



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

ACCREDITATION REPORT

SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY

LEARNING PROGRAMME RE-ACCREDITATION

**BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (HONOURS) IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

AND

**HIGHER DIPLOMA IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

APRIL 2024

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1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Based on the Service Agreement (No.: AA946), 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), was commissioned by Saint Francis University (the University / the Operator) to conduct a Learning Programme Re-accreditation exercise with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the AAVQO to determine whether the Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education (BEdeCE) and Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education (HDECE) programmes of the Operator meet the stated objectives and QF standards and can continue to be offered as accredited programmes; and
- (b) To issue to the Operator an accreditation report setting out the results of the determination in relation to (a) by HKCAAVQ.

2. HKCAAVQ'S DETERMINATION

2.1 HKCAAVQ has determined that, subject to the fulfilment of the conditions and compliance with the restriction set out below, the Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education (BEdeCE) and Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education (HDECE) meet the stated objectives and QF standard at Level 5 and Level 4 respectively, and can continue to be offered as accredited programmes with a validity period of five years and three years respectively.

2.2 Validity Period

2.2.1 The validity period will, provided that the Operator fulfils all pre-conditions to the commencement of the validity period set out in Section 2.4, 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 and restriction set out in Sections 2.4 and 2.5 by the specified deadline.

2.3 The determinations on the two Programmes are specified as follows:

Name of Operator(s)	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學	
Name of Award Granting Body	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學	
Title of Learning Programme	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education 幼兒教育(榮譽)學士	Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education 幼兒教育高級文憑
Title of Qualification(s) [Exit Award(s)]	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education 幼兒教育(榮譽)學士	Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education 幼兒教育高級文憑
Primary Area of Study and Training	Education	
Sub-area (Primary Area of Study and Training)	Education and Teacher Education	
Other Area of Study and Training	Not applicable	
Sub-area (Other Area of Study and Training)	Not applicable	
QF Level	Level 5	Level 4
QF Credits	596	356
Mode(s) of Delivery and Programme Length	Full-time, 4 years Part-time, 3 years	Full-time, 2 years
Start Date of Validity Period	1 September 2024	1 September 2024
End Date of Validity Period	31 August 2029	31 August 2027
Number of Enrolment(s)	One enrolment per year	One enrolment per year

Maximum Number of New Students 新學員人數上限	<u>Full-time</u> Year 1 entry: 50 students per year Year 3 entry: 50 students per year <u>Part-time</u> Year 1 entry: 30 students per year	80 per year
Specification of Competency Standards-based Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Vocational Qualifications Pathway Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Address of Teaching / Training Venue(s)	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories 新界將軍澳翠嶺里 2 號	

2.4 Conditions

2.4.1 Pre-condition

BEdECE

2.4.1.1 The Operator is to (i) review and concretise the teaching and learning arrangements for Non-Chinese-Speaking (NCS) students in the programme, including but not limited to replacement electives for the General Education courses in Chinese and Putonghua for NCS students, (ii) go through the internal approval and quality assurance process for the refinement of Programme Objective 6 relating to Chinese and Putonghua communication skills of NCS students, and (iii) ensure effective communication across various levels of staff of the Programme about the above arrangements for NCS students.

The Operator is to submit relevant information and evidence to HKCAAVQ for the fulfilment of the pre-condition above **on or before 28 June 2024**. (Para. 4.7.4)

2.4.2 Requirement

BEdECE and HDECE

2.4.2.1 The Operator is to review and revise as appropriate the minimum admission requirements of the programmes, in particular the equivalent qualifications, including but not limited to local and non-local public examinations and standardised tests and qualifications, taking into account factors such as relevancy to the discipline of the Programme, Chinese and English language components, qualification level, attainment level and study volume.

The Operator is to submit relevant information and evidence to HKCAAVQ for the fulfilment of the requirement above **on or before 31 October 2024**. (Para. 4.2.2)

2.5 Restriction

BEdECE and HDECE

2.5.1 The Operator is to ensure that the revised programme, including proposed changes in the course content, practicum arrangement and hours, QF credits, and medium of instruction (applicable to BEdECE only), is continuously approved by the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department so that the graduates will be eligible for registration as Qualified Kindergarten Teachers (QKT), Child Care Workers (CCW), Child Care Supervisors (CCS) and Special Child Care Workers (SCCW).

The Operator is to submit relevant evidence to HKCAAVQ on the fulfilment of the restriction **before enrolling any students to the Programmes for the 2024/25 academic year**. (Para. 4.1.7)

2.6 Recommendations

HKCAAVQ also offers the following recommendations for the continuous improvement of the two programmes.

BEdECE

2.6.1 The University should regularly review the course sequence and the proportion of ECE foundational courses and specialist courses, and

maintain the sufficiency and depth of pedagogical knowledge and skills in basic Early Childhood Education. (Para. 4.3.3)

BEdECE and HDECE

- 2.6.2 The University should continue to monitor and ensure adequate preparation for students for practicum by including a focus on whole-class learning such as catering for children with diverse needs. (Para. 4.3.4)
- 2.6.3 The University should review and enrich, where applicable, the assessment and feedback policy to ensure that comprehensive details about the guidelines and requirements are provided to students and staff on student assessment matters including minimum and maximum word count per task, minimum and maximum percentages allocated for each assessment task, maximum number of assessments set per course, turn-around time and quality of feedback provided to students, rules for re-submission of student work, maximum weighting for examinations. (Para. 4.4.3)
- 2.6.4 The University should consider further developing clear and regular communication and collaboration between the programme leaders, teaching staff and the administrative offices supporting the practicums, for example, in relation to the issues of students' workload during practicum, inclusion of on-going university work during practicum, and scheduling assessment due dates during practicum. (Para. 4.4.4)
- 2.6.5 The University should closely monitor the medium of instruction (MOI) in the delivery of courses and continue to ensure that the MOI and its MOI policy are followed in the teaching, learning and assessment activities of the programmes. (Para. 4.4.5)
- 2.6.6 The University should continue to offer regular and specific staff development training programmes/activities, for example, to facilitate staff knowledge about the requirements and expectations of the Generic Level Descriptors for the two programmes. (Para. 4.5.3)
- 2.7 HKCAAVQ will subsequently satisfy itself on whether the Operator remains competent to achieve the relevant objectives and the Programme continues to meet the standard 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 the fulfilment of any condition and compliance with any restriction stipulated in this Accreditation Report.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Saint Francis University (SFU), formerly Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE) and 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 an Institutional Review conducted by HKCAAVQ for offering sub-degree programmes. CFHC underwent another Institutional Review by HKCAAVQ in October 2010 for offering bachelor's degree programmes. The Chief Executive in Council granted approval for CFHC to change its name to CIHE with effect from May 2011. CIHE acquired the university title in January 2024 and changed its name to SFU. As of March 2024, SFU has two postgraduate programmes, 12 bachelor's degree programmes, four higher diploma programmes and a diploma programme.
- 3.2 The University commissioned HKCAAVQ to conduct a Learning Programme Re-accreditation exercise for the BEdECE and HDECE programmes. HKCAAVQ formed an expert panel (the Panel) for this exercise (Panel Membership at **Appendix 1**), and a site visit by the Panel was conducted at the University's campus on 22 and 23 February 2024. In conducting this exercise, HKCAAVQ's *Manual for the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under HKQF (Version 1.2, November 2020)* was the guiding document for the University and the Panel.
- 3.3 In consideration of the University's track record established from previous accreditation exercises, information on "institute-wide student support services" under LPA-6 Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services was not required in accordance with HKCAAVQ's Differentiation Approach.

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.

4.1 Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The learning programme must have objectives that address community, education and/or industry needs, with learning outcomes that meet the relevant HKQF standards, for all exit qualifications from the programme.

- 4.1.1 The BEdECE and HDECE programmes are hosted by the Ip Ying To Lee Yu Yee School of Humanities and Languages (SHL) of the University. The Programme Objectives (POs) and Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) of the two Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes remain unchanged since the last accreditation, except that refinement is made to the PO6 of the BEdECE programme which is also delineated in Para 4.1.3 and 4.7.4. The POs and PILOs of the two programmes are as follows:

BEdECE

The BEdECE Programme aims to develop graduates with the intended attributes below:

- PO1: Command a comprehensive and state-of-the-art grounding in child development and child studies in both theoretical and practice-oriented terms, in particular as applied to the education of children of 0-8 years of age, as the minimum point of departure for engaging in the Programme;
- PO2: Critically evaluate, apply and synthesise professional knowledge and skills in ECE and a wide range of ECE-specific teaching and learning methods, approaches and strategies in designing, planning and implementing ECE curricula to produce optimal results;
- PO3: Command competence in making mature and purposeful judgment and decisions in taking stock of the professional and ethical roles as early childhood educators in the cultural, social, political and economic contexts of Hong Kong in curriculum design for early childhood education settings;

PO4: Command expertise, professionalism and ethical values in evaluating, applying and synthesising practical skills and knowledge to cater to the education and care of children with diverse and special educational needs, so as to bring about a true inclusive ECE for all;

PO5: Exercise competence, professionalism, interpersonal skills and emotional maturity to communicate and collaborate with parents, families and the community, as well as the non-Chinese-speaking minorities in Hong Kong to effect the appropriate interface between kindergarten, family and primary education;

PO6: Demonstrate competence in generic skills including communication skills in English, Chinese (and Putonghua)* and academic as well as IT and numeracy competencies for both professional and routine operations pertaining to ECE; and

**Chinese (and Putonghua) are not applicable to Non-Chinese-Speaking (NCS) students.*

PO7: Exercise maturity and capability professionally and academically for advancement in the workplace and/or to engage in continuing professional development (CPD).

Upon completion of the BEdECE Programme, graduates should be able to:

PILO1: Marshal and operate an appropriate set of ECE theories and good practices to develop and adopt suitable strategies and approaches to work most fruitfully with young children in the learning process;

PILO2: Design a curriculum for delivery to children aged 0-8 by applying, improvising and synthesising theories and good practices in child development and child studies as well as other related disciplines that are fit for purpose;

PILO3: Reflect on and assume the professional roles and responsibilities of early childhood educators with full commitment to the professionalism, ethics and reflective practice of the ECE profession;

PILO4: Critically analyse the cultural, social, political and

economic factors governing the development of early childhood education in Hong Kong to bring about an inclusive ECE for all;

PILO5: Collaborate with children's parents and families, and other stakeholders, in a team work spirit to effect an interface/transition between kindergarten, family and primary education for children's optimal development;

PILO6: Evaluate, apply and synthesise learning theories and approaches in early childhood education, employing Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other useful tools, to plan, implement and critically evaluate early childhood curricula and programmes that are safe and developmentally appropriate to children of 0-8 years of age in Hong Kong; and

PILO7: Demonstrate competence in generic knowledge and skills including language skills, numeracy skills, research skills, and ICT skills, always aware of local and international issues and trends pertaining to ECE for functioning optimally in the profession.

HDECE

The HDECE Programme aims to develop graduates with the intended attributes below:

PO1: To command a broad-based theoretical grounding in child development and young children's specific needs for curriculum development in early childhood education;

PO2: To acquire a holistic understanding of child development as a result of going through an interdisciplinary training and being exposed to a wide range of teaching and learning approaches and strategies;

PO3: To thoroughly appreciate and be able to take stock of the professional and ethical roles as early childhood educators in the cultural, social, political and economic contexts of Hong Kong;

PO4: To acquire competence in curriculum planning, implementation, management and reflective practice;

- PO5: To command expertise in practical skills and professional knowledge in education and care of children 0-8 years of age;
- PO6: To acquire proficiency and competence in generic skills including communication skills in English and Chinese (and Putonghua) and academic as well as numeracy competencies; and
- PO7: To attain maturity and capability professionally and academically for advancement in the workplace and/or to pursue an undergraduate programme in their continuing professional development.

Upon completion of the HDECE Programme, graduates should be able to:

- PILO1: Identify children's diverse needs to develop suitable strategies and approaches to work with them in the learning process;
- PILO2: Synthesize child development theories as a theoretical framework to inform teaching practice;
- PILO3: Reflect on and assume the professional roles and responsibilities of early childhood educators and their commitment to professionalism, ethics and reflective practice;
- PILO4: Collaborate with children's parents and families, and other stakeholders, in a teamwork spirit to work out strategies and methods for achieving children's holistic development;
- PILO5: Analyse the cultural, social, political and economic factors in Hong Kong that govern the development of early childhood education;
- PILO6: Apply learning theories and approaches in early childhood education, employing Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other useful tools, to plan, implement and evaluate early childhood curricula and programmes that are safe and developmentally appropriate to children of 2-6 years of age in Hong Kong; and

PILO7: Apply generic skills and the awareness of local and international issues for functioning optimally in the profession and/or in preparation for advancing to the degree level academically.

4.1.2 To demonstrate the alignment of learning outcomes that meet the relevant QF standard at Level 5 for BEdECE and Level 4 for HDECE, the Panel was provided with the following information of each of the two programmes:

- (a) mapping of the POs and the PILOs;
- (b) mapping of the PILOs and the courses;
- (c) mapping of the courses and the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) at QF Level 5 for BEdECE and Level 4 for HDECE;
- (d) Course Outlines of all courses, with information on course description, course intended learning outcomes (CILOs), course content, teaching and learning and assessment activities, and references;
- (e) samples of teaching, learning and assessment materials of courses; and
- (f) comments and feedback from the External Examiners, external advisors and practicum partners.

4.1.3 The University proposed several changes to the two programmes, including further enhancement of the content in some courses and practicum courses, changes in practicum hours and arrangements, change of QF credits, change of medium of instruction of BEdECE, and refinement of the Programme Objective 6 of BEdECE. After reviewing the proposed changes which are also elaborated in different subsequent paragraphs of this report (e.g. Para. 4.1.7, 4.3.4, 4.4.5), the Panel considered them acceptable, and **advised** the University to ensure the alignment of the proposed changes, course content, CILOs, PILOs and the Government's requirements on ECE foundational courses, and give consideration to the impact on students' workload, in addition to the Restriction in Para. 4.1.7.

4.1.4 Regarding the refinement of the Programme Objective 6 of the BEdECE programme, in the accreditation documents and during the site visit meetings, the University elaborated on the programme feature of teaching non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students and

proposed to refine the Programme Objective 6 relating to Chinese and Putonghua communication skills by including an asterisk note for NCS students. The Panel considered the refinement reasonable and expressed that the University should further complete the internal approval process and quality assurance mechanism relating to the refinement, and therefore a related pre-condition is delineated and stipulated in Para. 4.7.4.

- 4.1.5 The Panel was given to understand that the University had taken actions to address the recommendations made by HKCAAVQ in the last accreditation for BEdECE in 2019 and HDECE in 2021, for the purpose of continuous improvement. The Panel considered that the actions taken to date were appropriate, and that the inclusion of regular and specific staff development should be continued as mentioned in Para. 4.5.3.
- 4.1.6 The University provided to the Panel, in accreditation documents and during the site visit, summary information on employment of recent graduates of the two programmes, as well as information on the graduates' profiles of the two programmes (as in **Appendices 2 and 3**), including the education and employment pathways of the graduates.
- 4.1.7 The Panel noted that graduates of the programmes are expected to be qualified for registration as Qualified Kindergarten Teachers (QKT), Child Care Workers (CCW), Child Care Supervisors (CCS) and Special Child Care Workers (SCCW). In this regard, the University informed the Panel that it has planned to seek approval from the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department for the two refined programmes which contain changes such as medium of instruction (BEdECE), practicum hours and arrangements (BEdECE and HDECE). To ensure that graduates of the two programmes meet the registration requirements for QKT, CCW, CCS and SCCW, the following restriction is therefore stipulated for the two programmes:

Restriction (BEdECE and HDECE)

The University is to ensure that the revised programme, including proposed changes in the course content, practicum arrangement and hours, QF credits, and medium of instruction (applicable to BEdECE only), is continuously approved by the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department so that the graduates will be eligible for registration as Qualified Kindergarten Teachers (QKT),

Child Care Workers (CCW), Child Care Supervisors (CCS) and Special Child Care Workers (SCCW).

The University is to submit relevant evidence to HKCAAVQ on the fulfilment of the restriction **before enrolling any students to the Programmes for the 2024/25 academic year.**

4.2 Learner Admission and Selection

The minimum admission requirements of the learning programme must be clearly outlined for staff and prospective learners. These requirements and the learner selection processes must be effective for recruitment of learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake the programme.

- 4.2.1 The Panel was given to understand that the two programmes follow the University's policies and guidelines regarding student admission, such as *Policies on Advanced Standing, Course Exemption/Credit Transfer* and *Guidelines for Teaching Staff on Admission*. The Panel noted that applicants are required to attend an admission interview conducted by the admission staff and academic staff of the programmes. The Panel was informed that the minimum admission requirements for both programmes remain unchanged as approved in the last accreditation. The minimum admission requirements of the two programmes are outlined below.

BEdeCE

Year 1 Entry (Full-time)

- Have obtained Level 3 in Chinese Language, Level 3 in English Language, Level 2 in Mathematics, "Attained" in Citizenship and Social Development and Level 2 in one elective subject in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination; OR
- Have obtained an equivalent qualification.

Year 3 Entry (Full-time)

- Have completed and obtained an ECE sub-degree qualification pitched at QF Level 4; OR
- Have obtained an equivalent qualification.

Year 1 Entry (Part-time)

- Have completed and obtained an ECE sub-degree qualification pitched at QF Level 4; OR
- Have obtained an equivalent qualification.

HDECE

- Have obtained Level 2 in five subjects (including Chinese Language and English Language) in the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination; OR
- Have completed and obtained the Diploma of Applied Education or Diploma Yi Jin; OR
- Have completed and obtained a QF Level 3 qualification; OR
- Being a mature applicant aged 21 or above on 1 September of the year when admission is sought, with relevant working experience and academic background; OR
- Have obtained an equivalent qualification.

4.2.2 The Panel reviewed the profiles of students admitted to the two programmes in the past validity period. Regarding the equivalent qualifications for admission to the two programmes and the assessment of equivalency, in the *Response to Panel's Initial Comments* and follow-up responses and in the site visit, the University provided some examples of possible equivalent qualifications, and it was noted that some examples were not appropriate although some were not actual cases, such as results and combinations of results of local and non-local public examinations, standardised tests and qualifications. Assessment of the equivalency should take into account factors such as relevancy to the discipline of the programmes, Chinese and English language components and proficiency, qualification level, attainment level, and study volume. The following requirement is therefore stipulated, in addition to the reminding **advice** to continue to adhere to the relevant policies or guidelines on admission requirements published in the past and upcoming validity periods, and ensure that comprehensive and easy-to-locate information on admission requirements of the two programmes is provided on the University's website to prospective student candidates. As a general note, the University should also

keep track of Government policies on Minimum Entrance Requirements.

Requirement (BEdECE and HDECE)

The University is to review and revise as appropriate the minimum admission requirements of the programmes, in particular the equivalent qualifications, including but not limited to local and non-local public examinations and standardised tests and qualifications, taking into account factors such as relevancy to the discipline of the Programme, Chinese and English language components, qualification level, attainment level and study volume.

The Operator is to submit relevant information and evidence to HKCAAVQ for the fulfilment of the requirement above **on or before 31 October 2024**.

- 4.2.3 The University provided to the Panel the yearly student intake of the BEdECE programme from 2020/21 to 2023/24 and the HDECE programme from 2021/22 to 2023/24, and proposed the maximum numbers of new students per year below for the two programmes, which are the same as approved in the last accreditation. The Panel considered the proposed maximum number of new students per year appropriate.

BEdECE

Year-1 Entry (Full-time): 50 new students per year

Year-1 Entry (Part-time): 30 new students per year

Year-3 Entry (Full-time): 50 new students per year

HDECE

80 new students per year

- 4.2.4 For BEdECE, in line with the Government's policy on the yearly quota of non-standard admission for programmes accredited under the Qualifications Framework, for degree programmes operating in the 2023/24 academic year and onwards, the maximum number of non-standard admission (including mature students) should be capped at a maximum of 15% on a programme basis and 10% on an institutional basis of the actual number of new students of the year. The cap is applied in line with the general expectation of self-

financed degree-awarding institutions in safeguarding teaching and learning quality and thereby upholding the credibility and recognition of the qualifications. The percentages are based on the sum of new student numbers across all years of study.

- 4.2.5 For HDECE, in line with the Government's policy on Associate Degree (AD) and Higher Diploma (HD) programmes, the University should continue to follow and adhere to the *Updated Revised Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes (effective since the 2024/25 academic year)* updated by the Education Bureau, relating to aspects including but not limited to the distinctive positioning of HD programmes, minimum entry requirements, programme and curriculum design, industry engagement, articulation and employment pathways.

4.3 Programme Structure and Content

The structure and content of the learning programme must be up-to-date, coherent, balanced and integrated to facilitate progression in order to enable learners to achieve the stated learning outcomes and to meet the programme objectives.

- 4.3.1 The BEdECE programme is a four-year full-time or a three-year part-time programme. To graduate from the BEdECE programme, students are required to complete 47 courses and acquire 596 QF credits (including 31 specialised courses, two two-semester practicum courses and 12 generic courses) with a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or above, and complete and pass a non-credit bearing course *Integrated Seminar and Community Involvement*.
- 4.3.2 The HDECE programme is a two-year full-time programme. To graduate from the HDECE programme, students are required to complete 26 courses (including 19 specialised courses of which two are practicum courses, and seven generic courses) and acquire 356 QF credits, with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above, and complete and pass a non-credit-bearing course *College Life and You*.
- 4.3.3 The Panel was provided with the information on the course outlines and sequences of the courses of the two programmes, and mapping of the courses and programmes with the requirements of the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department in relation to ECE curriculum, CCW, CCS and SCCW. For BEdECE, in addition to the delineation relating to the arrangement for non-Chinese-

speaking (NCS) students in Para. 4.1.4, such as the replacement course relevant to ECE for the General Education (GE) Putonghua course for NCS students, the Panel also reviewed the proportion and number of courses in ECE foundational courses and specialist courses, and **recommended** that the University should regularly review the course sequence and the proportion of ECE foundational courses and specialist courses, and maintain the sufficiency and depth of pedagogical knowledge and skills in basic Early Childhood Education.

- 4.3.4 On the practicum of the two programmes, the Panel was given to understand that there are changes in the practicum arrangement and practicum hours. The University proposed to enrich the course content of the practicum courses by including counselling and therapy approaches for Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and change the practicum hours from 858 hours to 761 hours for BEdECE and from 446 hours to 411 hours for HDECE, after reviewing students' workload and collecting students' views on the proposed changes in practicum hours. Having reviewed the proposed revised practicum arrangements and discussed with teaching staff during the site visit, the Panel noted that different approaches could be used in practicum, such as small-group activities, theme-based and integrated teaching, and Special Educational Needs (SEN) teaching, some of which could be challenging to handle. The Panel therefore **recommended** that the University should continue to monitor and ensure adequate preparation for students for practicum by including a focus on whole-class learning such as catering for children with diverse needs.
- 4.3.5 In consideration of the above information and the discussion with various stakeholders, notwithstanding the recommendations above, the Panel considered that the structure and content of the two programmes are effective in enabling students to achieve the stated learning outcomes and meet the programme objectives.

4.4 **Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

The learning, teaching and assessment activities designed for the learning programme must be effective in delivering the programme content and assessing the attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

- 4.4.1 The BEdECE and HDECE programmes employ a range of teaching and learning activities, such as lectures, tutorials, seminars,

practicum, discussions and debates, micro-teaching and teaching demonstrations, projects, site visits and hands-on activities. For the two programmes, the typical class size of a lecture and seminar are around 50 and 100 respectively, and a tutorial is 10-30 students. During the site visit, the Panel was also given to understand that the programmes will consider the class size for students' learning experience.

- 4.4.2 The University provided to the Panel the Course Outlines of all courses of the two programmes, including the course description, course intended learning outcomes, course content, pedagogical methods and assessment methods. In the accreditation documents and Response to Panel's Initial Comments, the University provided the Panel with samples of teaching and learning materials, assessment tasks (covering formative and summative assessments, where applicable), associated assessment criteria/rubrics, and samples of marked student assessments covering high, medium and low performance, of the following courses of the two programmes, including the practicum courses:

BEDECE

- *BECE404 Project II: Final Year Project*
- *BECE403 Working with Non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) Children in Local Early Childhood Educational Settings*
- *BECE412 Early Intervention via a Multidisciplinary Approach for Children with Special Educational Needs*
- *BECE 210-1 Practicum I*
- *BECE 210-2 Practicum I*
- *BECE 405-1 Practicum II*
- *BECE 405-2 Practicum II*

HDECE

- *ECER 107 Integrated Play Based Curriculum and Environment Planning, Implementation and Evaluation in Early Childhood Education*
- *ECE219 Promoting Children's Creativity and Aesthetic Development through Visual Arts and Music*

- *ECE 130 Practicum I*
- *ECE 230 Practicum II*

4.4.3 In terms of assessment of the two programmes, a range of methods are adopted, including written examinations, tests, project work, worksheets, case studies, essays, oral presentations, term papers, teaching demonstrations, etc. Having reviewed the Assessment and Feedback Policy, E-Learning Policy, samples of assessment materials, comments from the External Examiners, and discussed with teaching staff, students and graduates of the two programmes during the site visit, the Panel noted that the guidelines and policy documents could have included more details for staff and students regarding assessment and feedback. The Panel therefore **recommended** that the University should review and enrich, where applicable, the assessment and feedback policy to ensure that comprehensive details about the guidelines and requirements are provided to students and staff on student assessment matters including minimum and maximum word count per task, minimum and maximum percentages allocated for each assessment task, maximum number of assessments set per course, turn-around time and quality of feedback provided to students, rules for re-submission of student work, maximum weighting for examinations. The Panel also **advised** the University to consider further diversifying the assessment tasks, such as including more use of digital learning technology.

4.4.4 The Panel was provided with summary information and results of recent students' evaluation of the courses, practicums and the two programmes, such as *Survey on Field Experiences of Practicum Courses from Practicum Workplaces*, *Course and Teaching Evaluation (CTE)* and *Programme Evaluation (PE)*. During the site visit meeting, the students and graduates whom the Panel met with commented positively in general on their learning experience, and expressed that they encountered difficulties when sometimes many assignments were scheduled during the practicum periods while they also needed to prepare teaching materials and lessons for practicum. Having reviewed the practicum arrangements and feedback from students, graduates and external stakeholders, the Panel **recommended** that the University should consider further developing clear and regular communication and collaboration between the programme leaders, teaching staff and the administrative offices supporting the practicums, for example, in relation to the issues of students' workload during practicum,

inclusion of on-going university work during practicum, and scheduling assessment due dates during practicum.

- 4.4.5 Regarding the medium of instruction (MOI) of the two programmes, English supplemented by Chinese has been the MOI of the HDECE programme, and the University proposed to change the MOI of the BEdECE programme from 'Chinese' to 'English supplemented by Chinese'. The Panel considered the proposed change of MOI for the BEdECE programme appropriate, considering the multiple-language environment of the industry. Having discussed with the students and graduates of the two programmes and the external stakeholders during the site visit, the Panel learnt the past implementation of the MOI in the two programmes and **recommended** that the University should closely monitor the medium of instruction (MOI) in the delivery of courses and continue to ensure that the MOI and its MOI policy are followed in the teaching, learning and assessment activities of the programmes.
- 4.4.6 Notwithstanding the recommendations above, the Panel considered that the learning, teaching and assessment activities of the two programmes have been in general effective in delivering the programme content and assessing students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

4.5 **Programme Leadership and Staffing**

The Operator must have adequate programme leader(s), teaching/training and support staff with the qualities, competence, qualifications and experience necessary for effective programme management, i.e. planning, development, delivery and monitoring of the programme. There must be an adequate staff development scheme and activities to ensure that staff are kept updated for the quality delivery of the programme.

- 4.5.1 The BEdECE and HDECE are managed by a Programme Team respectively, consisting of the Acting Associate Dean, Programme Leader, Final Year Project Coordinator, Practicum Coordinators, General Education Course Coordinator and other teaching staff. Eight full-time and six part-time teaching staff members are currently teaching the two programmes. The University provided to the Panel the staffing projection and planning for the coming five years for BEdECE and four years for HDECE. The Panel noted that the staff-student ratio (SSR) for the BEdECE and HDECE programmes have been and will be kept at 1:20 and 1:25 respectively in accordance with the University's policy.

- 4.5.2 The Panel reviewed the profiles and CVs of the management staff and teaching staff of the two programmes and considered that they have the relevant qualifications and experience to manage and teach the two programmes respectively. The Panel noted the two programmes follow the University's *Policy and Procedures for Recruitment and Appointment of Academic Staff*.
- 4.5.3 On staff development, the University provided to the Panel summary information of staff development activities from 2020 to 2023. Having reviewed the staff development activities and met with the teaching staff of the two programmes, the Panel considered that this would benefit the delivery quality of the two programmes in the long run and therefore **recommended** that the University should continue to offer regular and specific staff development training programmes/activities, for example, to facilitate staff knowledge about the requirements and expectations of the Generic Level Descriptors for the two programmes.
- 4.5.4 In consideration of the above information and the discussion with relevant stakeholders, the Panel formed the view that the programme leadership and staffing are appropriate in general and the staff have appropriate qualifications and experience necessary for effective management and delivery of the two programmes.

4.6 **Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services**

The Operator must be able to provide learning, teaching and enabling resources/services that are appropriate and sufficient for the learning, teaching and assessment activities of the learning programme, regardless of location and mode of delivery.

- 4.6.1 On financial resources, the Panel was provided with summary information on the Income and Expenditure of the BEdECE from 2020/21 to 2022/23 and HDECE from 2021/22 to 2022/23, and financial projection and sensitivity analysis relating to finance of the BEdECE programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29 and HDECE for 2024/25 to 2026/27. Based on the financial information provided, the Panel considered that the operation of the two programmes is adequately supported in terms of financial resources and continues to be financially viable.
- 4.6.2 On physical resources, the University provided to the Panel the information on its learning, teaching and enabling resources relevant to the delivery of the two programmes such as the University's

provision of Computer Laboratory, Multi-Media Lecture Room and Early Childhood Education Model Classroom, in addition to the general teaching and learning facilities such as Library, Information Technology Services Centre, Language Centre, Student Affairs Office and Careers Centre. During the site visit, the University provided the Panel with a tour of the facilities for the two programmes. The Panel was also provided with the summary information of the library holdings and figures, and subscriptions relevant to the two programmes, including journal subscriptions and electronic databases.

4.6.3 During the site visit meeting with the students and graduates of the two programmes, the Panel was given to understand that students need to be further supported regarding their English language proficiency, which is particularly important for the BEdECE programme as the University proposed to change the MOI to 'English supplemented by Chinese'. The Panel therefore **advised** the University to enhance the English language support for the students of the two programmes and ensure that adequate English language support services are provided to students of the two programmes.

4.6.4 In consideration of the above information and the discussion with relevant stakeholders, the Panel considered that the University in general has provided appropriate and sufficient learning, teaching and enabling resources for the delivery of the two programmes.

4.7 **Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance**

The Operator must monitor and review the development and performance of the learning programme on an on-going basis to ensure that the programme remains current and valid and that the learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities and learner assessments are effective to meet the programme objectives.

4.7.1 The University provided to the Panel the following information of the BEdECE and HDECE programmes to demonstrate that the two programmes are monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis:

- (a) Meeting minutes / extracts of Academic Board, Quality Assurance Committee (Academic), SHL School Management Team, SHL School Board, Programme Committee/Team, Examiners Committee and Advisory Committee;

- (b) *Handbook of Academic Policies, Regulations, Guidelines & Procedures (for Taught Postgraduate, Undergraduate and Sub-degree programmes);*
- (c) *Quality Assurance Handbook;*
- (d) *Teaching and Learning Quality Manual;*
- (e) *Guidelines for Annual Review of Programmes and Courses;*
- (f) Annual Programme Review Reports;
- (g) Programme Evaluation Reports, and Course and Teaching Evaluation Reports;
- (h) Reports of Survey on Field Experience of Practicum Courses from Practicum Partner Schools;
- (i) Reports of the External Examiners;
- (j) Records of Internal Programme Validation;
- (k) Information on attrition rates, students' GPA and graduation rates; and
- (l) Summary results of Graduate Destination Survey.

4.7.2 The Panel observed that feedback from key stakeholders has been collected through various channels, and feedback from different sources is collected in the Annual Programme Review Process and is recorded in Annual Programme Reports. For example, students' and graduates' feedback and evaluation on the courses and teaching are collected at the end of each semester through Course and Teaching Evaluation (CTE), and evaluation and feedback on the programme delivery and supporting services are collected through Programme Evaluation (PE) on an annual basis for graduates. Student Affairs Office (SAO) of the University also conducts Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) six months after the graduation of the graduates.

4.7.3 Regarding feedback and views from external stakeholders, in addition to the collection of input from external advisers from the Advisory Committee, feedback from External Examiners is collected through External Examiner Reports, and feedback from practicum partner schools is collected through a Survey on Field Experience of Practicum Courses.

- 4.7.4 As also described in Para. 4.1.4, during the site visit meeting, the University elaborated on the teaching of non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students and proposed to refine the Programme Objective 6 of the BEdECE programme relating to Chinese and Putonghua communication skills by including an asterisk note for NCS students. The Panel had the view that the University should duly complete the internal approval process and quality assurance mechanism relating to the refinement, and therefore stipulated the pre-condition below. In addition to the internal approval process, as the Panel received different versions of the NCS arrangements from the representatives of the University during the site visit, parts of the pre-condition also aim to ensure that the University would have timely and effective communication with the relevant stakeholders on various arrangements of the programmes among relevant committees, working groups and teaching staff and all related individuals and parties.

Pre-condition (BEdECE)

The Operator is to (i) review and concretise the teaching and learning arrangements for Non-Chinese-Speaking (NCS) students in the programme, including but not limited to replacement electives for the General Education courses in Chinese and Putonghua for NCS students, (ii) go through the internal approval and quality assurance process for the refinement of Programme Objective 6 relating to Chinese and Putonghua communication skills of NCS students, and (iii) ensure effective communication across various levels of staff of the Programme about the above arrangements for NCS students.

The Operator is to submit relevant information and evidence to HKCAAVQ for the fulfilment of the pre-condition above **on or before 28 June 2024**.

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 Operator and/or Programme 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 (<https://www.elegislation.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 <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.

5.3 **Qualifications Register**

5.3.1 Qualifications accredited by HKCAAVQ are eligible for entry into the Qualifications Register ("QR") at <https://www.hkqr.gov.hk> for recognition under the QF. The Operator should apply separately to have their quality-assured qualifications entered into the QR.

5.3.2 Only learners who commence the study of the named accredited learning programme during the validity period and who have graduated with the named qualification listed in the QR will be considered to have acquired a qualification recognised under the QF.

Ref: 49/23/03

30 April 2024

JoH/AnC/DnL/dnl/kil

Saint Francis University

**Learning Programme Re-accreditation for
(i) Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and
(ii) Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education**

22 - 23 February 2024

Panel Membership

Panel Chair

Professor Nita TEMMERMAN

International Higher Education Consultant
Formerly Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic
Quality and Partnerships) and Executive
Dean, Faculty of Education, University of
Southern Queensland
AUSTRALIA

*** Panel Secretary**

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Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of
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Honorary University Associate
Formerly Associate Professor, Department of
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* The Panel Secretary is also a member of the Accreditation Panel.

Graduate Profile of BEdECE

Qualification Title	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education 幼兒教育(榮譽)學士
Qualification Type	Bachelor Degree
QF Level	Level 5
Primary Area of Study and Training	Education
Sub-area (Primary Area of Study and Training)	Education and Teacher Education
Programme Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Command a comprehensive and state-of-the-art grounding in child development and child studies in both theoretical and practice-oriented terms, in particular as applied to the education of children of 0-8 years of age, as the minimum point of departure for engaging in the Programme;2. Critically evaluate, apply and synthesise professional knowledge and skills in ECE and a wide range of ECE-specific teaching and learning methods, approaches and strategies in designing, planning and implementing ECE curricula to produce optimal results;3. Command competence in making mature and purposeful judgment and decisions in taking stock of the professional and ethical roles as early childhood educators in the cultural, social, political and economic contexts of Hong Kong in curriculum design for early childhood education settings;4. Command expertise, professionalism and ethical values in evaluating, applying and synthesising practical skills and knowledge to cater to the education and care of children with diverse and special educational needs, so as to bring about a true inclusive ECE for all;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Exercise competence, professionalism, interpersonal skills and emotional maturity to communicate and collaborate with parents, families and the community, as well as the non-Chinese-speaking minorities in Hong Kong to effect the appropriate interface between kindergarten, family and primary education; 6. Demonstrate competence in generic skills including communication skills in English, Chinese (and Putonghua)* and academic as well as IT and numeracy competencies for both professional and routine operations pertaining to ECE; and <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*Chinese (and Putonghua) are not applicable to Non-Chinese-Speaking (NCS) students.</i></p> 7. Exercise maturity and capability professionally and academically for advancement in the workplace and/or to engage in continuing professional development (CPD).
<p>Programme Intended Learning Outcomes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marshal and operate an appropriate set of ECE theories and good practices to develop and adopt suitable strategies and approaches to work most fruitfully with young children in the learning process; 2. Design a curriculum for delivery to children aged 0-8 by applying, improvising and synthesising theories and good practices in child development and child studies as well as other related disciplines that are fit for purpose; 3. Reflect on and assume the professional roles and responsibilities of early childhood educators with full commitment to the professionalism, ethics and reflective practice of the ECE profession; 4. Critically analyse the cultural, social, political and economic factors governing the development of early childhood education in Hong Kong to bring about an inclusive ECE for all;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Collaborate with children’s parents and families, and other stakeholders, in a team work spirit to effect an interface/transition between kindergarten, family and primary education for children’s optimal development; 6. Evaluate, apply and synthesise learning theories and approaches in early childhood education, employing Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other useful tools, to plan, implement and critically evaluate early childhood curricula and programmes that are safe and developmentally appropriate to children of 0-8 years of age in Hong Kong; and 7. Demonstrate competence in generic knowledge and skills including language skills, numeracy skills, research skills, and ICT skills, always aware of local and international issues and trends pertaining to ECE for functioning optimally in the profession.
Education Pathways	<p>Graduates of the Programme are expected to be eligible for pursuing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master of Education in Early Childhood Education; and ▪ Kindergarten/Child Care Centre Principalship Professional Training Programmes
Employment Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualified Kindergarten Teachers (QKT) ▪ Child Care Workers (CCW) ▪ Child Care Supervisors (CCS) ▪ Special Child Care Workers (SCCW)

<p>Minimum Admission Requirements</p>	<p>The minimum admission requirements of the Programme are as follows:</p> <p><u>Year 1 Entry (Full-time)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have obtained Level 3 in Chinese Language, Level 3 in English Language, Level 2 in Mathematics, “Attained” in Citizenship and Social Development and Level 2 in one elective subject in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination; OR • Have obtained an equivalent qualification. <p><u>Year 3 Entry (Full-time)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed and obtained an ECE sub-degree qualification pitched at QF Level 4; OR • Have obtained an equivalent qualification. <p><u>Year 1 Entry (Part-time)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed and obtained an ECE sub-degree qualification pitched at QF Level 4; OR • Have obtained an equivalent qualification.
<p>Operator</p>	<p>Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學</p>

Graduate Profile of HDECE

Qualification Title	Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education 幼兒教育高級文憑
Qualification Type	Higher Diploma
QF Level	4
Primary Area of Study and Training	Education
Sub-area (Primary Area of Study and Training)	Education and Teacher Education
Programme Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To command a broad-based theoretical grounding in child development and young children's specific needs for curriculum development in early childhood education;2. To acquire a holistic understanding of child development as a result of going through an interdisciplinary training and being exposed to a wide range of teaching and learning approaches and strategies;3. To thoroughly appreciate and be able to take stock of the professional and ethical roles as early childhood educators in the cultural, social, political and economic contexts of Hong Kong;4. To acquire competence in curriculum planning, implementation, management and reflective practice;5. To command expertise in practical skills and professional knowledge in education and care of children 0-8 years of age;6. To acquire proficiency and competence in generic skills including communication skills in English and Chinese (and Putonghua) and academic as well as numeracy competencies; and7. To attain maturity and capability professionally and academically for advancement in the workplace and/or to

	pursue an undergraduate programme in their continuing professional development.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify children’s diverse needs to develop suitable strategies and approaches to work with them in the learning process; 2. Synthesize child development theories as a theoretical framework to inform teaching practice; 3. Reflect on and assume the professional roles and responsibilities of early childhood educators and their commitment to professionalism, ethics and reflective practice; 4. Collaborate with children’s parents and families, and other stakeholders, in a teamwork spirit to work out strategies and methods for achieving children’s holistic development; 5. Analyse the cultural, social, political and economic factors in Hong Kong that govern the development of early childhood education; 6. Apply learning theories and approaches in early childhood education, employing Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other useful tools, to plan, implement and evaluate early childhood curricula and programmes that are safe and developmentally appropriate to children of 2-6 years of age in Hong Kong; and 7. Apply generic skills and the awareness of local and international issues for functioning optimally in the profession and/or in preparation for advancing to the degree level academically.
Education Pathways	Articulation to a degree programme in Early Childhood Education or any other related disciplines or professions
Employment Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualified Kindergarten Teacher (QKT) ▪ Child Care Worker (CCW) ▪ Child Care Supervisor (CCS) ▪ Special Child Care Worker (SCCW)

Minimum Admission Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have obtained Level 2 in five subjects (including Chinese Language and English Language) in the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination; OR • Have completed and obtained the Diploma of Applied Education or Diploma Yi Jin; OR • Have completed and obtained a QF Level 3 qualification; OR • Being a mature applicant aged 21 or above on 1 September of the year when admission is sought, with relevant working experience and academic background; OR • Have obtained an equivalent qualification.
Operator	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學

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