

FAQs

(A) Accreditation Process and Criteria

- 1) Are internal training courses (learning programmes) without external participants or soft skill training programmes eligible for Qualifications Framework (QF) recognition? How can the effectiveness of these programmes be reflected with reference to the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD)?**

Ans: Yes, as long as they meet the claimed objectives and deliver the learning outcomes that are commensurate with respective levels of the GLD as well as meet the following general requirements for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR) after having been quality assured by HKCAAVQ:

- (a) The learning programme should carry an award (i.e. a qualification) as a formal recognition of the completion of the learning programme;
- (b) The learning programme should include formal assessment(s) to ascertain that the learners have achieved the specified outcomes of the programme;
- (c) The learning programme should be level-rated in accordance with the GLD of the QF;
- (d) The learning programme should carry its award title in accordance with the Award Titles Scheme (ATS) under the QF (please find details of ATS in the QF website www.hkqf.gov.hk);
- (e) Learning programmes at QF Levels 1 to 4 must have QF credit allocated to them to indicate the volume of learning (please find details about QF credit in the QF website at www.hkqf.gov.hk);
- (f) The learning programme should be accessible to learners of Hong Kong.

- 2) Is the teaching venue an important criterion in Initial Evaluation (IE) and Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)?**

Ans: The teaching venue is a physical resource that underpins the quality of a learning programme. It is one of the accreditation criteria that the Accreditation Panel will review. The onus of proof that the Operator has

adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of its learning programme(s) lies with the Operator.

3) How does HKCAAVQ accredit different Operators with various types of learning programmes?

Ans: Although there are different kinds of learning programmes operated by Operators of different scales and types, they are all subject to the same minimum standards of accreditation. However, the type of evidence Operators of various types of learning programmes present to demonstrate that they meet the relevant criteria and standards may be different.

Specific guidance notes have been tailor-made for different types of Operators. They are available on our website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/four-stage-qa-process>. Alternatively, Operators may attend our regularly scheduled workshops to gain a better understanding about the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process.

4) Is it necessary for an institution to be registered under the Education Ordinance (Cap 279) before it can apply for accreditation?

Ans: As provided for under the AAVQO (Cap 592), a person, school, institution, organisation or other body, the whole or part of the business of which includes the operation of any learning programme or any part of a learning programme, is considered as an Operator and may apply for accreditation under the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that underpins the QF. Registration under the Education Ordinance (Cap 279) is not a pre-requisite for accreditation, but the Operators have to ensure that they have obtained all approvals and registrations necessary in order to operate the learning programme(s) and shall maintain and comply with the terms of all such approvals and registrations. Moreover, the Operators have to ensure compliance with all regulations and statutory requirements of the Government necessary for the conduct of learning programmes.

5) Are there any restrictions / requirements on the programme length?

Ans: The introduction of the ATS and QF Credit has established that Diploma programmes should contain a minimum of 60 QF credits. There are no other restrictions/ requirements on programme length.

6) Are there any restrictions / requirements on the qualification title of quality assured learning programme?

Ans: The Education Bureau introduced the ATS in 2012 to specify the award titles that can be used for qualifications at various QF levels so that learners can better understand the level of qualifications from the titles. Any application for use of award titles outside of the ATS should be submitted to the Review Panel on Award titles set up under the Education Bureau with effect from 1 January 2013. For more details about the ATS, please visit the website of QF (www.hkqf.gov.hk).

7) How long does it take to go through an accreditation exercise?

Ans: It depends on the QF level and the accreditation service required. An exact time schedule will be determined and agreed upon between HKCAAVQ and the Operator at the time of entering into the Service Agreement. Typically, the time required to complete each stage (from receipt of the accreditation document to the issuance of the accreditation report) would normally be 14 to 20 weeks for combined Stage 1 IE and Stage 2 LPA, and 20 to 24 weeks for Stage 3 Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) and Stage 4 Periodic Review (PR).

8) How should I prepare for the accreditation exercise?

Ans: The key to successfully completing an accreditation exercise is to understand the guiding principles of accreditation. Attending one of our regularly scheduled [workshops](#) will be a good way to help you understand more about the accreditation procedures and requirements. In general, new operators need 3-9 months to prepare their accreditation documents for combined IE and LPA, depending on their

capacity.

9) How will the validity period of accreditation status be decided? How long will it be?

Ans: IE status is linked to the approved QF level or below and is valid for two years. Within this two-year period, Operators must apply to have at least one learning programme accredited under LPA. Accredited Operators who have yet to apply for LPA after the end of the two-year validity period will need to apply for an extension of their IE status at least three months before the validity period expires. If Operators continue to gain successful accreditation for their learning programmes, their IE status will remain valid. In other words, the IE status of Operators will lapse when the validity period of the last accredited programme has expired. In such case, Operators may submit an application for extension of IE status. Only one extension of IE status will normally be allowed.

The validity period for LPA and Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA) is linked to programme quality and programme duration. Under normal circumstances, the validity period is $N + 1$ years, where N is the programme duration.

10) When will a Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA) be conducted?

Ans: Operators should submit the Statement of Intent (Sol) for re-LPA at least **ten months** before the expiry date of the validity period of their learning programmes. Accredited programmes with no students/learners commences the study during the validity period are not eligible for re-LPA. If re-LPA is not completed by the expiry date, the accreditation status will automatically lapse and the status of the related qualifications of the learning programmes on the QR will be shown as expired.

11) Does an Operator need to re-apply for accreditation if they want to make changes in the learning programme during the validity period?

Ans: It is the responsibility of the Operator to inform HKCAAVQ of any substantial change(s) to its learning programmes. In case of doubt, the Operator should consult HKCAAVQ on the need for approval on substantial change(s) as soon as is feasible, and prior to implementing any change(s). HKCAAVQ may vary or withdraw the accreditation report(s) at any time during the validity period if there are substantial changes made to the programme(s) that have not been approved by HKCAAVQ. Please refer to the '*Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status*' in seeking approval for proposed changes. The Guidance Notes can be downloaded from the HKCAAVQ website.

12) Can qualifications partially delivered outside Hong Kong be registered on the Qualifications Register (QR)?

Ans: Please see the latest information listed on Qualifications Register (QR) website:

<https://www.hkqr.gov.hk/HKQRPRD/web/hkqr-en/about/FAQ/QA/>

(QR website > About Us > FAQ > Quality Assurance of Local and Non-local Qualifications)

(B) Determination of QF levels

13) Is IE linked to certain QF level(s)? Are Operators with IE status at QF levels 4-7 eligible to proceed with accreditation of programmes intended to be at QF levels 1 to 3?

Ans: IE status is linked to the approved QF level or below. It is undertaken at institutional level to assess whether an Operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) at a particular QF level(s). The QF level(s), if approved, indicates that the Operator may proceed with accreditation of learning programmes at the approved QF level(s) or below.

14) If a learning programme fails to gain programme accreditation at the claimed QF level, will HKCAAVQ approve the grant of a LPA status at an alternative / lower QF level as appropriate?

Ans: For a learning programme that does not meet the QF standards at the claimed QF level, the accreditation outcome would be non-approval. HKCAAVQ will not approve the grant of a LPA status at an alternative QF level. However, if the Operator has provided sufficient and adequate evidence to demonstrate to HKCAAVQ that it is competent to deliver the learning programmes that meet the claimed objectives, the minimum quality standards and the QF standards at the claimed QF level, HKCAAVQ may consider granting a conditional approval to the learning programme at the claimed QF level, subject to fulfilment of relevant condition(s) / requirement(s) by stipulated deadlines to bridge the identified gap.

(C) Assignment of QF credits

15) Are there any restrictions / requirements on the assignment of QF credits?

Ans: The Education Bureau has introduced the use of QF credit under the Hong Kong QF in 2012 and published the Operational Guidelines on Use of Credit. QF credit is a measure of the size or volume of learning. It enables learners to know the extent of effort required in order to complete a learning programme (or a module) and acquire the relevant qualification.

Under the Hong Kong QF, one credit consists of 10 notional learning hours. In assigning the QF credits, course providers will need to determine the self-study hours in relation to the contact hours of a learning activity, having regard to the QF level, nature of discipline, learning and teaching modes, etc. of the learning programme concerned.

Depending on the curriculum and instructional design, for those learning programmes relying more on face-to-face delivery and teacher supervision, a lower ratio of contact hours to self-study hours should be considered. On the other hand, learning programmes engaging learners' with empirical research, project-based learning, problem-based learning or intensive after-class practices may adopt a higher ratio of contact

hours to self-study hours.

For example, a QF Level 2 hairdressing learning programme structured with different learning modules that requires learners to complete a design project module for consolidating their hair design skills from previous modules. As such, the design project module adopted a higher ratio of contact hours to self-study hours (i.e. 4 contact hours and 46 self-study hours; ratio as 1:11.5) to merit learner's time spent in completing the project.

Example: Certificate in Hairdressing (QF level 2)

Module	UoC Code	QF Level	Contact Hours	Self-study hours	Total	QF Credits
Hair Sculpture	HDZZHS101B	1	26.5	3.5	30	3
	HDZZMC203B	2	27	3	30	3
	HDZZDP103B	1	27.5	2.5	30	3
	HDZZDP201B	2	43	17	60	6
	HDZZID201B	2	27	3	30	3
	---	2	51	9	60	6
	---	2	54	6	60	6
Perm Design	HDZZDP101B	1	19	11	30	3
	HDZZDP202B	2	40	20	60	6
	---	2	33	17	50	5
Color Design	HDZZDP102B	1	19	11	30	3
	HDZZDP203B	2	40	20	60	6
	---	2	33	17	50	5
Evening-Hairstyle Technique	HDZZDP204B	2	24	6	30	3
Make-up Design	BEZZMU104A	1	12.5	44	56.5	6
	BEZZMU202A	2	11	19	30	3
	BEZZMU204A	2	11.5	19	30.5	3
	BEZZMU205A	2	11.5	19	30.5	3
	BEZZMU203A	2	13.5	19	32.5	3
Design Project	---	2	4	46	50	5
			528	312	840	84

(D) SCS-based learning programme

16) Are there separate fee schedules for accreditation of SCS-based learning programmes?

Ans: SCS-based learning programmes are designed with reference to the published Specification of Competency Standards for specific industries in accordance with the Qualifications Guidelines (QG) promulgated by the Government. SCS-based learning programme accreditation is

conducted in the same way as all other programme accreditation and the accreditation fee for Stage 2 LPA will be charged according to the published fee schedule.

17) Are the accreditation criteria stipulated in the respective Guidance Notes in line with the Qualifications Guideline promulgated by the Government?

Ans: All SCS-based learning programmes are accredited under Stage 2 LPA of the HKCAAVQ's Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. Reference is made in the accreditation criteria to the published QG for SCS-based and SGC-based learning programmes under Qualifications Framework (http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/media/SCS/QG%20revised_E_2014.08.pdf).

(E) Programmes with Intermediate Exit Award

18) What is an intermediate exit award? Is there any extra charge for the LPA with intermediate exit award(s)?

Ans: Learner's achievements in a learning programme can be recognized at specific stages before the completion of a whole programme by exit awards, each of which is composed of a number of designated learning outcomes and credits at a particular QF level. Learners must satisfy the requirements for an intermediate exit award within the learning programme before being granted the exit qualification. For example, a Master degree programme may have two intermediate exit awards, for each of which a learner needs to fulfill the specific graduation requirements:

Master Degrees (e.g. MA / MSc) at QF Level 6
Postgraduate Diploma at QF Level 6
Professional Certificate at QF Level 6

If a learning programme contains embedded intermediate exit award(s), an additional accreditation fee will be charged for each exit award and the actual fee depends on the claimed QF level(s) of the intermediate exit award(s).

19) Can an operator put together their existing QF accredited learning programmes to form a new QF qualification?

Ans: In cases where an operator wishes to combine their existing QF accredited learning programmes to form a new QF qualification, there must be some form of integration . Take for example, a hairdressing operator who is offering the following QF accredited learning programmes.

Module 1	Certificate of Hair Sculpture at QF Level 2
Module 2	Certificate of Color Design at QF Level 2
Module 3	Certificate of Perm Design at QF Level 2
Module 4	Certificate of Evening Hairstyling at QF Level 2

If the operator intends to propose a new qualification, Certificate of Hair Design at QF Level 2, which is embedded with the above four exit awards. Learners awarded with the full qualification should not only have to show that they have demonstrated the learning outcomes in each of the exit awards but also that they should be able to show how they can integrate all the knowledge and skills in a way that is relevant to the purpose of the new qualification.

The operator may consider two approaches for designing their new qualification in the above example. One can be achieved by including a compulsory unit with an integrative purpose and with outcomes that reflect this; the assessment of these outcomes is likely to require some form of overarching approach such as a placement, project, dissertation, or (if appropriate to the outcomes) final examination. For instance, the operator may include a fifth module – Design Project for the integrative purpose.

An alternative approach is to specify a separate, end-of-qualification set of outcomes and their associated assessments as an additional graduation requirement. Throughout the course of study, learners will have to complete an additional integrative assessment (e.g. hair design portfolio) as one of the graduation requirements in parallel to the four modules.

20) Can learners enroll in single modules at a time and when they have accumulated enough the Operator will award them a qualification?

Ans: Operators often design learning programmes with flexible course duration and multiple intermediate exit awards to cater for learner's diversity. But it should be noted that an achievement can only be recognised by the award of a qualification if the learner has formally enrolled for that qualification. A learner should not enroll in Programme A and be awarded with the qualification of Programme B. Before enrolling in a learning programme, it is important for learners to make informed decision on the qualifications that they are pursuing.

(F) Accreditation Fees

21) Are there any discounts for Operators seeking accreditation of a number of learning programmes in one exercise?

Ans: HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit self-financed body and operates on the principle of full cost recovery. HKCAAVQ's accreditation fee schedule, as approved by the Secretary for Education, is available on HKCAAVQ website at <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk>. The fee level reflects the QF level of the learning programmes as well as the scope and complexity of the accreditation exercise. The exact accreditation fee for an exercise will be specified in the Service Agreement.

22) Is there a fee difference in respect of learning programmes of different durations or learning programmes with different class sizes?

Ans: The costs for accrediting learning programmes of different durations or with different class sizes at the same QF level are normally the same.

(G) Financial Subsidies

23) Are there any financial subsidies to facilitate Operators to

participate in the QF?

Ans: The Education Bureau has introduced various funding schemes under the QF to support quality assurance of programmes offered by education and training providers and to encourage them to register the qualifications in the QR. Information is available at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guic/DSSQF.asp>.

(H) Termination of an Accreditation Exercise

24) Is there any condition under which HKCAAVQ may decide to terminate an accreditation exercise?

Ans: Pursuant to the terms of the Service Agreement signed by the Operator and HKCAAVQ for any exercise, HKCAAVQ has a discretion to terminate the accreditation exercise under certain circumstances. In particular, HKCAAVQ may decide to terminate the accreditation exercise if HKCAAVQ has come to the conclusion, upon an initial examination of the accreditation document, that the information provided is inadequate and/or the state of readiness of the Operator is such that it is unlikely that the Panel will be able to conduct a meaningful accreditation exercise. Clause 4 of the Service Agreement includes the specific provisions governing early termination. In the event that the accreditation exercise is terminated pursuant to the Service Agreement, no relevant accreditation tests will be conducted and no accreditation report will be produced or issued by HKCAAVQ.