of programme objectives, learning outcomes and QF standards.
- Admission profile and ratio of applicants to planned places show that the learning programmes and programmes in the approved programme area(s) have high demand.
- Programme planning promptly responds to new opportunities and challenges, supported by adequate financial and resource planning.
- Strong ties and/or collaborations have been established between programmes and the programme area(s) and the relevant disciplines, industries or professions.
- Learners, alumni and staff achievements from the programmes and the approved programme area(s) receive recognition from the relevant disciplines, industries or professions.



## PIR-4 Management of Resources and Services

### Accreditation Standard

The College must demonstrate that, generally and within the approved programme area(s), the mechanisms for management and deployment of resources and services continue to be effective to meet the educational/training objectives, as a result of implementing organisational resource allocation policies and financial budgets.

### Minimum requirements

- PIR-4.1 The College has effective resource planning and management covering human, wellness, financial, physical and information resources to provide the learning experience and environment to support the delivery of learning programmes in achieving their intended learning outcomes.
- PIR-4.2 The financial management is effective to ensure the sustainability of the delivery of their learning programmes in meeting the educational/training objectives. Decisions on such plans are made with the support of relevant and sufficient data and information.
- PIR-4.3 The decisions on resource allocation to support learning, teaching and assessment within the programme area(s) and at the relevant QF level(s) have taken into account of feedback obtained through various channels, with a view to supporting long-term development of its learning programmes.
- PIR-4.4 The feedback from users on the quality and adequacy of learning, teaching and enabling resources is regularly collected and acted upon, and used to inform future planning.
- PIR-4.5\* Adequate learning resources and learner support services have been identified and provided by the College relevant to the QF level(s) of the programmes provided, and have been informed by programme planning and analysis of learner characteristics.

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

## **Explanatory Notes for PIR-4**

### ***Why this accreditation standard is important***

This standard is to ensure that educational/training resources and support services are available and suitable to ensure effective learning, teaching and assessment on an on-going basis. This requires careful planning to ensure that funding is available, development/procurement is timely and training on applying resources in learning/teaching is provided to learners and staff. Within an organisation, resources are typically shared and therefore coordination and scheduling are required to maximise the utilisation and cost effectiveness of resources, and to minimise the impact on the availability and/or quality of resources.

### ***Matters for consideration***

- Appropriate resource allocation has been made to ensure adequate learning and teaching resources be provided to the learners for the purpose of effective and independent learning. Such support may include but is not limited to library resources, teaching accommodation, meeting space for staff and students, laboratories with specialised equipment and other workshop facilities and access to information technology resources.
- Appropriate technologies and reporting tools are adopted to support resource planning.
- Appropriate learner support services are available to meet the needs of learners with different learning styles, special education needs and at different levels of study.
- Suitable technologies are deployed to provide timely feedback to learners and staff.

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

## **PIR-5 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

### **Accreditation Standard**

The College must demonstrate its on-going maintenance of an effective quality assurance system for ensuring the quality and standards of its learning programmes at the stated QF level(s)\*, including those in the approved programme area(s), aligning with its educational/training objectives.

### **Minimum requirements**

- PIR-5.1 The academic governing body is fully accountable for the quality assurance of programme offerings and approval of related policies and procedures, including approval of awards.
- PIR-5.2 Rules and regulations on admission and progression, as well as graduation requirements are clear and readily accessible by learners, and are in line with the relevant prevailing local admission requirements and standards.
- PIR-5.3 The policies on admission, assessment, measurement of quality of learning outcomes, programme approval, staff quality, review and feedback mechanisms, resources and support facilities are effective.
- PIR-5.4 Information of quality assurance policies and procedures and programme-based information are maintained by a single authoritative source and are readily accessible within the institution by both staff and learners.
- PIR-5.5 New policies and procedures in regard to the programmes are approved by the designated academic governing body through appropriate processes, and implemented with engagement of relevant personnel as appropriate.
- PIR-5.6 The quality assurance system is effective in benchmarking and ensuring that the existing and new learning programmes developed meet the relevant QF standards.
- PIR-5.7 The feedback from stakeholders is considered throughout the programme design, development, approval and review processes, and has resulted in improvement actions and enhancement of programmes, programme areas and organisational effectiveness.
- PIR-5.8 The staff members responsible for managing, delivering and assessing the learning programmes takes effective actions to address weaknesses, build on strengths, and generally develop a culture of continuous improvement and quality enhancement.

## **Explanatory Notes for PIR-5**

### ***Why this accreditation standard is important***

This standard is to ensure that quality assurance of the College focuses on evaluating how effective it is in accomplishing its vision and mission and achieving its educational/training objectives, through an on-going, evidence-based and participatory self-reflection process. This is to ensure that the organisation is responding to changes, enhancing its effectiveness and is focused on quality, in pursuit of its organisational aims.

### ***Matters for consideration***

- Appropriate evidence, both direct and indirect, is systematically collected, analysed and interpreted to inform quality assurance decisions in a timely manner.
- Findings from quality assurance activities are fully discussed at the right level(s) and acted upon, if necessary, with documented records.
- The governing and management bodies routinely receive reports on effectiveness of improvement actions.
- The governing and management bodies have made it a priority to monitor the effectiveness of quality assurance, and the alignment between its vision and mission, educational/training objectives and offerings.
- The quality assurance system ensures its integrity and objectivity by engaging external input and incorporating checks and balances between those who take actions and those who review actions.
- Oversight of quality assurance measures on face-to-face or online programmes offered at multiple locations is effective.
- Certification documents are stored with effective security measures.

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

## **5. THE PIR-320 PROCESS**

### **5.1 Preparation**

#### **Conducting Self-evaluation**

- 5.1.1. PIR-320 is conducted by HKCAAVQ on the assumption that the College 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 PIR-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 the validity period of the last IR-320 or PIR-320. The self-evaluation process is intended to help a College to prepare the Institutional Submission for demonstrating its continuous competence in achieving its vision and mission, and enhancing the quality of its operations.
- 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 PIR-320 standards and requirements and relevant legal requirements for operating sub-degree and/or degree programmes.
- 5.1.4. The College's self-evaluation should engage the existing personnel of the institution 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 PIR-320 can 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 submitting the Institutional Submission, the site visit and the completion of the PIR-320 Report. 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 PIR-320 standards 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 institution, such as its vision and mission statements, staff and student population and programme provisions, etc.
- Chapter 2: Organisational Effectiveness and Planning
- Chapter 3: Organisational Leadership and Staffing
- Chapter 4: Programme Area Development and Management
- Chapter 5: Management of Resources and Services
- Chapter 6: Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- Chapter 7: Conclusion – a summary of strengths and areas for improvement of the College for continuing compliance with the PIR-320 standards 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 PIR-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 PIR-320 will be presented in an PIR-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 PIR-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:

Periodic Institutional Review Process	Week No.
1. College conducts self-evaluation	Preparation
2. College indicates Intention for PIR-320 to HKCAAVQ	
3. HKCAAVQ and College sign Service Agreement for PIR-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 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 the College (fulfilment of conditions and/or restrictions), if any.	According to the fulfilment dates stipulated in the Report



## **6. OUTCOME OF THE PIR-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 PIR-320 standards and be granted to maintain the approved PAA and the IR-320 status at degree or sub-degree level; or
  - (ii) The College will have met the PIR-320 standards and be granted to maintain the approved PAA and the IR-320 status at degree or sub-degree level, upon fulfillment of the conditions stipulated; or
  - (iii) The College did not meet the PIR-320 and cannot be granted to maintain the approved PAA and the IR-320 status.
- 6.2. After the PIR-320 exercise is successfully completed, the College should follow the relevant procedures to inform EDB of the outcome for remaining on the register of registered colleges 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 pertinent factors in determining the eligibility of the College to remain on the register.
- 6.3. All registered colleges need to maintain their IR-320 status for remaining on the register of registered colleges under Cap. 320 with successful cyclical reviews every five years.
- 6.4. Within the validity period, registered colleges need to submit their accredited or PAA covered new degree programmes to the EDB for approval in accordance with the relevant requirements under Cap. 320 before the programmes can be launched.
- 6.5. 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 and PIR-320 in accordance with the established mechanism on notification of changes.
- 6.6. 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.

### **Appeal**

- 6.7. Under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 592), organisations aggrieved by QF-related decisions made by HKCAAVQ may appeal to the Appeal Board of the Education

Bureau. Please refer to Cap. 592A ([www.elegislation.gov.hk](http://www.elegislation.gov.hk)) for the appeal rules. Details of the appeal procedures are available at [www.hkqf.gov.hk](http://www.hkqf.gov.hk).

## **7. FEE FOR PIR-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 a PIR-320 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 grants to Colleges that have successfully gone through the PIR-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 PIR-320 standards. The panel works according to the principles set out within the relevant sections of HKCAAVQ Manual for PIR-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 institutions, 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 PIR-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 Reports.
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 perceivedly 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 College 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 College during the course of the accreditation exercise or before the issuance of the relevant accreditation report.



## Specimen Site Visit Programme<sup>1</sup>

PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - 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	<b>End of Day One Programme</b>	

<sup>1</sup> The 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

PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - 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 programme areas / 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	<b>End of Day Two Programme</b>	

## Specimen Site Visit Programme

PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - 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	<b>End of Day Three Programme</b>	

**End of Site Visit Programme**