



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

CONFIDENTIAL

ACCREDITATION REPORT

CARITAS INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

PROGRAMME AREA ACCREDITATION

SOCIAL WORK

JANUARY 2021

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Appendix HKCAAVQ Panel Membership

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Based on the Service Agreement (No.: AA660), the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), in the capacity of the Accreditation Authority as provided for under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592) (AAVQO), was commissioned by Caritas Institute of Higher Education (Operator) to conduct Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the AAVQO to determine whether the Operator can be granted the PAA status for the programme area (as listed under the Specifications of the Programme Area undergoing PAA below) for a specified validity period; and
- (b) To issue to the Operator an accreditation report setting out the results of the determination in relation to (a) by HKCAAVQ.

1.2 Specifications of the Programme Area undergoing PAA

Area of Study and Training	Programme Area	QF Level
Social Sciences	Social Work	5

2. HKCAAVQ'S DETERMINATION

2.1 HKCAAVQ has determined that subject to the fulfilment of the condition set out in para. 2.4, the Operator can be granted the PAA status for the programme area of Social Work at QF Level 5 under the Area of Study and Training "Social Sciences" with a validity period of five years.

The Operator granted the PAA status is considered as meeting the HKCAAVQ accreditation standards of the institutional and programme area domains of PAA. The Operator has the institutional competencies to develop programmes meeting its strategic objectives. The Operator has robust internal processes to ensure the development and operation of learning programmes under the approved programme areas are aligned and managed in

accordance with its institutional development plan, and that its learning programmes meet the stated objectives and QF standards.

2.2 Validity Period

2.2.1 The validity period will commence on the date specified below. Operators may apply to HKCAAVQ to vary the commencement date of the validity period. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2.2.2 The maintenance of the accreditation status within the specified validity period is subject to the fulfilment of the requirement set out in para. 2.4 by the specified deadline.

2.3 The determinations on the PAA status are specified as follows:

Name of Operator	Caritas Institute of Higher Education 明愛專上學院
Address of Operator	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories, Hong Kong
Name of Award Granting Body	Caritas Institute of Higher Education 明愛專上學院
Area of Study and Training	Social Sciences
Sub-area	Social Services
Programme Area and Scope of Programme Area	<u>Social Work</u> Study and training in the provision of social work services that seek to pursue social justice and/or improve the quality of life of people who are disadvantaged or need support in their lives.
QF Level	Level 5
Start Date of Validity Period	1 September 2021
End Date of Validity Period	31 August 2026
Address of Teaching / Training Venue(s)	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories, Hong Kong

2.4 Condition

Requirement

- 2.4.1 The Operator is to establish a clear process that systematically brings together the academic guidelines and procedures, which can be used as a reference document by staff for consistently handling re-admission applications.

The Operator is to submit the relevant document(s) to HKCAAVQ on the fulfilment of the above requirement **on or before 13 September 2021**. (para. 4.4.5)

2.5 Recommendations

HKCAAVQ also offers the following recommendations for continuous improvement of the Operator and the programme area:

Institutional Domains

- 2.5.1 After considering the information provided and the pending review of Cap. 320, the Panel strongly recommended that the Operator should monitor the outcome of the review, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the revised Cap. 320, including implementation of a governance structure with appropriate checks and balances. (para. 4.1.3)
- 2.5.2 The Panel recommended that the Operator should develop policies or mechanisms for the effective utilisation of the research funding for maximum impact. (para. 4.3.5)
- 2.5.3 The Panel recommended that the Operator should (i) more effectively demonstrate the relationship between the activities and achievements of its quality assurance/institutional effectiveness unit and institutional/programme research and academic planning, and (ii) establish and implement a process by which the quality assurance unit is regularly evaluated. (para. 4.4.4)

Programme Area Domains

- 2.5.4 The Panel recommended that the Operator should demonstrate (i) the process for assistance and support to students exhibiting poor academic performance (i.e. below an annual GPA of 2.0) is effective and has qualified counsellors to provide personal

counselling services for these students; and (ii) the services for at risk students are systematically evaluated, with the evidence assessed and used in planning. (para. 4.8.5)

- 2.6 HKCAAVQ will subsequently satisfy itself whether the Operator remains competent to achieve the relevant objectives as claimed by the Operator by reference to, amongst other things, the Operator's fulfilment of any conditions and compliance with any restrictions stipulated in this Accreditation Report. For the avoidance of doubt, maintenance of accreditation status is subject to fulfilment of any condition and compliance with any restriction stipulated in this Accreditation Report.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE), formerly known as Caritas Francis Hsu College (CFHC), was established in 1985. CFHC was registered as a post-secondary college under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) in 2001 after a successful Institutional Review for the conferment of sub-degree programmes leading to sub-degree awards. The college underwent another Institutional Review conducted by HKCAAVQ in October 2010 and acquired the accreditation status for offering degree-level programmes. Renamed as CIHE from May 2011, it obtained a government land grant and the new campus in Tseung Kwan O came into full operation in 2017-18. The offering of new degree programmes by CIHE is subject to CE-in-Council approval.

- 3.2 As of November 2020, CIHE has the following HKCAAVQ-accredited programmes on offer:

	QF Level
1. Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Language and Liberal Studies	5
2. Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Translation Technology	
3. Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours)	
4. Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education	

5. Bachelor of Entrepreneurial Management (Honours) in Design Business 6. Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) 7. Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) 8. Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Physiotherapy 9. Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Digital Entertainment Technology 10. Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Artificial Intelligence 11. Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) 12. Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)	
13. Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education 14. Higher Diploma in Social Work 15. Higher Diploma in Enrolled Nursing (General)	4

3.3 CIHE commissioned HKCAAVQ to conduct PAA for the proposed programme area “social work” at QF Level 5 hosted by its Felizberta Lo Padilla Tong School of Social Sciences (SS School). HKCAAVQ formed an expert Panel for this accreditation exercise (Panel Membership at Appendix). A site visit took place on 4-6 November 2020. With the unstable development of the epidemic situation, HKCAAVQ and the Operator agreed to conduct site visit (4-6 November 2020) by in-person interviews as well as by video conferencing. HKCAAVQ’s *Manual for the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (Version 1.1, April 2019)* was the guiding document for the Operator and the Panel in conducting this exercise.

4. PANEL’S DELIBERATIONS

The following presents the Panel’s deliberations on a range of issues pertinent to its major findings. For aspects of the accreditation standards where no observations are made, they are considered to be appropriately addressed by the Operator.

Institutional Domains

4.1 Organisational Governance and Management

The Operator must have a governing body that defines the Operator's vision and mission and establishes educational/training objectives aligned with the vision and mission. The governing body has set a clear and explicit direction for development based on the Operator's values and characteristics, and has implemented a management system which is fit-for-purpose and effective in meeting the educational/training objectives.

Governance

- 4.1.1 CIHE has a Board of Governors (BoG) and a Council to perform governance functions. The BoG is the supreme governing body responsible for setting the vision and mission as well as overseeing the overall direction and funding of CIHE. It is subject to and operated under the Constitution of Caritas Institute of Higher Education. It has 15 members and currently meets twice a year. The Council is the executive body responsible for overseeing management implementation and is supported by four standing committees, namely, the Institute Development Steering Committee, Finance Committee (FC), Fund Raising Committee, and Staffing Committee. The Council has 19 members and currently meets four times a year.
- 4.1.2 The Panel was provided with the terms of reference and membership compositions of the BoG and the Council. Membership of the governing bodies includes internal representatives who are management/staff members of CIHE, and external stakeholders who are persons with expertise in higher education, commerce or industry sectors. The non-ex-officio members of the BoG and the Council held membership for a term of two years. To ensure CIHE's policies come under the appropriate purviews of the BoG and the Council, the President serves as the ex-officio member on these two governing bodies. There are two to three staff members to be elected from the Academic Board (AB) into the Council. The senior management of CIHE join the Council meetings as in-attendance participants.
- 4.1.3 During the site visit, the Panel met with representatives from the BoG and the Council to discuss their roles and contributions towards institutional governance, strategic planning and resources management. The governing bodies of CIHE guided the

development of the strategic plans and oversaw the development of CIHE to ensure its core values are implemented in education programmes with a view to aligning with its vision and mission. The Panel noticed that there was a significant overlap of the membership of the BoG and the Council. The representatives from these governing bodies responded that the overlapping membership between the BoG and the Council facilitated the coordination between the two bodies on major issues. CIHE stated that the structures were referenced to other institutions as well as the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap 320). The Panel expressed the concern that this form of dual membership did not facilitate the independence of both bodies, and the checks and balances which are normally expected. CIHE informed the Panel that the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR Government has released a consultation document on the review of the Cap. 320 with proposed amendments to governance structure of Cap. 320 institutions. **After considering the information provided and the pending review of Cap. 320, the Panel strongly recommended that the Operator should monitor the outcome of the review, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the revised Cap. 320, including implementation of a governance structure with appropriate checks and balances.**

- 4.1.4 Regarding the self-reviews of the BoG and the Council, the Panel was informed that the governing bodies used standard questionnaires adopted from the UK for self-reviews. The Panel observed that self-reviews of the governing bodies and the management happened when there was a need, such as during the preparation for their first PAA exercise or when there were new senior management personnel on board, and in a passive manner, although with bottom-up input incorporated. The Panel **advised** CIHE to establish a formal system for undertaking self-reviews of the governing bodies and management on a regular basis, with a view to enhancing governance effectiveness, and the evaluation of any recommendations for change.

Management

- 4.1.5 In terms of institutional management, a Senior Management Group (SMG), which comprises the President, Provost and Vice-Presidents, holds meetings regularly with the heads of academic, administrative and learning support units in the form of Management Team (MT) to discuss proposals, drive initiatives and respond to issues. The SMG is supported by five standing committees, namely the Budget and Resources Committee (BRC),

Promotion and Public Affairs Committee, President's Advisory Committee on Establishment, Quality Assurance Committee (Administration), and Student Recruitment Committee.

- 4.1.6 The AB (para. 4.1.2) is set up to regulate and approve all academic affairs of CIHE. The AB, chaired by the President, composes of academic staff from each of the five Schools and a student representative from the Students' Union. Reporting to the AB, a School Board is set up under each School to oversee the operation and management of learning programmes and other academic-related matters. The AB is served by six standing committees, including the Quality Assurance Committee (Academic) (QAC-Academic), Academic Regulations Committee, Advanced and Professional Studies Committee, Research and Ethics Committee, Staff Development Committee, and Student Development Committee.
- 4.1.7 When reviewing the membership composition of committees, the Panel noted there are staff and student representatives on the Council and the AB. Both staff and student representatives are elected or nominated in accordance with the rules of composition of the committee concerned. Student representatives are members of the Student Development Committee at the institutional level, and Programme Committees at the school level. External stakeholders are engaged through the appointment of the members of Advisory Committee at school level and External Examiners (EEs) at programme level.
- 4.1.8 Based on the above, the Panel formed the view that CIHE has governing bodies that define CIHE's vision and mission and establish educational/training objectives aligned with the vision and mission. The governing bodies have set a clear direction for development based on CIHE's values and characteristics, and have implemented a management system which is fit-for-purpose and effective in meeting the educational/training objectives.

4.2 **Strategic Planning and Development**

The Operator must have formal processes at organisational level for developing its strategic plan, which are effective in driving achievement of educational/training objectives. The strategic plan should focus on the analyses, decisions and actions needed to sustain and enhance the operation of its learning programmes.

- 4.2.1 When reviewing the vision and mission statements of CIHE, the Panel noted that its vision is “to nurture graduates who are not only professionally well-trained and academically well-educated, but who can also contribute to the social and moral well-being of society”. CIHE aspires to become a private university and a well-respected and internationally recognised institution in the longer term. The mission of CIHE is embodied in its three-pronged approach, including professional development, sound education, and positive life values.
- 4.2.2 The Panel noted that long-term qualitative and quantitative development issues are addressed in the strategic planning processes. CIHE’s strategic planning has been conducted at five-year intervals, with its last plan covering 2016-17 to 2020-21. With a view to aligning its strategic plan with the timeframe of its PAA exercises between 2019 and 2021, the Strategic Plan 2019-24 was discussed by the Council and the BoG, and finally approved in 2019. In response to the Panel’s enquiry about how the strategic planning process involved stakeholders and advisory panels, CIHE elaborated that the Strategy Steering Group (Academic) was formed in 2018 to initiate internal staff consultation. External consultation was conducted with the Education Bureau, professional bodies and advisors at the Institute as well as school level.
- 4.2.3 The Panel noted that in the planning process of the strategic plan, an institute-wide SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis was conducted. The Panel enquired whether any recent SWOT analysis has been conducted, given the recent social and political situations and the declining population of HKDSE students might reduce potential applications for admission abruptly. In the Response to Panel’s Initial Comments, CIHE informed the Panel that a sensitivity analysis with three scenarios was conducted in the planning process, and the five-year strategic and financial plan 2019-24 was reviewed annually on a rolling basis. A comparison of the actual student numbers of the last two academic years with the three sensitivity scenarios showed that the actual student intake achieved was better than or close to the attainable estimation. Having considered the information provided, the Panel has no further questions in this regard.
- 4.2.4 The SS School conducted a SWOT analysis for the proposed programme area of social work. In addition to an internal consultation, external consultation was conducted with the Advisory Committee (AC), EEs, Honorary Professors, employers,

participants in annual stakeholder meetings, fieldwork agencies, professional bodies and NGOs in the community. The SS School five-year strategic plan of 2019-24 aimed specifically at taking advantages of its strength as the unique top-up pathway of social work programmes, and opportunities identified in the SWOT. In the plan, it prioritised the development of postgraduate certificate courses, though it is not covered by this PAA. The Panel reviewed the results of the SWOT analysis for the proposed programme area and commented that CIHE was one of the biggest and strongest providers for social work graduates in the territory, and Caritas-Hong Kong covered an array of brands and organisations where students could be well placed for practice. CIHE had the passion and strategies to nurture students to serve with love in action with meeting the socio-economic development need of Hong Kong, which helped fulfil the strategic planning in line with CIHE's mission and vision. With the unstable development of the epidemic situation, the Panel advised CIHE to establish short to medium term strategic planning which takes into account the entirety of the current pandemic time of uncertainty.

- 4.2.5 To assure the overall quality of its operation and to facilitate review of the achievement of the stated objectives, CIHE has developed a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are (i) full-time degree student enrolment, (ii) programme accreditation, (iii) research and scholarly activities, and (iv) academic performance of students. The results of the four KPIs up to 2018-19 and their targets in the Strategic Plan 2019-24 were provided to the Panel for review. The Panel enquired how the benchmarking exercises of KPIs have been conducted. In the Response to Panel's Initial Comments, CIHE provided information that their KPIs have been benchmarked with the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong and Tung Wah College by comparing the number of programmes, enrolment figures and also the amount of research and scholarly funding for the last two academic years.
- 4.2.6 The Panel also noted that four strategic priorities have been identified to assure CIHE's ongoing actions for continuous reflection and improvement of its selected programme areas. These strategic priorities are Quality Teaching and Learning (P1), Whole-Person Formation Based on Catholic Values (P2), Inter-Disciplinary and Applied Research and Relevant Scholarly Activities (P3), and Clear Public Identity, Stakeholder Support and Recruitment (P4). The Panel requested information on benchmarking for "Programme Area Development and Periodic Review" (P1.2) under the strategic priority P1. In the Response to Panel's Initial Comments, CIHE

elaborated that the selection of tertiary institutions for benchmarking would be based on the nature of the programme to be reviewed. CIHE presented the last review for the Bachelor of Nursing programme as an example of benchmarking where the programme was benchmarked with the comparable programmes offered by the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong Baptist University, the Open University of Hong Kong and Tung Wah College.

- 4.2.7 The Panel noted that short-term implementation and delivery actions were addressed through the annual review of operations and preparation of operational plans. Based on the findings reported in Annual Programme Reports (APRs) and with reference to the respective KPIs, academic and non-academic units prepared their updated operational plans for the coming academic year.
- 4.2.8 CIHE has developed a Risk Management Framework with the aim to raise awareness of, to prepare for and to mitigate risks in its planning and periodic review. The Panel noted that all five Schools and nine non-academic units have prepared Risk Registers identifying the potential risks and their main root causes, conducting risk assessment and proposing risk control actions. The risk registers were reviewed by the MT (para. 4.1.5) to ensure all relevant parties are aware of their responsibilities in the suggested mitigation actions.
- 4.2.9 Based on the above, the Panel formed the view that CIHE has in place formal processes at institutional level for developing its strategic plan, which are effective in driving achievement of educational/training objectives and focused on analyses, decisions, and actions needed to sustain and enhance the operation of its learning programmes.

4.3 **Financial Management and Viability**

The Operator must have an established financial management approach which is effective in ensuring the Operator's short-term and long-term viability to sustain its operation in alignment with the current strategic plan, and enables it to meet its educational/training objectives.

- 4.3.1 The Panel noted CIHE has a governance and management framework for financial planning and annual budgeting. In this

regard, the governing bodies, i.e. the BoG and the Council, are responsible for overseeing the soundness and effectiveness of financial management with the support provided by the FC (para. 4.1.1). The SMG (para. 4.1.5) is accountable for directing the implementation of financial planning and annual budgeting processes. The BRC (para. 4.1.5) is responsible for assessing and providing recommendations on resource allocation, space utilisation and facilities provision. The Finance and Estates Office works with heads of all academic and non-academic units in conducting financial planning and annual budgeting processes.

4.3.2 The Financial Expert (FE) appointed by HKCAAVQ for this PAA exercise and the Panel Chair reviewed financial information presented by CIHE in the accreditation documents, including

- (a) CIHE's Financial Plan 2019-24;
- (b) SS School's Financial Plan 2019-24 showing income and expenditure of individual programmes;
- (c) Audited balance sheet of CIHE as at 31 March 2019; and
- (d) Full financial report and financial statements of CIHE for the year ended 31 March 2019.

4.3.3 The five-year Financial Plan of CIHE at para. 4.3.2 (a) was prepared based on three scenarios of student number projections, namely (i) attainable, (ii) prudent and realistic, and (iii) conservative, as a sensitivity analysis of the financial risks. Upon requested by the FE, CIHE provided further information on the projected student intakes, projected number of classes, projected tuition fees and projected personal emoluments of the individual Schools in 2019-24, which are useful information for the FE to assess the assumptions of the financial plan and its practicality. Although the FE had the view that the growth forecast might be aggressive, he concurred that the demands for social work and nursing studies, both have contributed substantially to the revenue of CIHE, are strong in the community. During the site visit, the Panel was convinced by the sound track record of the student recruitment of CIHE's social work programmes.

4.3.4 In response to the FE's enquiry about any contingent financial plan to cover for the worse-case scenario, CIHE's written response stated that contingent financial planning has been considered as part of the Strategic and Financial Planning processes of the

Institute. The full financial report of CIHE for the year ended 31 March 2019 showed that CIHE had achieved net surpluses in the last two years 2017-18 and 2018-19. Taking into account its sources of income, including a healthy trend of student enrolments of nursing and social work programmes, the donations and government matching grants received, CIHE is financially viable in the long term and short term as it could generate positive cash flow and surpluses; create a considerable reserve of retained earnings and deferred income; and maintain adequate liquid assets to comfortably cover the annual operating expenditure. In addition, it has confirmed that Cartias-Hong Kong would provide financial support for CIHE when needed. Based on the above information, the FE has confidence that CIHE could substantiate any potential deficit risk in the coming years. Upon review of the financial information, the Panel Chair and the FE concluded that CIHE has the financial viability to sustain its operation in accordance with its plan.

4.3.5 The Panel heard on several occasions during the site visit that CIHE aspired to become a private university and mentioned a considerable amount of funding has been set aside for supporting research activities. CIHE had informed the Panel that substantial amount of funding in support of establishing and developing their research capacity has been reserved in the coming few years. The Panel was encouraged by the proposed spending in support of research, but it considered a policy or mechanism should be in place to effectively use the mentioned funding for systematically supporting academic staff in pursuing research and/or scholarly activities. The Panel **recommended that the Operator should develop policies or mechanisms for the effective utilisation of the research funding for maximum impact.**

4.3.6 Notwithstanding the recommendation, the Panel concluded that CIHE has an established financial management approach which is effective in ensuring its short-term and long-term viability to sustain its operation in alignment with the current strategic plan, and enables it to meet its educational objectives.

4.4 **Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

The Operator must have established an effective internal quality assurance system with well-defined policies and procedures in place to determine and monitor the quality and standards of its learning programmes, and to ensure alignment with its

educational/training objectives and the stated HKQF level(s).

- 4.4.1 CIHE has in place a quality assurance system (QAS) to ensure the upkeep of the quality of its teaching and learning, and the standards of its learning programmes. The Panel gathered the following regarding the QAS of CIHE:
- (a) The Quality Assurance Handbook (QA Handbook);
 - (b) Results of Course and Teaching Evaluation (CTE) in 2018-19 for the social work programmes;
 - (c) Results of Programme Evaluation in 2018-19 for the social work programmes;
 - (d) EEs' reports in 2018-19; and
 - (e) APRs (para. 4.2.7) for social work programmes for 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- 4.4.2 Having reviewed the above documents, the Panel made the following observations:
- (a) The QA Handbook sets out the principles, mechanisms, and procedures of quality assurance. The roles and responsibilities of the committees and personnel involved are defined. Detailed guidelines are presented and they govern the conduct of programme development, modification, monitoring and review. The QA Handbook includes templates to facilitate the execution of certain quality assurance (QA) processes. For example, a template for course syllabus is provided for programme development and a template of APR is provided for programme monitoring.
 - (b) For programme development, it was noted from the QA Handbook that a Programme Planning Committee (PPC) would be set up, which is responsible for ensuring the alignment between the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). The new programme would go through a check-and-balance and approval process implemented by the Internal Programme Validation Panel (IPVP), the QAC-Academic, and the AB (para. 4.1.2).

- (c) In terms of CIHE's committee structure for QA, the AB is the supreme academic body regulating the academic affairs. The QAC-Academic assumes a check-and-balance role on QA-related matters at institutional level. While the PPC, the Programme Team (PT) and the Programme Committee (PC) are formal platforms for the discussion of programme proposals and other QA related matters at the programme level. Feedback related to the learning programmes from various sources, e.g. students and external stakeholders, has been collected. Information of such was recorded and captured in the Annual Programme Reports of social work programmes
- (d) The Advisory Committee (AC) provides external input to the QAS at school level. It comprises academics and practitioners from industries and professional sectors. The Panel noted the composition of AC of the SS School comprised mainly people of social work areas. CIHE responded that there was no specification for the composition. They would source people from other areas and even overseas academics or practitioners. CIHE was encouraged to include a diverse composition and increase the scope of the AC.

4.4.3 The Panel noted that EEs are appointed, at least one for each programme, to provide external check on programme quality. Comments from EEs should be discussed by the Examiners Committee (EC), while one of the EEs met during the site visit was not invited to an EC meeting.

4.4.4 The Panel enquired how the results of institutional/programme research supported academic planning and development. The Panel had concern in respect of quality improvement upon course and programme evaluations, as well as how improvement measures were formally implemented or evaluated for effectiveness. The Panel would like to ensure that the objectives of the academic, student, and administrative service units of the Operator are being met, and there is a process by which the quality assurance unit is regularly evaluated. The Panel **recommended that the Operator should (i) more effectively demonstrate the relationship between the activities and achievements of its quality assurance/institutional effectiveness unit and institutional/programme research and academic planning, and (ii) establish and implement a process by which the quality assurance unit is regularly evaluated.**

- 4.4.5 During the site visit, CIHE mentioned about the re-admission arrangement. The Panel was concerned about the approach and policy of CIHE in respect of students' re-admission after withdrawal from a programme of study. The Panel noted that CIHE has not formalised the concept of re-admission following the withdrawal by the student. The Panel received conflicting information on establishing the maximum time duration between a student leaving a programme and any re-admission to assure academic relevance and maintenance of pedagogic currency of the resumed award. The Panel stipulated a requirement as follows:

Requirement

The Operator is to establish a clear process that systematically brings together the academic guidelines and procedures, which can be used as a reference document by staff for consistently handling re-admission applications.

The Operator is to submit the relevant document(s) to HKCAAVQ on the fulfilment of the above requirement on or before 13 September 2021.

Programme Area Domains

4.5 Programme Area Development and Management

The Operator must substantiate the proposed programme area by its track record of operation of HKQF-recognised learning programmes in relevant discipline or industry areas, in alignment with organisational objectives and planned resources.

- 4.5.1 The proposed programme area seeking PAA status at QF Level 5 is 'Social Work'. Making reference to the illustrative scope statement of the related sub-area, CIHE proposed the scope of Social Work as follows:

Study and training in the provision of social work services that seek to pursue social justice and/or improve the quality of life of people who are disadvantaged or need support in their lives.

4.5.2 The Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) was first accredited in 2012, and re-accredited in 2017. CIHE substantiated the proposed programme area by its track record of operating the social work stream of the Programme (BSocSc-SW), which is the second Bachelor's Degree programme developed by CIHE, as follows:

Qualification Title	Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours)
Streams	1. Social Work 2. Community Studies 3. Psychology
QF Level	5
Mode and Programme Length	Full-time, 4 years
Number of Enrolment(s)	One enrolment per year
Maximum Number of New Students	<u>Social Work Stream</u> Year 1 Entry – 60 Year 3 Entry – 60
Validity Period	1 September 2013 – 31 August 2023

4.5.3 The Panel noted the track record of CIHE in offering the existing BSocSc-SW programme. Having reviewed the scope statement and compared it with the subject matters covered by the social work stream in the existing programme, the Panel considered that the scope of the programme area can be appropriately delineated by the proposed scope statement.

4.5.4 In line with CIHE's mission to prepare work-ready graduates, social work stream of the Programme (BSocSc-SW) attained professional recognition as follows:

Nature of Recognition	Validity Period	Yearly Maximum Number of New Students Approved
Social Workers Registration Board Qualification Recognition	First recognition: 1 Sept 2014 – 31 August 2017 Second recognition: 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2022	Year 1: 60 Year 3: 40

4.5.5 The student enrolments of the BSocSc-SW from 2014/15 to 2019/20 are as follows:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Year 1	62	63	62	63	61	63
Year 2	--	59	59	59	59	59
Year 3	--	26	103	103	101	98
Year 4	--	--	24	98	102	100

4.5.6 In addition to the BSocSc-SW programme, the SS School also offers two other programmes in social work, namely, the Higher Diploma in Social Work (HDSW) at QF Level 4 in both the full-time and part-time modes for secondary school leavers, and the Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) (BSW) at QF Level 5 in the part-time mode for holders of sub-degrees in social work.

4.5.7 Projected numbers of social work students for academic year 2021/22 to 2023/24:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
BSocSc-SW	303	299	299
BSW (part-time)	312	338	338
HDSW	232	232	232
HDSW (part-time)	254	254	254
Total	1101	1123	1123

4.5.8 The development of the programme area of social work is in alignment with the institutional objectives in its five-year Strategic Plan. CIHE is planning to undergo PAA in three programme areas at QF Level 5 as a step towards the establishment of a private university. To support this strategic action, CIHE has set up a PAA team and working groups to guide and coordinate institutional efforts and resources in the development of programme areas.

4.5.9 Taking into account findings from the external environmental scan, the SS School has to increase the annual student intake to meet the market demand of graduates from social work programmes. According to the five-year Academic Plan of the SS School, it has no plan to offer new programme at QF Level 5 within the proposed programme area of social work. Beyond the proposed programme area, the SS School has planned to launch a "Postgraduate Certificate in Social Services".

4.5.10 The Panel was of the view that CIHE substantiated the proposed programme area by its track record of operation of QF-recognised learning programmes in relevant discipline and industry areas, in alignment with organisational objectives and planned resources.

4.6 **Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

The Operator must have developed and implemented effective policies for the development of learner-centred strategies for achievement of learning outcomes through alignment of educational/training objectives, learning experiences, assessment, and learning support.

4.6.1 CIHE has a set of policies and regulations governing student admission specified in the Handbook of Academic Policies, Regulations, Guidelines and Procedures. In regard to the student admission and selection, the Panel was presented with the following information for the BSocSc-SW programme:

- (a) The admission requirements through different routes, including Year 1 entry, Year 3 entry, and advanced standing;
- (b) The admission statistics, including number of applicants, number of offers made, number of students enrolled, and qualifications; and
- (c) The admission procedure and the admission interview form of the SS School.

4.6.2 Upon review of the above information, the Panel enquired about the information of non-standard admission. In the response to Panel's Initial Comments, CIHE stated that students admitted via the non-standard route were typically mature students of age 21 or above. The non-standard entry is capped at not more than 5% of the total intake on a programme basis. The Panel was informed that no student has been admitted into the BSocSc-SW and the other social work programmes via the non-standard route for the last four academic years.

4.6.3 The Panel observed that the selection of students for the social work programmes has been based on the applicants' academic results, performance in the admission interview and other experiences, including relevant working experience, commitment to social work services, and volunteer service records.

- 4.6.4 CIHE has in place a Learning and Teaching Policy stipulated the principles informing learning and teaching practices to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. As regards the learning and teaching of the social work programmes, the SS School has employed a range of 15 strategies including lecture, tutorial, case study, problem-based learning, skills workshop, project work, presentation, web-based learning and teaching, guest speech, and fieldwork placement. The pedagogical methods employed in individual courses are outlined in their respective syllabuses. The fieldwork placement provided students with opportunities to go into the field to understand the actual context for social work practice. Regarding the fieldwork for BSocSc-SW, the fieldwork handbook, a list of the fieldwork partners, and the assigned work areas have been provided to the Panel for review. According to the accreditation documents, the SS School recently received a donation to support non-local fieldwork placements in Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia and Canada over the following five years.
- 4.6.5 The SS School adopted a teacher-guided, student-centered and self-directed learning approach in the implementation of teaching and learning. Academic staff members facilitated the self-directed learning of students, especially those in senior years. Having discussed with the student/graduate representatives, the Panel learnt that their learning experiences were positive. They were satisfied with the design of the curricula and agreed that the workshops and placements have given them opportunities to put the knowledge they learned into practice. They appreciated the efforts and support rendered by the teachers. The student/graduate representatives expressed that the provided training allowed them to serve the community in line with the values and the ethical principles of social work, as well as to be exposed to actual work environment.
- 4.6.6 The Learning and Teaching Policy (LT Policy) of CIHE provides reference to management and academic staff on the principles informing learning and teaching practices to enhance the quality of learning and teaching, and it is communicated and implemented throughout CIHE via the Learning and Teaching Work Group, School/Department meetings and staff induction programme. The AB (para. 4.1.2) is responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of LT Policy. All learning programmes and courses of CIHE have been developed in accordance with LT Policy and based on the outcome-based learning approach. To ensure that assessment activities effectively

measure students' attainment of programme/course learning outcomes, LT Policy provides guidelines on the design of assessments and assure the quality of teaching and learning. Information on assessment is presented in standardised course syllabuses.

4.6.7 The Panel reviewed the following documents including the assessment criteria for different assessment tasks; the assessment scheme; the sample marked assessments of high, medium and low performance from three courses; the credit requirement for graduation; the academic performance of students in 2018-19; the EEs' reports in 2018-19; and the annual programme reports for 2017-18 and 2018-19. Having reviewed the above documents about student assessment and interviewed with representatives of the programme team and EEs, it is noted that social work practice courses have adopted the formative mode of assessment that aimed at providing timely feedback and monitoring the progress of students continuously. The Panel formed the view that effective mechanisms are in place for student assessment.

4.6.8 Based on the above information, the Panel considered that the Operator has established and implemented effective policies for the development of learner-centred strategies for achievement of learning outcomes through alignment of educational/training objectives, learning experiences, assessment, and learning support.

4.7 Staffing and Staff Development

The Operator must have a suitably qualified and competent workforce which is capable to develop and deliver learning programmes in the proposed programme area, and can ensure sustainable development of the proposed programme area.

Staffing

4.7.1 The projected staffing plan has been prepared based on the projected student population, the staff-student ratio (SSR) of each programme, programmes to be offered, and research and scholarly development. CIHE's planned SSR of 1:15 and 1:25 have been applied to the social work degree programmes and social work sub-degree programmes respectively. The estimated number of full-time equivalent academic staff required for teaching social work and related courses from 2020-21 to 2023-24, with actual number of 2019-20, are as follows.

SS School	2019-20 (actual)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Professor	3	4	4	4	4
Associate Professor	1.5	2.5	3.5	4	4
Assistant Professor	11.5	11.5	12.5	13.5	14
Senior Lecturer	8	9	9	9.5	10
Lecturer	13	12	12	12	12
Total staff	37	39	41	43	44

4.7.2 The profiles of the SS School academic staff, and the courses they taught, were provided to the Panel for review. It is noted that around 50% of these staff possess doctoral qualifications and 70% of them are registered social workers. According to the response to Panel's Initial Comments, CIHE elaborated that academic staff follow either the professorial or the lecturing track. Staff in professorial track are required to have the ability and competence to conduct research, and they have higher proportion of research and scholarly activities in their planned work commitment than staff in lecturing track. The performance of individual academic staff members would be assessed according to their respective and agreed job objectives. The assessment domains included teaching, research and scholarship, and scholarly activities and services.

4.7.3 It is stated in the accreditation documents that the Dean, Associate Dean, Programme Leaders, Stream Co-ordinators, Fieldwork Co-ordinators and Course Co-ordinators shared the management responsibilities with a clear division of labour, communication channels and coordination for the delivery of academic programmes and their constituent courses. Each programme leader for the respective BSocSc-SW, BSW, and HDSW (full-time) and HDSW (part-time) provided leadership at the programme level. Four academic staff members have been appointed as Fieldwork Co-ordinators. For maintaining coherence and consistency in the learning experience and assessments of the courses, a Course Co-ordinator is assigned to each of the courses taught by more than one teaching staff. The teaching load of a full-time teacher ranged from 9 to 16 weekly contact hours, depending on one's rank and specific role(s).

4.7.4 In view of the increase of student intakes in the SS Academic Plan, CIHE has planned to increase the academic staff establishment of

the SS School. The BRC (para. 4.1.5) of CIHE has increased the annual budget provision to allow for internal promotion. The Panel noted CIHE has in place a set of policies and procedures for promotion and academic advancement of faculty/the academic staff.

Staff Development

- 4.7.5 The Centre for Excellence of CIHE has organised conferences, symposiums, seminars and workshops for academic staff on a regular basis to facilitate their learning and teaching enhancement activities. The academic staff members have successfully secured grants from Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme (QEGS) and Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS) to conduct projects for enhancing their learning support for students. Some funded projects involved collaboration with other institutions.
- 4.7.6 The Panel enquired about the resources provided to achieve the desired outcomes in enhancing the research outputs. CIHE informed the Panel that the SS School has provided various resources and support to academic staff. In terms of workload, academic staff members have been encouraged to budget in teaching relief in applying for research grants. Regarding financial support, a conference grant has been given to academic staff for attending international conference and other training activities. A list of financial and leave support to academic staff for attending conferences and training courses was provided to the Panel for review. The SS School has set up a research support team with four full-time staff, including a research associate and three research assistants to support staff in conducting research, and prepare research proposals. In addition to CIHE's internal research grants, the SS School has set up a research grant to encourage staff participation in discipline-related research activities. Aiming to build the research culture within the SS School, a Research Working Group has been set up. The Group has organised workshops and seminars on funding applications and sharing of research projects, and prepared suggestions and papers on resources support for staff in taking up research and scholarly activities. Senior academics have been actively in providing advice and support to younger academics in preparing research proposals, lining up research partners, conducting data analysis, and preparing journal manuscripts.
- 4.7.7 CIHE informed the Panel that there is a documented research framework providing descriptions and policies, as well as protocol of research, accessible on intranet or staff portal. The Research

Office and the Research and Ethics Committee were established to help resolve staff's concerns over research issues. The Panel **advised** the Operator to utilise its own institutional research to benchmark its research support and management against best local and international practices, and evaluating its processes.

- 4.7.8 On the basis of the above, the Panel considered that the Operator has a qualified team of academic staff for the sustainable development of the proposed programme area.

4.8 Programme Area Resources and Services

The Operator must have implemented a well-managed approach to its provision of learning, teaching and enabling resources which aligns with the current and planned development of the proposed programme area.

- 4.8.1 For the development of the proposed programme area of social work, the budget proposal of SS School takes into consideration the resource and service requirements, in consultation with support units including the Library, Language Centre, and Information Technology Services Centre. For preparing the School budget, both students and staff were consulted during the budgeting process. Students provided formal feedback on programme provisions through the CTE (para. 4.4.1) and student representatives of the Programme Committee. Whereas staff members of SS School were consulted on the resources that they would require for the coming year, such as honorarium for guest speakers, staff development activities, special databases for research, and student co-curricular activities.
- 4.8.2 The BRC (para. 4.1.5) assessed the budget proposal of the proposed programme area, and made overall recommendations on the provision, allocation and utilisation of resources, space and facilities for teaching, learning, administrative and recreational purposes. The five-year financial plan of the SS School from 2019-20 to 2023-24 was provided in the accreditation documents. The SS School has a strong and stable student base and its tuition fee income was well in excess of its direct teaching costs. On the other hand, significant donations were received/pledged in support of the operation and development of the SS School, such as a specific donation to support the fieldwork placement and life education programme of the SS School.

- 4.8.3 Regarding the library resources, the Panel has reviewed the programme specific library budget, and the lists of library holdings and e-resources relevant to the proposed programme area. In addition to titles related to the social work programme syllabuses, the library would acquire also resources recommended by students and staff. The Library adheres to the e-priority policy, in which the purchase of e-books was given priority over print to enable students to access to e-books and e-journals anytime on and off-campus.
- 4.8.4 Regarding the programme area specific facilities, CIHE provided a video tour of the facilities of the campus and the social work laboratory. The laboratory was equipped with four cameras and microphones for video-recording skills demonstration and clinical practice. Students could practise the necessary social work skills in the demonstration room while teachers and other classmates could observe through a one-way mirror in the control room.
- 4.8.5 During the site visit, the Panel was concerned about the assistance and support provided to students exhibiting poor academic performance. The minimum pass level for an award was an annual GPA of 2.0, while CIHE would not consider a student at risk until an annual GPA of 1.7 was reached. The Panel opined that there was no clear rationale for providing intervention at this low threshold level. CIHE responded that an annual GPA 1.7 was termed as academic probation and such decision was made upon benchmarking against other institutions. Students would be issued a letter to alert them the status and advise them to pay more attention to the study. Appropriate individual support for students on academic probation would be provided by class teachers, such as designing an individual study plans for them, while students having GPA between 1.7 and 2.0 would receive institute-wide support. CIHE expressed that it would look into students' needs and students' profiles as a whole instead of mere GPA. After considering the above information, the Panel **recommended that the Operator should demonstrate (i) the process for assistance and support to students exhibiting poor academic performance (i.e. below an annual GPA of 2.0) is effective and has qualified counsellors to provide personal counselling services for these students; and (ii) the services for at risk students are systematically evaluated, with the evidence assessed and used in planning.**
- 4.8.6 After considering the above information and notwithstanding the recommendation, the Panel concluded that the Operator has in place resource planning and management process to ensure

provision of learning, teaching and enabling resources for the current and planned developments of the proposed programme area.

5 IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THIS ACCREDITATION REPORT

5.1 Variation and withdrawal of this Accreditation Report

5.1.1 This Accreditation Report is issued pursuant to section 5 of the AAVQO, and contains HKCAAVQ's substantive determination regarding the accreditation, including the validity period as well as any conditions and restrictions subject to which the determination is to have effect.

5.1.2 HKCAAVQ may subsequently decide to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report if it is satisfied that any of the grounds set out in section 5(2) of the AAVQO apply. This includes where HKCAAVQ is satisfied that the Operator is no longer competent to achieve the relevant objectives and/or the Programme no longer meets the standard to achieve the relevant objectives as claimed by the Operator (whether by reference to the Operator's failure to fulfil any conditions and/or comply with any restrictions stipulated in this Accreditation Report or otherwise) or where at any time during the validity period there has/have been substantial change(s) introduced by the Operator after HKCAAVQ has issued the accreditation report(s) to the Operator and which has/have not been approved by HKCAAVQ. Please refer to the '*Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status*' in seeking approval for proposed changes. These Guidance Notes can be downloaded from the HKCAAVQ website.

5.1.3 If HKCAAVQ decides to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report, it will give the Operator notice of such variation or withdrawal pursuant to section 5(4) of the AAVQO.

5.1.4 The accreditation status of the programme area will lapse immediately upon the expiry of the validity period or upon the issuance of a notice of withdrawal of this Accreditation Report.

5.2 Appeals

- 5.2.1 If the Operator is aggrieved by the determination made in this Accreditation Report, then pursuant to Part 3 of the AAVQO the Operator has a right of appeal to the Appeal Board. Any appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of this Accreditation Report.
- 5.2.2 If the Operator is aggrieved by a decision to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report, then pursuant to Part 3 of the AAVQO the Operator has a right of appeal to the Appeal Board. Any appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of the Notice of Withdrawal.
- 5.2.3 The Operator should be aware that a notice of variation or withdrawal of this Accreditation Report is not itself an accreditation report and the right to appeal against HKCAAVQ's substantive determination regarding accreditation arises only from this Accreditation Report.
- 5.2.4 Please refer to Cap. 592A (<http://www.legislation.gov.hk>) for the appeal rules. Details of the appeal procedure are contained in section 13 of the AAVQO and can be accessed from the QF website at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.

5.3 Qualifications Register

- 5.3.1 The PAA status as defined by the approved programme area(s) will enable the Operator to offer programmes up to the QF level specified for the approved programme area(s) without prior learning programme accreditation. The programmes offered by the Operator up to the QF level specified for the approved programme area(s) are eligible for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR). All other programmes offered by the named Operator falling outside the approved programme area(s) and which have not obtained accreditation status will not be considered as accredited programmes.
- 5.3.2 Upon completion of relevant procedures by Operators as determined by the QR Authority, Operators may enter the qualifications covered within the scope of the PAA status into the QR at <http://www.hkqr.gov.hk> for recognition under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.

5.3.3 Only learners who commence the study of a qualification covered within the scope of the PAA status during the validity period and who have graduated with the qualification listed in the QR will be considered to have acquired a qualification recognised under the QF.

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20 January 2021

JoH/SF/FiL/MrC/asc

**Caritas Institute of Higher Education
Programme Area Accreditation for Social Work**

4 - 6 November 2020

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HKCAAVQ Report No.: 21/01