From the Executive Director

In the May issue of the HKCAAVQ Newsletter, I am pleased to share with you the positive results of some significant projects that we achieved in the first quarter of 2017, as well as a number of policy initiatives that have been approved by the Council in its April 2017 meeting.

The Review of Accreditation Standards and Criteria is moving into the consultation phase to collect feedback from stakeholders on the proposed refinements. To ensure that the accreditation standards are fit for purpose, your support to and participation in the consultation is essential.

I was delighted to see some 150 operator representatives and 80 Specialists present at the HKCAAVQ Operators Briefing cum Specialists Appointment Ceremony on 19 May. This was the first time we organised a joint programme to provide an opportunity for operators and Specialists to meet in the spirit of peer review.

The event also marked the formal launch of the Quality Assurance Online Knowledgebase (QAOK), an online knowledgebase containing good quality assurance practices from the education sector. I would like to extend our thanks to the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Committee (UGC) for agreeing to include the recommendations of good practices identified in the university audit reports and in the future from the audit reports of the self-financed arms of the universities in the QAOK. I hope the QAOK will become a frequently used tool for everybody in the sector.

Earlier this year, we ran an online survey to collect feedback on the usability and effectiveness of our website. I am grateful to everybody who spent time filling out the questionnaire. Your comments and suggestions are very useful for our continuous improvement of the website.

Finally, I would like to bring to your attention the decisions that the Council made in its April meeting to approve a number of new policies and make amendments to existing policies. You will find the details of these policy initiatives in the Newsletter.

Ms Dorte Kristoffersen
Executive Director

Spotlight

Launch of Quality Assurance Online Knowledgebase (QAOK)
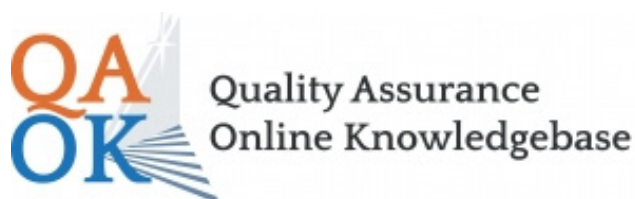
The Quality Assurance Online Knowledgebase (QAOK) (http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/publications/QAOK) went live in February 2017. It is one of the initiatives under a project supported by the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS).

The QAOK is a user-friendly knowledgebase which contains examples of good practices in quality assurance drawn from the post-secondary education sector locally and internationally. Its aim is to serve as an information portal for institutions seeking to improve their internal QA processes and to disseminate the good practices to a wider community.

The QAOK covers a board spectrum of topics including institutional governance, programme development and student support services. The list of topics may be supplemented from time to time when new topics and content arise. Visitors are encouraged to share the good practices with friends and colleagues and leave comments for individual good practice on the QAOK for constructive exchange of views.

HKCAAVQ will continue to identify good practices from different sources and the QAOK will be updated regularly with new good practices identified. Contributions from the higher education sector are highly welcomed. We encourage users to check QAOK regularly. You can use this link to access QAOK.

HKCAAVQ Operators Briefing cum Specialists Appointment Ceremony 2017

Over 230operator representatives and Specialists attended the HKCAAVQ Operators Briefing cum Specialists Appointment Ceremony 2017 on 19 May 2017.

It was the first time that the annual Operators Briefing, QR Briefing, and Specialists Appointment Ceremony were combined into one event. Apart from sharing the annual Operators' feedback on our Accreditation and QR services and presenting Certificates of Appointment to HKCAAVQ Specialists, this event also provided a platform for exchange and networking between Specialists, Operators and HKCAAVQ. We also provided Operators with an update of HKCAAVQ's recent developments, such as the launch of QAOK, the development of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) centralised database on QR and the consultation on Review of Accreditation Standards.

Staff Exchange between NIAD-QE and HKCAAVQ

HKCAAVQ and the National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE) signed the third Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in January 2016.

Staff exchange is one of the collaborative activities under the MoU. Mr Yu Sugawara and Mr Takeshi Kunishige from the International Affairs Division of NIAD-QE participated in the staff exchange from 20 to 24 March 2017.

HKCAAVQ briefed the participants on its core services and new initiatives including review of accreditation standards and criteria, launch of Quality Management System (QMS) and pilot exercise of accreditation of online programme. One of the participants also took part in a site visit of a non-local learning programme accreditation as an observer.

Mr Sugawara and Mr Kunishige made a presentation on "Institutional Quality Assessments by NIAD-QE" to more than 40 HKCAAVQ staff. The presentation highlighted the roles of NIAD-QE, types and scopes of institutional accreditation, assessment and evaluation they conducts, adopted approaches and standards, compositions and roles of panels and possible results.

The exchange identified similarities in the two agencies' approaches and standards for quality assurance activities, as well as differences, such as the profiles of operators, and the philosophy behind site visits. We believe that the exchange has promoted better mutual understanding and paved the way for future collaboration.

Experience Sharing between HEEACT and HKCAAVQ

HKCAAVQ and the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) have signed their second Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC) in November 2016. A delegation led by its Executive Director, Professor Angela Hou, visited HKCAAVQ on 9 February 2017.

The delegation made presentations on "HEEACT and Internationalisation of Quality Assurance in Taiwan", "HEEACT Accreditation Outcomes and Impacts" and "Student Learning Outcomes and Qualification Recognition: Hong Kong Case" In return, HKCAAVQ staff shared their experience in recruiting, training and engaging non-local specialists for accreditation activities in Hong Kong. It is worth noting that both agencies had similar experiences and faced similar challenges in conducting quality assurance activities offshore, such as cultural differences and use of language.

HKCAAVQ and HEEACT exchanged views on the recent developments of quality assurance in Hong Kong and Taiwan, including the review of generic level descriptors in Hong Kong and the change from compulsory to voluntary programme evaluation for higher education institutions in Taiwan. Both agencies agree that such exchange has enhanced mutual understanding and facilitated possible cooperation in the future.

QESS Workshop on Student Support Services

With the support of the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS) under the Education Bureau, HKCAAVQ continued to run internal workshops to benefit from international perspectives in quality assurance.

Mr Derfel Owen, Director of Academic Services at the University College London was invited to conduct a workshop titled "Student Success: Holistic Support to Enhance Student Outcomes and Meet Evolving Global Expectations" on 22 – 24 February 2017.

During the workshop, Mr Owen presented a range of strategic considerations in the provision of student support services and shared with HKCAAVQ professional staff examples of good practices in supporting students, including creating student charters to enhance communication between students and an institution, and mapping of key stages in student life cycle to help design effective student support services. He also facilitated a number of group discussions. The fruitful exchange of ideas and experience helped HKCAAVQ staff gain a deeper understanding on the topic.

Feature

HKCAAVQ e-Portal

In July 2016 HKCAAVQ launched the e-Portal, an electronic communication platform that enables operators and course providers to process, check and review the status of their applications and submissions for accreditation and assessment services online.

Operators and course providers that have set up user accounts in the e-Portal can apply for accreditation and assessment services as well as submit applications and documents within this secure user-friendly online platform, covering an array of services including Accreditation for academic and vocational programmes, Assessment of Continuing Education Fund (CEF) reimbursable courses as well as Assessment and Vetting of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes.

In this issue, we are going to share with you the first experiences gained with the usage and further development of the e-Portal, as well as provide some user feedback and tips for using the e-Portal.

Update of e-Portal

The past 10 months have been a 'phase-in' period for the use of the e-Portal. While the number of operators using the e-Portal has grown steadily, by end-January 2017 it had not reached 100% coverage for all services. As a result HKCAAVQ decided to extend the phase-in period until end-June 2017, after which time the use of the e-Portal will become mandatory for all accreditation and assessment services. Up to end-April 2017, the take up and use of the e-Portal are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Take up and use of the e-Portal as of the end of April 2017

Services	% of operators with e-Portal Account	% of monthly transactions through the e-Portal
Academic Accreditation	84%	90%
Vocational and Professional Accreditation	84%	100%
Assessment of CEF reimbursable courses	47%	100%
Assessment of CPD programmes	90%	100%

The extension to the phase-in period has been used to further enhance the utility of the e-Portal with modifications made e.g, to spaces and character numbers to allow for the input of larger amounts of information in forms. These and other enhancements were fully implemented by the end of March 2017.

User feedback

"The interface of the e-Portal is clear enough to say it is user-friendly. Instructions for submitting information are clear and well-stated. As a result, the time for submitting documents is shortened and using this e-Portal is highly effective. The most significant advantage of using the e-Portal is that it saves much manpower and resources to submit supporting documents."

Dr. Ricky Yuen
School Principal, School of Nursing, Union Hospital

Tips for Users

What is the file size limit for upload? What can I do if my file exceeds the limit?

The system allows a maximum size of 1GB per file. You can upload at the same time up to:
- five files for user account registration
- ten files for submitting new applications
- three files of supplementary information for existing applications

If the file size exceeds 1GB, you can compress the file. Some compression tools allow users to save the compressed file as multiple fixed-size files.

Is there any easier way to manage if I have many files to upload?

Instead of uploading the files one by one, you may compress a number of files into a zipped file for uploading the document in one go.

Can I authorise my colleague to check the status of application?

There is a function built in the account to allow an e-Portal user to enable other e-Portal users to view their application by adding them onto the list of viewers. For details, please see Step 5 of part 2, page 10 of the user guide (please click this link). This function facilitates the checking process by the operator within its organisation before submitting the application. In addition, the authorised viewer will receive the status update by email; all you need to do is to enable the receiving notification function.

For enquiries, suggestions and feedback on the e-Portal, please click the Enquiries and Assistance page to contact our staff. You may also click here to read our quick guides for more information and guidance in using the e-Portal.

Policy Update

Consultation on Review of Accreditation Standards and Criteria

Based on the Discussion Paper issued in May 2016, HKCAAVQ conducted desktop research and focus group meetings to inform the drafting of revisions to the accreditation standards. Fourteen broad issues have been identified, with an overarching theme being the need to provide more guidance to operators and accreditation panels in applying the standards; while maintaining a suitable degree of flexibility to address the diversity of operators and learning programmes accredited by HKCAAVQ. In the light of this, a new structure for presenting the accreditation standards and criteria has been developed.

The Review project has now entered the consultation phase. A Consultation Document incorporating a summary of the issues and the draft revisions to the accreditation standards will be available on or before 20 June 2017 from the Review page on HKCAAVQ's website for open consultation. The consultation will last till **31 August 2017** with three channels for collecting feedback and opinions from different stakeholders, including an online survey, written submission and face-to-face sessions. Invitations will be sent to HKCAAVQ's accredited operators, specialists and relevant parties to participate in the consultation.

Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) Centralised Database

Since November 2016, HKCAAVQ has been working closely with various stakeholders in preparation for the building of the CAT Database. Funded by the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS), this CAT centralised database, will be incorporated, as a new function on the Qualifications Register (QR) with a dedicated search facility with various interactive features.

To seek professional advice from the policy-maker and operators, an Advisory Group has been formed with representatives from the Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS) and four selected operators from both the self-accrediting and HKCAAVQ-accredited sectors serving as members. Valuable feedback and suggestions for refining the proposal for the CAT centralised database and for taking forward the project were received from the Advisory Group at its first meeting in March 2017.

QR System Enhancement

In support of the requirement to indicate "Industry" and "Branch" on the QR, and in order to enhance the transparency of qualifications to learners and the usability of QR as a public database for quality assured qualifications under the Qualifications Framework (QF), the QR system has been enhanced. The enhancement allows operators to select more than one (and maximum 10) industry for a programme on the QR, and up to 30 branches. This expansion of the selection of industries and branches was rolled out on 1 April 2017.

Policy on differentiation approach in accreditation

The HKCAAVQ Council meeting on 21 April 2017 approved the arrangements for the implementation of a differentiated approach to accreditation for eligible operators with service agreements signed on or after 3 July 2017.

The differentiation approach rests on analysis of data on an operator's track record drawn from HKCAAVQ's Quality Management System (QMS).

Operators with positive track records may be eligible for differentiated accreditation approaches such as:
• Paper-based review accreditation
• Customised accreditation
• Variation in validity period
or some combination of the above.

It is also intended that the differentiation approach be applied to the assessment of substantial change on the same basis of evidence of a positive track record.

To learn more about the differentiation approach, please refer to the article under Policy Update in the last Newsletter. Further details on the differentiation approach will be provided to operators over the coming months.

Refinements to the Process for Substantial Changes

Maintenance of accreditation status during the validity period is subject to no substantial changes being made to an operator or a learning programme without prior approval from HKCAAVQ. The Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status (Guidance Notes), which were last reviewed in 2013, specify procedures for seeking approval for proposed changes to ensure that changes made do not adversely affect the capacity of an operator and/or a learning programme accredited by HKCAAVQ to continue to meet the accreditation standards and criteria.

With the development of a differentiation approach in accreditation (please refer to the last Newsletter), HKCAAVQ has explored whether a similar approach can be applied to handling substantial change applications submitted by operators with good track records to lighten the documentation load and shorten the processing time.

Based on the results of our research, the addition of a new procedure of Notification for substantial change is recommended. This will mean that an operator with a good track record in accreditation who is eligible for a differentiated accreditation approach can apply for the notification procedure. HKCAAVQ will review the nature, scale and scope of the changes, and determine if the notification could be accepted. Consultation on the details of the proposed new approach will be held in the coming three months, with implementation of the revised substantial change process planned for 1 September 2017.

The Guidance Notes will be revised to include the new Notification procedure as well as more examples of different categories of substantial changes to provide better guidance for operators on what constitutes a substantial change.

Non-Qualifications Framework (QF) Accreditation

Under Section 4(2)(a) of Cap. 1150, HKCAAVQ may, subject to the prior approval of the Secretary for Education, conduct accreditation tests outside Hong Kong. In the past two years, some local operators, both academic and vocational, have expressed an interest in having programmes that are operated outside Hong Kong accredited, as proof of a certain level of quality and/or for human resource management purposes. HKCAAVQ has on this basis decided to introduce a non-QF accreditation service for accredited Hong Kong operators offering learning programme outside Hong Kong, primarily in Mainland China.

HKCAAVQ will assess particularly the contextualisation of programme delivery outside Hong Kong such as partnership arrangements, staffing, delivery modes, and facilities. The accreditation will also consider aspects such as the institutional strategy to undertake collaborative provision and the quality assurance mechanism between the partners.

HKCAAVQ is compiling a set of Guidance Notes on this new service. Potential applicants will be able to make reference to the Guidance Notes for the accreditation criteria, process and evidence requirements and assess their eligibility for application. Detailed information on this new service will be published on the HKCAAVQ website in July 2017.

Local News Roundup

- The Draft of Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) prepared by the HRM Cross-Industry Training Advisory Committee (CITAC) is now ready for sector-wide consultation. The consultation started on 27 March 2017 and will end on 27 June 2017. The full version of the draft SCS can be downloaded from the HKQF website.

- 2017-18 QF Award Scheme for Learning Experiences organised by the Qualifications Framework Secretariat is open for application. Application starts on 20 March 2017 and ends on 26 May 2017. Click here for details.

- The Government re-appointed Mr Tim Lui Tim-leung as the Chairman of the Education Commission for a term of two years from May 1, 2017, to April 30, 2019. Click here to view the press release.

HKCAAVQ in Numbers

ACCREDITATION SERVICES

103 programmes have been accredited or re-accredited	**1** programme areas have been quality-assured under Programme Area Accreditation	**13** operators have gone through the Initial Evaluation process

Academic Accreditation	
Local academic programmes	
Learning Programme Accreditation	6 programmes
Learning Programme Re-Accreditation	8 programmes
Programme Area Accreditation	1 operator and 1 programme area
Non-local academic programmes	
Initial Evaluation	1 operator
Learning Programme Accreditation	3 programmes
Learning Programme Re-Accreditation	7 programmes

Vocational and Professional Accreditation	
Initial Evaluation	12 operators
Learning Programme Accreditation	34 programmes
Learning Programme Re-Accreditation	45 programmes
Accreditation of Assessment Agency	1 operator and 2 industries
Re-accreditation of Assessment Agency	2 operator and 2 industries

* Data collected from 1 August 2016 – 31 January 2017

As of 26 May 2017, 576 summary accreditation reports have been uploaded on our website. Click here to view Summary Accreditation Reports.

TRAINING SERVICES

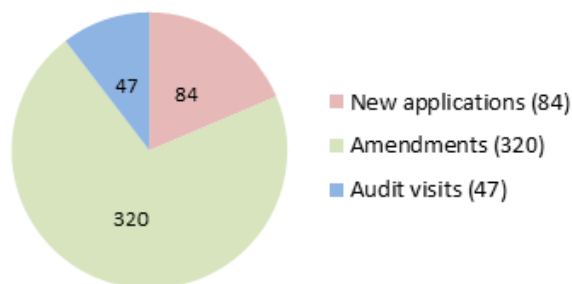| **805** Specialists in the Register (as of 31 Jan 2017)	**20** capacity building activities have been held for Specialists, Operators and Staff involving **531** participants (1 Aug 2016 – 31 Jan 2017)

HKCAAVQ's capacity building activities

Stakeholders	No. of sessions	No. of participants
Specialists	3	66
Operators	16	436
Staff	1	29
Total	**20**	**531**

ASSESSMENT SERVICES

199 cases of assessment of non-local courses completed

- New applications (10)
- Annual returns (130)
- Course changes (59)
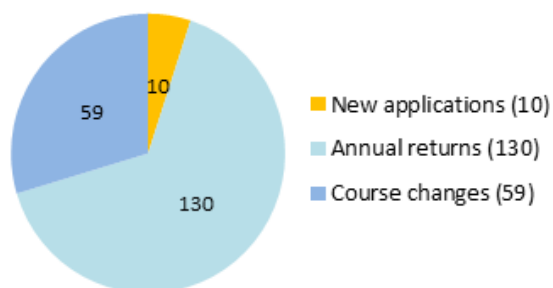
451 cases of assessment of CEF Reimbursable Courses completed

- New applications (84)
- Amendments (320)
- Audit visits (47)

329 cases of assessment of CPD Programmes for the Insurance Authority completed

- New applications (63)
- Re-assessment (145)
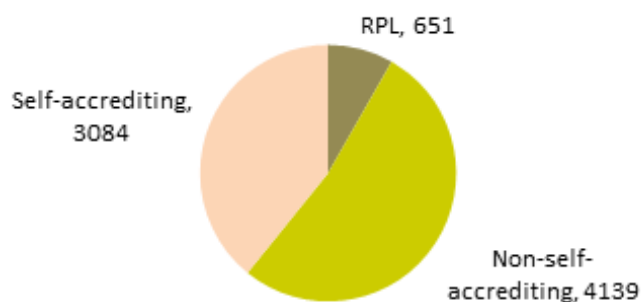- Course changes (121)
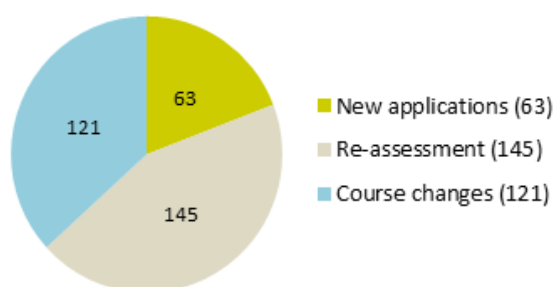
1,063 cases of assessment of individual qualifications completed

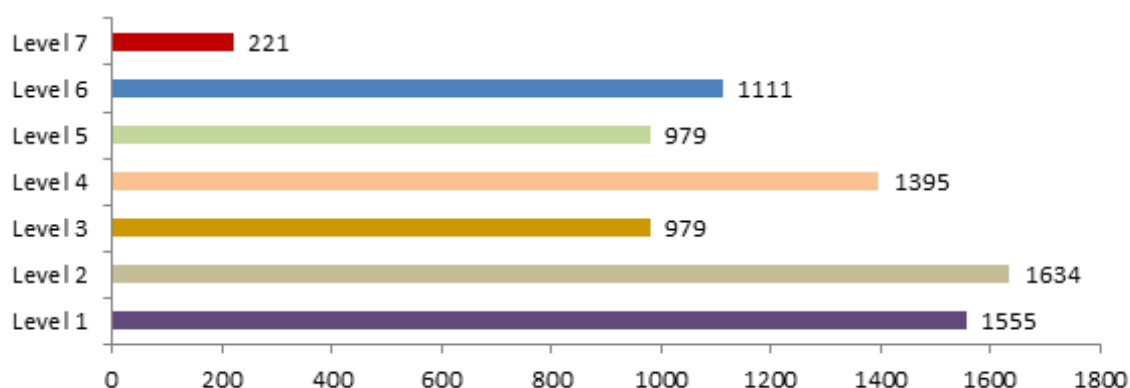* Data collected from 1 Aug 2016 – 31 Jan 2017

QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER

Number of qualifications on QR by Accreditation Body/ Qualification Type

RPL, 651
Self-accrediting, 3084
Non-self-accrediting, 4139

7,874 qualifications have been registered on the QR (as of 13 Apr 2017)

1,060 CAT Programmes on the QR (as of 13 Apr 2017)

Number of qualifications on QR by QF Level

Level	Count
Level 7	221
Level 6	1111
Level 5	979
Level 4	1395
Level 3	979
Level 2	1634
Level 1	1555

Click here to view detailed breakdown of the April statistics.

Around the World

Asia

- A statement on joint recognition of qualifications was signed on 23 February by Education officials from the Republic of Korea and New Zealand. It is believed that that the statement will pave the way for students to further their studies in either country. The Joint Recognition Statement follows the completion of a joint research report: Comparison of Senior Secondary School Qualifications. The joint research report and signed Statement are available at the NZQA website.

Australia

- The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) has released its International Engagement Strategy 2016–2020. Click here for details.

Europe

- The European Commission has launched a public consultation on Erasmus+. This consultation will gather comments and perspectives from stakeholders and the public on the Erasmus+ programme's relevance and effectiveness and on the efficiency of its implementation with an aim to support the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme.

- Universities in the Netherlands may soon be able to offer full degree programmes overseas if a bill passes through the Dutch Senate. It is expected that the bill will help Dutch institutions establish more flexible and attractive joint degree partnerships.

- The European Centre for the Development of Vocational and Training (CEDEFOP) has published the 2016 update of the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Click here to read the updated inventory.

- Eurydice, the Education Information Network in Europe, published the Thematic Overviews of the Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2016. These overviews cover 40 European education and training systems and examine education structures, policies and reforms in five key areas: early childhood education and care, achievement in basic skills, early leaving from education and training, higher education and graduate employability. Click here to read the overviews.

Global

- OECD has published a new report titled The OECD Skills Outlook 2017: Skills and global value chains. The report shows how countries can make the most of global value chains, socially and economically, by investing in the skills of their populations. It explains what countries would need to do to specialise in technologically advanced industries by developing a consistent set of skills-related policies such as education, employment protection legislation, and migration policies, in coordination with trade and innovation policies. The report is available at its website.

United Kingdom

- UK's Quality Assurance Agency for higher education will undertake in-country reviews of UK transnational education (TNE) provision in Ireland, Hong Kong and Malaysia. These reviews will support the strategic development of TNE by UK providers. It will help ensure that UK TNE students can continue to be confident that they are accessing an education that meets the same expectations for quality and standards as those studying in the UK. QAA and HKCAAVQ are having ongoing discussions about the broader regulatory and quality assurance framework in which the two agencies operate and the extent to which they can share data, information, and intelligence about TNE and its quality assurance, recognise each other's quality assurance decisions, or engage in joint review activity. QAA has published a handbook for TNE Review.

Upcoming Events

VPET Connex 2017

The Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) International Conference, also known as the "VPET Connex 2017", will be held from 16-17 June 2017 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The Conference is Jointly organised by the Education Bureau of The HKSAR Government and the Vocational Training Council. HKCAAVQ is one of the partner organisations. The conference aims to bring together leaders, policy makers and practitioners to share best practices and strengthen collaboration among VPET partners and institutions. Registration is now open; please visit the Conference website for details.

Contact us

The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)

Address:
10 Siu Sai Wan Road, Chai Wan, Hong Kong

T: +852 3658 0000
F: +852 2845 9910
E: info@hkcaavq.edu.hk
W: http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk

To subscribe our newsletter or update your profile, please email to info@hkcaavq.edu.hk. To unsubscribe from this newsletter, please click here or send a blank email to unsubscribe@hkcaavq.edu.hk with subject "unsubscribe".

You may also subscribe our RSS Feed to get a real time access to updated news from HKCAAVQ.