



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

Manual for the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework

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Abbreviation

AAVQO	Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592)
EDB	Education Bureau
GLD	Generic Level Descriptors
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
HKQF	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework
IE	Initial Evaluation
IR	Institutional Review
LPA	Learning Programme Accreditation
NLP	Non-local learning programmes
PAA	Programme Area Accreditation
PIR	Periodic Institutional Review
Process	The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process
QA	Quality Assurance
QR	Qualifications Register
Re-LPA	Learning Programme Re-accreditation
Sol	Statement of Intent

1. Preamble

- 1.1 The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) was established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150) and may conduct accreditation tests generally or as authorised under any other local enactment. Under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance, HKCAAVQ performs the following accreditation tests such as:
 - (a) Institutional Review for the Purpose of Seeking Cap. 320 Registration (IR-320)
 - (b) Institutional Review for Private University Title
- 1.2 HKCAAVQ also performs the statutory roles of the Accreditation Authority and the Qualifications Register (QR) Authority under the Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap. 592). In the capacity of the Accreditation Authority, HKCAAVQ conducts accreditation tests related to the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) including those under the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process (the Process).
- 1.3 Under the AAVQO (Cap. 592), HKCAAVQ performs the dual roles of a gate-opener and a gate keeper. As a gate-opener, HKCAAVQ supports Operators in understanding the minimum accreditation requirements through the provision of information and training about the accreditation standards and process. HKCAAVQ also performs its gate-keeping role through the accreditation process to ensure that HKQF-recognised programmes and qualifications are meeting the HKQF standards under the specified level of the HKQF as described in the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) of the HKQF.
- 1.4 HKCAAVQ has made rules to provide for the methods and procedures for accreditation (the “Rules”) and in order to implement these Rules has developed the Process for Operators who wish to seek accreditation services under the HKQF.
- 1.5 This Manual has been produced for prospective and existing Operators in accordance with the Rules and developed within their ambit. The purpose of this Manual is to provide an overview of the Process along with the accreditation standards and matters for consideration for each stage of the Process. This Manual supersedes any previous guidance notes on the Process but is by no means exhaustive.
- 1.6 As the HKQF evolves, this Manual will from time to time be revised. Whilst HKCAAVQ endeavours to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information contained in this Manual, HKCAAVQ reserves the right to delete, suspend or edit any information at any time in its absolute discretion without prior notice. To obtain the most up-to-date information, users may refer to the electronic version of this Manual on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

- 1.7 Operators undertaking accreditation are expected to put in place arrangements to respond to government policy initiatives, including for example, HKQF credit, Award Title Scheme, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer. Operators are also required to demonstrate the implementation of government policy initiatives where required.
- 1.8 For enquiries, please contact HKCAAVQ at info@hkcaavq.edu.hk or by phone at (852) 3658 0000.

2. Role of HKCAAVQ in HKQF

- 2.1 As the Accreditation Authority, HKCAAVQ develops and implements the standards and mechanism for accreditation to underpin the HKQF. Qualifications accredited by HKCAAVQ are eligible for entry into the QR for recognition under the HKQF.
- 2.2 Following the legislative intent, HKCAAVQ developed accreditation standards that have a focus on Operators' organisational competence in operating and ensuring the quality of its delivery of learning programmes under the HKQF. The assessment of organisational competence takes into consideration the nature of the learning programme(s) that an Operator offers or plans to offer. The mechanism developed is the Process which ensures that Operators possess the competence required to operate their learning programmes, and also encourages progressive development of organisational competence for continuous enhancement.
- 2.3 The HKQF is a seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors. The HKQF contains the following key features:
 - (a) **Level**, which reflects the depth and complexity of learning leading to a qualification;
 - (b) **Award title**, which reflects the nature, area of study and hierarchy of a qualification; and
 - (c) **Credit**, which indicates the volume or size of learning of the qualification.
- 2.4 Each HKQF-recognised qualification is assigned a level to indicate its position in the hierarchy relative to others. The level of a qualification is determined in accordance with a set of GLD which specifies, in four domains, the outcome standards expected of the qualification at each level.
- 2.5 As the QR Authority, the functions of HKCAAVQ include:
 - (a) Determining the entry or removal of a qualification into/from the QR;
 - (b) Ensuring and enhancing the credibility of the QR structure; and
 - (c) Monitoring advertisements relating to the HKQF.Any programme providers or qualifications granting bodies who wish to have their quality-assured qualifications entered into the QR should apply to HKCAAVQ.

3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 In performing its gate-keeping role, HKCAAVQ conducts accreditation tests by means of the standards developed for each of the four stages in the Process to ensure the quality of accredited learning programmes and the capability of the Operators to deliver such programmes. HKCAAVQ follows the following guiding principles in conducting the Process:

Peer Review

- 3.2 The Accreditation Panel is formed through the engagement of sector/discipline/industry experts with the expertise and experience in the discipline/industry/quality assurance (QA). The roles of the Accreditation Panel are as follows:
- (a) To assess the quality of an Operator and its learning programmes;
 - (b) To collect and evaluate evidence; and
 - (c) To form a judgement as to whether the Operator and its learning programmes meet the required standards and stated aims.

The roles and responsibilities of Panel Members in the Process are detailed in **Appendix 3**. Panel Members are subject to a Code of Conduct on conflict of interest and compliance with confidentiality requirements, details of which are available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/policies.

Standards-based

- 3.3 As the Accreditation Authority under the HKQF, HKCAAVQ has developed accreditation standards which collectively set out the competence requirements that an Operator must meet to demonstrate that it can achieve its objectives and deliver the expected programme learning outcomes. The standards also reflect the high expectations of the community on the quality of the education and training system in Hong Kong, as well as essential features expected of Operators. HKCAAVQ's accreditation standards do not mandate requirements such as specific learning outcomes, programme design or operating models.

Evidence-based

- 3.4 The accreditation judgement is made on the basis of evidence provided by the Operator to support its claimed attainment of the accreditation standards and its own objectives. Further details regarding the evidence required of Operators are set out in the Evidence Guides for Accreditation available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

Fitness for Purpose

- 3.5 The accreditation takes into consideration the stated objectives and the scope of an Operator, while ensuring that the learning programme(s) it offers meet(s) the claimed HKQF level(s).

Transparency

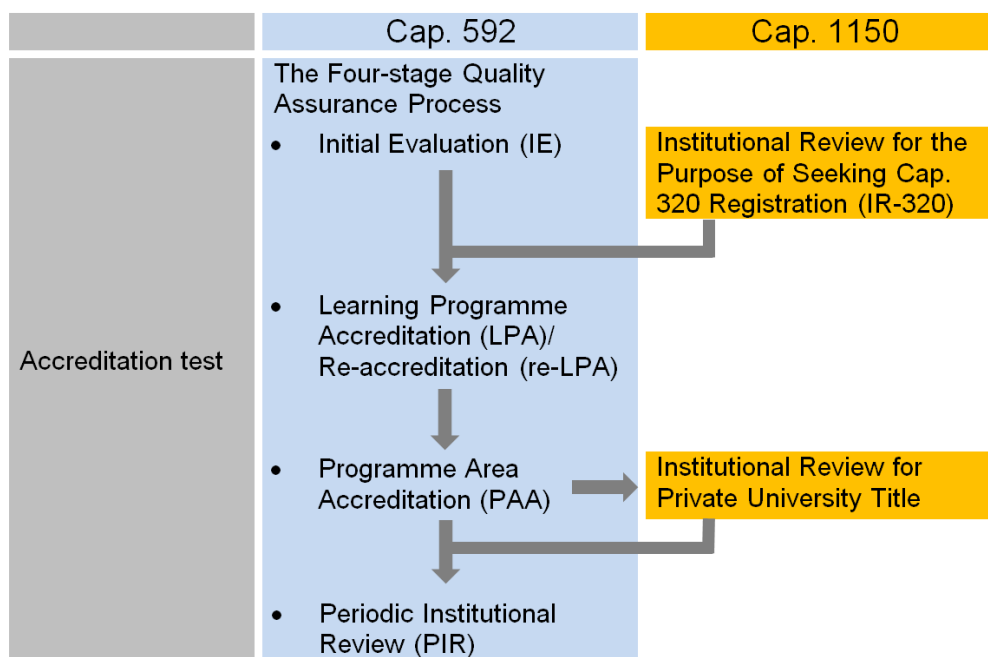
- 3.6 Accreditation is undertaken using a transparent approach throughout the Process so that all parties involved (i.e. the Operator and the Accreditation Panel) have a common understanding of the Process and relevant issues that may arise. Through the accreditation process, the Operator is required to respond to any questions/concerns raised by the Accreditation Panel and provide evidence to support its responses to such questions/concerns. Further details on the roles and responsibilities of Operators in accreditation are available in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.7 The rationale for the Accreditation Panel's recommendations regarding the accreditation determination and decisions together with the supporting evidence collected by the Accreditation Panel through the accreditation process are documented in an accreditation report that is prepared by the Panel Secretary and reviewed by the Accreditation Panel. The Operator is given the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the accreditation report. HKCAAVQ finalises the accreditation report following consideration of the Accreditation Panel's recommendations and makes the accreditation determination and decisions. The Accreditation Panel and the Operator may seek clarification regarding the accreditation determination and decisions contained in the accreditation report from the Heads of the relevant accreditation units at HKCAAVQ.
- 3.8 For the purpose of increased transparency in the Process, HKCAAVQ publishes summary/full accreditation reports after the pre-condition(s) has/have been fulfilled, if any, for the following types of accreditation tests under the Process:

Accreditation Test	Vocational and Professional	Academic
Initial Evaluation (IE)	Full Accreditation Report	Full Accreditation Report
Initial Evaluation and Learning Programme Accreditation (IE+LPA)	Summary Accreditation Report	
Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)/Re-accreditation (re-LPA)		
Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)		
Periodic Institutional Review (PIR)		

The accreditation reports for in-house programmes or with non-approval outcomes will not be published.

4. The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

- 4.1 The table below summarises the relationship between the accreditation tests conducted under the AAVQO (Cap. 592) and those conducted under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150) listed in paragraph 1.1.



An Operator planning to offer degree programmes should first undertake an institutional review (IR) for the purpose of seeking registration under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320). An IR status allows an Operator to offer learning programmes at HKQF Level 5 or below without undertaking an IE, however such learning programmes are subject to LPA/re-LPA. Details on IR for the purpose of seeking Cap. 320 registration are available in the *Guidelines on Institutional Review for the Purpose of Seeking Cap. 320 Registration*, which is available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

- 4.2 For an Operator seeking private university title, obtaining PAA status for degree programmes at undergraduate level (i.e. HKQF Level 5) in at least three different Areas of Study and Training forms part of the eligibility requirements for IR for Private University Title. More information on the IR for Private University Title is available in the *Institutional Review Manual for Private University Title* available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.
- 4.3 The portfolio of HKCAAVQ covers a wide range of Operators and learning programmes in the education and training sectors. To perform its role as the gate-keeper and gate-opener, the Process maintains a minimum level of competence requirements for meeting the HKQF

standards when an Operator first enters the Process. The Process then allows the Operator to demonstrate higher levels of competence in terms of effective delivery and QA of their learning programmes. The different stages in the Process are illustrated below:

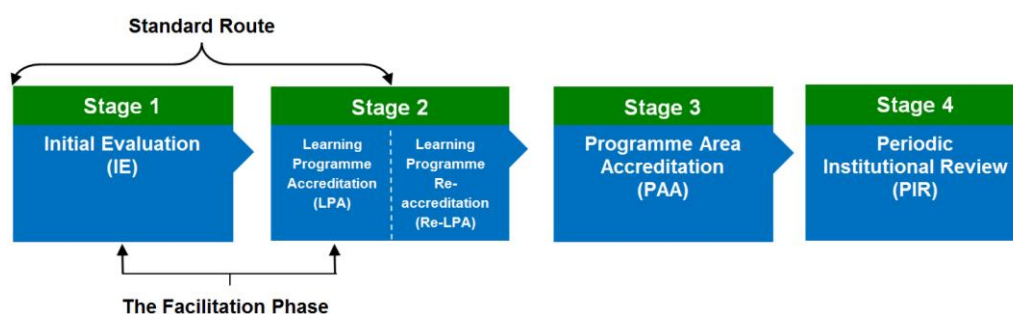


Figure 1: The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

4.4 The Process, shown in Figure 1, is designed with a particular purpose for each stage to develop the competence of Operators, and to recognise established track record of Operators. Moving to the stage of Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) is not automatic and requires demonstration of a high level of competence of an Operator in effective management and continuous self-improvement in a systematic and information-driven manner. Therefore, accreditation by HKCAAVQ is not designed to replace internal QA, but rather works in collaboration with the internal QA of Operators. The following table summarises the purpose of each stage in the Process:

Stage	Purpose Statement
Initial Evaluation	To ascertain whether an Operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) that meet HKQF standards up to a certain HKQF level.
Learning Programme Accreditation/ Re-accreditation	The purpose is twofold: To ascertain whether a learning programme (proposed or accredited) meets an HKQF standard to achieve the claimed objectives. To ascertain whether the Operator of a learning programme is competent to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of its programme operation to achieve the claimed programme objectives.
Programme Area Accreditation	To ascertain whether an Operator is competent to quality assure its learning programme(s) within a programme area up to a certain HKQF level, as demonstrated from the track record of its operation of accredited learning programmes in a particular discipline or industry area, and its capacity to enhance its organisational effectiveness to achieve the educational/training objectives.

Periodic Institutional Review	To ascertain whether an Operator continues to be effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation by formulating and implementing actions based on evidence.
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Initial Evaluation (IE)

- 4.5 For a new Operator (or a partnership in the case of NLPs), the standard route for entering the Process is a combined IE and LPA exercise. This allows an Operator to demonstrate its organisational competence through actual implementation.
- 4.6 An Operator applying for IE must specify the HKQF level at which they intend to offer their learning programmes. A valid IE status allows an Operator to operate accredited learning programmes at the approved HKQF level or below. The Operator is required to undertake another IE if its approved IE status does not cover the intended HKQF level of a programme submitted for LPA.
- 4.7 IE for a joint programme leading to awards jointly conferred and delivered in Hong Kong involves two institutions as award granting bodies and Operators. Both institutions should have valid IE, IR, PAA or self-accrediting status. At least one institution has to be a local Operator. For a non-local institution acting as the partner institution, it should prove its self-accrediting power in its home country/region.
- 4.8 IE for an NLP involves a partnership between a Hong Kong Operator (local Operator) and a non-local Operator. IE for partnerships between Operators is distinct from, and in addition to, any IE/IR by HKCAAVQ which the local Operator may have undergone in respect of its local learning programmes or in connection with another non-local Operator in another partnership. This is because each partnership between local and non-local Operators is unique in terms of the QA and/or other contractual and operational arrangements for registered/exempted non-local courses under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap. 493).
- 4.9 A degree-granting Operator seeking to offer degree programmes at HKQF levels not covered by its approved IR status is required to undertake another IE, as well as going through LPA for the higher degree programmes. The Operator must demonstrate through its track record against the relevant accreditation standards and matters for consideration its capacity and capability in offering Bachelor's degree programmes before its application for accreditation of Master's (or Doctoral) degree programmes can be considered.
- 4.10 In cases where a programme is delivered through a digital learning platform to provide structured teaching, learning and assessment, and the programme has more than 50% of instruction delivered online, such a learning programme is defined as an online learning

programme. A local institution/organisation that wishes to have a local online learning programme accredited and award its own local qualification must have previously been accredited by HKCAAVQ and have a valid IE/IR status and have a track record of delivery of at least one accredited programme.

- 4.11 For a non-local online learning programme that leads to an award of a non-local qualification, such a programme must have been registered or exempted under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap. 493). When the registration requirements under Cap. 493 are not applicable, the Operator is required to provide relevant evidence to demonstrate that a comparable QA mechanism is in place in the home country to assure the standards of the programme offered offshore are at a level comparable to a programme conducted in the home country leading to the same qualification.

Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)/Re-accreditation (re-LPA)

- 4.12 An Operator is required to have a valid IE/IR status to apply to have its learning programme(s) at the approved HKQF level or below accredited through LPA/re-LPA.
- 4.13 For the new degree programmes which require the approval of the Chief Executive in Council under section 10 of Cap. 320, HKCAAVQ will consider comments from EDB on their new programme proposal before conducting the LPA.
- 4.14 Re-LPA is a cyclical evaluation of an accredited learning programme to determine whether the learning programme continues to meet the stated objectives, and delivers the learning programme that meets the accreditation and HKQF standards as determined at the previous LPA/re-LPA. Re-LPA focuses on improvements and outcomes since the LPA or the last re-LPA. The Operator is expected to demonstrate continuous improvement as a result of its internal QA procedures over the validity period.
- 4.15 Not every aspect of an Operator or the implementation of a learning programme can be demonstrated when they are first accredited. Those aspects will be revisited in a re-LPA exercise.
- 4.16 To ensure sufficient evidence is available for conducting an accreditation with regard to the accreditation standards, accredited programmes where no learner commences the study during the validity period are not eligible for the application of re-LPA.

The Facilitation Phase

- 4.17 A Facilitation Phase has been incorporated into Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Process. The purpose of the Facilitation Phase is to facilitate new

Operators or Operators plan for programmes in a new area or at a higher HKQF level to prepare for the accreditation exercise. Further information on the approach to the Facilitation Phase is available in **Appendix 2**.

Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)

- 4.18 An Operator may apply for a PAA within the scope of the Area of Study and Training of its accredited learning programmes subject to the following eligibility criteria:
- (a) Seven years of operation after (i) successful LPA/re-LPA by HKCAAVQ, or (ii) successful accreditation by a QA body recognised by HKCAAVQ, i.e. from the commencement of the first student cohort of the accredited programme; or
 - (b) Five years of operation after successful LPA/re-LPA by HKCAAVQ, i.e. from the commencement of the first student cohort of the accredited programme, with neither pre-conditions nor requirements concerning the quality aspects of the outcome-based learning programmes, including but not limited to:
 - (i) Achieving the programme objectives and delivering the intended learning outcomes that meet the HKQF standards, with reference to GLD.
 - (ii) Aligning the curriculum as well as teaching/training and learning strategies and procedures with programme objectives for the purpose of delivering the intended learning outcomes for the target learners.
 - (iii) Adopting valid and reliable assessment strategies and procedures in measuring the learners' standard of learning.
 - (iv) Ensuring the outcome standard of the programme via an effective internal QA system.
- 4.19 When applying for PAA, an Operator should propose a defined scope of a programme area under a specific Area of Study and Training, with reference to its accredited learning programmes that meet the eligibility criteria stated above. During the accreditation process, the Operator must demonstrate how, among other things, these accredited learning programmes, and the staff expertise and resources are commensurate with the scope of the proposed programme area(s).
- 4.20 To provide guidance for the definition of the scope of programme areas, HKCAAVQ has developed Sub-areas for each Area of Study and Training. Operators can refer to the *Classification of Areas of Study and Training in the Qualifications Register (QR), List of Sub-areas and Illustrative Scope Statements* available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.
- 4.21 The following guiding principles should be used by Operators, Accreditation Panels and HKCAAVQ to consider and define the scope of a programme area:

- (a) A programme area can be a whole Area of Study and Training, a Sub-area in full or a Sub-area in part (one subject matter or a combination of subject matters under the same Sub-area), but it cannot be a combination of Areas of Study and Training or Sub-areas under different Areas of Study and Training;
- (b) The Illustrative Scope Statement of each Sub-area should be used as a reference for defining the proposed scope of a programme area to be described as a single coherent statement;
- (c) Should the proposed programme area only partially cover a Sub-area, the examples of subject matter(s) covered in the Sub-area should be referred to.
- (d) There should be flexibility within an approved programme area to allow innovative development of learning programmes;
- (e) Creation of new sub-areas not included in the published list, if deemed necessary for the purpose of defining the scope of the proposed programme area, should be fully justified by the Operator;
- (f) In cases where the full scope of a Sub-area is considered to be too broad for an Operator, the Accreditation Panel can recommend a limited scope of the Sub-area be granted as the programme area; and
- (g) When an Operator operating inter-disciplinary learning programmes applies for PAA status, whether it should apply for PAA status only in the major programme area, or in all programme areas covered by its learning programmes should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4.22 With PAA status, an Operator may develop and operate learning programme(s) within the approved scope of programme area(s) at the specified HKQF level(s) or below within the validity period without undertaking LPA/re-LPA.

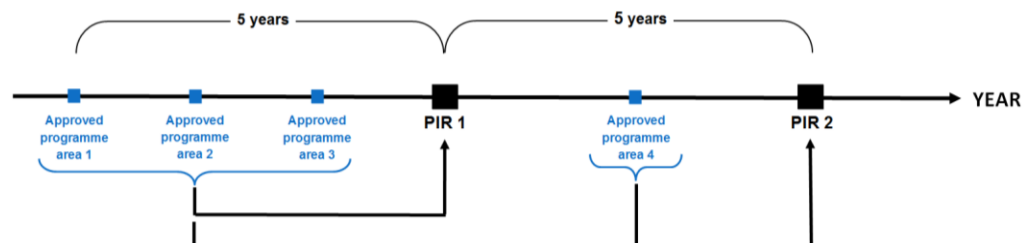
4.23 An Operator with PAA status may offer inter-disciplinary learning programme(s) if the majority of the learning programme(s) content is within the approved PAA scope.

4.24 HKCAAVQ has established the Panel on PAA Scope to advise on the scope of programme area/sub-area should there be disagreement between HKCAAVQ and an Operator under the following circumstances:

- (a) when drawing up the Service Agreement on the basis of the track record of the applied programme area(s)/sub-area(s); and
- (b) when monitoring the offer of a new programme under the approved PAA status.

Periodic Institutional Review (PIR)

- 4.25 As an overall assessment of institutional effectiveness, PIR is designed to cover all approved programme area(s) under the PAA status that an Operator may possess.
- 4.26 PIR places greater emphasis on overall institutional effectiveness based on evidence from programme delivery across all of an Operator's approved programme areas contributing to attainment of institutional objectives. To undertake such an exercise requires grouping approved programme areas of an Operator together, looking at evidence available from multiple approved programme areas possibly at different stages of development.
- 4.27 For an Operator with multiple approved programme areas granted at different times, the first PIR would be conducted when the first PAA is due for review, that is, normally five years after its approval. This PIR would cover any other approved programme area(s) after the approval of the first PAA. Upon a successful PIR, a PIR status will be granted so that all existing approved programme areas can continue to be valid regardless of the validity period(s) originally granted. Any new approved programme area(s) after the first PIR would be covered by the second PIR, normally five years after the first PIR, together with other approved programme areas. This is illustrated in the diagram below:



- 4.28 The normal validity period of PIR is five years. Depending on the findings, the granting of a PIR status includes the options of limiting or removing a previously approved programme area.
- 4.29 Depending on the scale of an organisation, the principles delineated above do not preclude the design of a PIR exercise such that the PIR can cover approved programme areas in similar or related Areas of Study and Training, or HKQF levels.

Differentiation Approach

- 4.30 In recognition of the good track records of an Operator at both organisational and programme levels, an accredited Operator may be eligible for differentiated approaches to accreditation, which include the following:
- (a) paper-based review accreditation;
 - (b) customised accreditation process;
 - (c) longer validity period; and

(d) any combination of the above.

For (a), after reviewing the Accreditation Document, if necessary, the Accreditation Panel may still request a meeting with particular personnel of the Operator in judging whether the relevant accreditation standards are met.

As for (b), examples of a customised accreditation process include a reduced scope of review, lightened Accreditation Document, a smaller size of accreditation panel, and a shorter site visit. The Operators with PAA status applying for new programme areas accreditation may also be eligible for the customisation approach. However, as PAA requires demonstration of a high level of competence of an Operator in effective management and continuous improvement of its internal QA and programme area specific capacity in terms of expertise and experience in programme development and delivery, the application of the customisation approach will be considered based on careful scrutiny of the contextual factors in each application.

As regards (c), the extended validity period is up to N+3 years, where N is the normal programme duration.

- 4.31 A number of indicators, such as approval without any Condition specified in previous accreditation exercises, external recognition, compliance with EDB rules and qualifications framework requirements, are considered holistically in defining the track record of an Operator. Based on data stored in HKCAAVQ's electronic database, the Operator's track record will be analysed by HKCAAVQ before the beginning of an accreditation exercise. The Operator will be notified if differentiation approaches in terms of either (a) and/or (b) above is applicable to the accreditation exercise. However, (c) will be for the Panel's consideration after the programme has met all the accreditation standards without any conditions.
- 4.32 HKCAAVQ may also take into account other considerations in determining the applicability of differentiation in an accreditation exercise on a case-by-case basis. The considerations may include the Operator's experience in offering programmes in similar disciplines, outcome of recent accreditation exercises conducted for the same Operator and the nature of the accreditation exercise.
- 4.33 During the accreditation process, if the Accreditation Panel, at a particular stage, concludes and recommends to HKCAAVQ that there is adequate evidence contained in the Accreditation Document and other supporting documents for it to make recommendations regarding the accreditation outcome without conducting a meeting or site visit, then HKCAAVQ may make the decision to conduct the accreditation exercise without a meeting or site visit. The Operator will be informed accordingly.

Accreditation Procedures and Indicative Timeline

4.34 The main steps and indicative timeline for each stage of the Process are outlined below:

Accreditation Procedures	Indicative Timeline (Week No.)			
	IE and LPA/ re-LPA		PAA	PIR
	For HKQF Levels 1-3	For HKQF Levels 4-7		
1. Submission of Statement of Intent (Sol) by Operator	Preparation Period			
2. Facilitation Phase (if applicable)				
3. Notification of differentiation approach (if applicable)				
4. Signing of Service Agreement with Operator				
5. Formation of Accreditation Panel				
6. Submission of Accreditation Document by Operator and review by Accreditation Panel	Week 1-3	Week 1-4	Week 1-4	Week 1-4
7. Accreditation Panel's initial comments and Operator's response	4-7	5-8	5-10	5-10
8. Site visit or meeting between Accreditation Panel and Operator	9	10	12	12
9. Issuance of Accreditation Report	16	20	24	24
10. Follow-up Actions (fulfilment of conditions and/or restrictions)	According to the fulfilment dates stipulated in the Report			

4.35 The detailed workflow with the actions to be taken by the corresponding responsible parties are available in **Appendix 4**.

5. Accreditation Standards

- 5.1 HKCAAVQ has adopted an outcome-based approach in the design of its accreditation standards. There is a hierarchy of outcomes considered in the development:
- (a) learner outcomes – learning outcomes attained by a learner after successful completion of a learning programme. Learner outcomes are reflected by assessments.
 - (b) programme outcomes – performance of a learning programme in relation to its programme objectives. Programme outcomes are typically assessed by analysing information such as stakeholder’s feedback and employment data.
 - (c) organisational outcomes – performance of an Operator in relation to achieving its vision and mission through effective governance and management. Internally, an organisation typically develops relevant performance indicators to assess its organisational outcomes. Effectiveness is a commonly used indicator in this regard.
- 5.2 These outcomes are inter-connected. The vision and mission of an organisation guides the design of learning programmes and the identification of learning outcomes, and the learning outcomes achieved by the learners contribute to the measurement of the effectiveness of the Operator. The effectiveness of an Operator hinges on whether there are processes in place to check and maintain the alignment between activities at different levels. This kind of organisational competence takes time to fully develop and HKCAAVQ requires Operators to meet the HKQF standards at the entry point of the Process. Moving through the Process, higher levels of competence are expected at each stage and these expectations are articulated in the accreditation standards.
- 5.3 HKCAAVQ’s accreditation standards are separate from other relevant standards or guidelines promulgated by the Government and/or other authorities that may be applicable to a particular Operator or learning programme undergoing accreditation. A list of such standards or guidelines is available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk. HKCAAVQ will assess the compliance of Operators with these requirements in the accreditation process, where applicable, as articulated under the relevant standards.

Domains of Competence

- 5.4 As explained in Section 4, each stage in the Process serves a different purpose. Therefore, there are different aspects of organisational competence that have to be assessed. These aspects can be ordered under several domains of competence. The following table summarises the domains of competence for each stage:

Stage	Domain of Competence
Initial Evaluation	IE-1 Organisational Governance and Management IE-2 Financial Viability and Resources Management IE-3 Organisational Staffing IE-4 Organisational Quality Assurance
Learning Programme Accreditation/ Re-accreditation	LPA-1 Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes LPA-2 Learner Admission and Selection LPA-3 Programme Structure and Content LPA-4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment LPA-5 Programme Leadership and Staffing LPA-6 Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services LPA-7 Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance
Programme Area Accreditation	Institutional Domain: PAA-1 Organisational Governance and Management PAA-2 Strategic Planning and Development PAA-3 Financial Management and Viability PAA-4 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement Programme Area Domain: PAA-5 Programme Area Development and Management PAA-6 Learning, Teaching and Assessment PAA-7 Staffing and Staff Development PAA-8 Programme Area Resources and Services
Periodic Institutional Review	PIR-1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning PIR-2 Organisational Leadership and Staffing PIR-3 Programme Area Development and Management PIR-4 Management of Resources and Services PIR-5 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Accreditation Standards

- 5.5 For each domain in a stage, an accreditation standard is developed to describe the level of competence required in relation to the purpose of that stage, for operation of learning programmes that meet HKQF standards. Different stages may have the same or similar domain, for example “Organisational Quality Assurance”, but the level of competence required generally increases as an Operator moves through the Process. For LPA and re-LPA, the level of competence is reflected in the design, development and effective implementation of the learning programme. For each standard, a determination will be made as to whether the standard has been met. The standards are applicable to all Operators and/or learning programmes going through the same stage of accreditation.

Minimum Requirements

- 5.6 Minimum requirements describe essential features of an Operator or learning programme. The minimum requirements are not meant to be used as checklists. They are included to provide guidance to Operators, on how to meet the accreditation standards, and also to assist Accreditation Panels in making an holistic judgement as to whether the accreditation standards have been met or not. As such, when appropriate, they may also provide an indication of where the setting of conditions and/or restrictions is necessary.

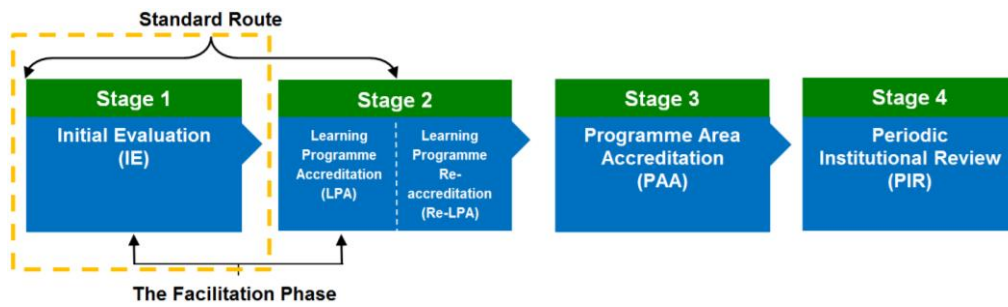
Matters for Consideration

- 5.7 Each standard is supported by a set of matters for consideration which sets out important considerations for determining whether a standard has been met. The matters for consideration provide guidance to the Accreditation Panel, and also to Operators in self-evaluating the performance of their organisations and learning programmes, to be applied according to the particular context of an Operator or learning programme. This allows flexibility to address diverse operating models, such as collaborative provisions in the case of joint programmes or NLPs. Similar to the minimum requirements, the matters for consideration listed under the standards are not intended to form a checklist.

Possible Sources of Evidence

- 5.8 Organisational competence has to be substantiated via information generated in actual operation. Following a self-evaluation, an Operator is expected to present selected evidence (e.g. policies, mechanisms, procedures) from its own operation demonstrating how each standard is met, using a Submission Form or self-evaluation report. This evidence may be contained in more than one document or sources of information. Evidence should be existing information such as policies, processes, and performance outcomes, and is not supposed to be developed for use in the accreditation process.
- 5.9 HKCAAVQ does not prescribe how such a self-evaluation should be conducted. An Operator is free to choose its self-evaluation approach such as commentary, case study, gap and trend analysis or any other suitable approach(es). The information presented in a self-assessment and the supporting evidence will be evaluated holistically against the accreditation standards. The selection of evidence may differ according to the size, context and scope of the Operator. The evidence required at different stages of the Process is detailed in the Evidence Guides for Accreditation available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

Initial Evaluation



The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

- 5.10 The purpose statement, domains of competence and the accreditation standards for Initial Evaluation (IE) are specified below.

Purpose Statement	Domain of Competence
To ascertain whether an Operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) that meet HKQF standards up to a certain HKQF level.	IE-1 Organisational Governance and Management IE-2 Financial Viability and Resources Management IE-3 Organisational Staffing IE-4 Organisational Quality Assurance

Domain: IE-1 Organisational Governance and Management

Accreditation Standard

The governing body of the Operator has clearly defined and appropriate educational/training objectives, and has implemented a management structure to realise those objectives, for the delivery of learning programme(s) that fall within the scope of the HKQF level(s) sought.

Minimum requirements:

- IE-1.1 The Operator is an organisation, or part of one, that can legally operate learning programme(s) in Hong Kong.
- IE-1.2 The people with key responsibilities for its education and training operations are fit-and-proper persons.
- IE-1.3 The Operator has governing and management team members, structures, policies and processes to effectively manage its operation and they are responsible for the quality of its education/training.
- IE-1.4 The Operator has a governance and management team with appropriate skills and expertise to lead an education/organisation and to manage its learning programme(s).
- IE-1.5 The Operator has reliable administration and management systems and procedures in place to ensure security, accuracy and currency of its records.
- IE-1.6 Learners enrolled in a learning programme are provided with accurate and up-to-date information about the programme and the qualifications that the programme may lead to.
- IE-1.7 The governing body must ensure that the name of the Operator adequately represents the nature of its operation (reflecting the learning programme(s) and the corresponding award(s)).

Explanatory Notes for IE-1

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator has established governance and management arrangements incorporating input from key stakeholders, which can ensure that key decision-making processes are effective in continuously assessing and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of its own operation, and protecting the interests of learners.

A collaborative provision refers to the provision of learning programme(s) leading or contributing to the award of credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement involving more than one parties. In the context of non-local programmes, the term 'Operator' refers to the collaborative provision as defined by a formal partnership agreement between the local and non-local Operator.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator assumes full accountability and responsibility for its education and training operations, regardless of whether any third-parties, including its parent or associated organisation(s), are involved.
- The Operator has a clear structure, in terms of functions and responsibility, for decision-making and management of its education and training operations.
- The Operator has developed a strategic plan which has identified educational/training objectives, and is supported by implementation plan(s) with measurable performance indicators.

- The Operator has procedures to handle grievances and/or complaints from staff and learners in a fair and transparent manner.
- The Operator has policies and procedures in place which ensures protection of learners, covering issues including but not limited to conflicts of interest, discrimination, harassment, and responsibility to learners.
- The Operator has policies that set out arrangements for learners enrolled in a learning programme to complete their qualifications in the event of termination or closure of the organisation/programme(s).

Special considerations for Collaborative Programmes

- Each awarding body within a partnership must either have a self-accrediting status or have already obtained a recognised accreditation status for the collaborative programme(s).
- Each partner in the collaboration must enter into a collaborative provision as a matter of organisational policy. A properly authorised body within the governance and management structure of the organisation with the authority to commit the necessary resources must have taken the decision to enter into a contract.
- The non-local Operator should be fully authorised to operate in the country in which it is based, and the terms of its accreditation should permit (or not prohibit) its participation in collaborative provision with a partner outside its own country as well as to award qualifications.
- There should be a written and legally binding agreement setting out the rights and obligations of the partners. The agreement must cover the responsibilities of each Operator and the specific matters relating to each learning programme offered through the collaboration.
- There should be a clear, written statement of responsibilities for making policy and operational decisions concerning the learning programmes covered by the collaboration. The awarding body should assume overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the collaborative programme.
- The partnership must have effective arrangements for information to be shared between the partners.

Domain: IE-2 Financial Viability and Resources Management

Accreditation Standard

The Operator must have adequate financial and physical resources to achieve its educational/training objectives, with well-defined systems and processes to manage its finances to support the quality and effectiveness of its operation.

Minimum requirements:

- IE-2.1 The Operator plans and manages its finances to sustain the operation of its learning programme(s).
- IE-2.2 The Operator has a financial planning and budgeting process which is based on realistic assumptions with regard to the projected demands, costs of operation, and foreseeable changes in the environment.
- IE-2.3 The Operator has mechanisms in place to appropriately allocate financial and physical resources for its education and/or training operations.
- IE-2.4 The Operator has the facilities and equipment necessary for the delivery of its learning programme(s).
- IE-2.5 The Operator regularly reviews the adequacy, in terms of quality, quantity and utility, of its educational and training resources, and takes necessary follow-up actions.

Explanatory Notes for IE-2

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator has the necessary financial and educational/training resources to support sustainable development of its education and training services. Management of financial and educational/training resources has to take into consideration programme planning, learners' needs and staffing requirements, and the quality of the provision.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator is financially viable.
- There is a financial plan which is reviewed and approved by the governing body of the Operator.
- The Operator has internal financial control measures in place to ensure the availability of appropriate financial assets or properties of the Operator for the operation of its learning programme(s).
- The Operator takes appropriate actions to prevent and detect fraud and misappropriation of funds. Such actions should be complementary to the level of external scrutiny, such as external audit that the Operator is subject to.
- The Operator performs assessment of financial risks regularly and has appropriate risk mitigation in place.
- The Operator is able to provide the necessary facilities and equipment which are appropriate to the nature of the planned learning programme(s) and the planned intake of learners.
- The facilities and equipment are maintained to ensure accessibility, safety, security, and a healthy learning environment.
- The Operator has sufficient cash flow and/or reserves to support the operation of its learning programme(s), and when necessary, meet financial emergencies and unforeseen occurrences.

Domain: IE-3 Organisational Staffing

Accreditation Standard

The Operator must be able to engage staff who are competent to manage its operations, to lead programme planning and development, and to support the delivery of learning programme(s) up to the claimed HKQF level(s).

Minimum requirements:

- IE-3.1 The Operator has a clear staffing structure with well-defined functions, responsibilities, and appointment criteria for different positions in the structure.
- IE-3.2 The Operator has a realistic staffing plan that facilitates effective programme development, management and delivery.
- IE-3.3 The Operator has set up formal and transparent human resources policies and procedures for recruitment, induction, performance review and staff development, which align with its educational/training objectives.
- IE-3.4 The Operator maintains an adequate number of full-time staff to ensure the stability of programme management, development and delivery.

Explanatory Notes for IE-3

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator has set up a staffing structure and system that can ensure the availability of suitable staff for programme management and delivery on an on-going basis, and to ensure that the Operator has appropriate staff recruitment and development processes which align staff duties with their specialisations, teaching and industry experience, formal qualifications and professional/scholarly activities.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator has determined a maximum learner-staff ratio for each of the learning and teaching activities typically adopted into its learning programme(s) to ensure adequate interaction between learners and staff.
- The Operator systematically monitors the teaching and non-teaching workload of staff to ensure teaching effectiveness and healthy professional development.
- Staff tasked with teaching functions generally have a qualification one level higher than the learning programme(s) they teach, or a terminal qualification, in a relevant area of study/training.
- The Operator has policies and provides resources to encourage staff development and undertaking of professional/scholarly activities such as research, publication and consultancy in their specialisations, or to enrich industry expertise or knowledge about the HKQF.
- The Operator has set out specific requirements for project or workplace supervisors.
- The Operator provides orientation and training to teaching and support staff.
- There are transparent and fair procedures to process complaints or grievances from staff.

Special considerations for Collaborative Programmes

- There should be appropriate and sufficient opportunities for sharing of academic ethos and operations, including induction and on-going support.
- There should be effective policies and processes to ensure that the collaborative programme addresses the local context, including meeting the HKQF standards, and learner and community needs.

Domain: IE-4 Organisational Quality Assurance

Accreditation Standard

The Operator must have an internal quality assurance system that can support effective management and monitoring of the quality of its learning programme(s) in delivering learning outcomes that align with the GLDs of the HKQF, to meet its educational/training objectives.

Minimum requirements:

- IE-4.1 The Operator has a robust mechanism for programme approval, development, periodic review and monitoring of its learning programme(s) to ensure that the programme objectives and HKQF standard(s) are met.
- IE-4.2 The Operator is ultimately responsible for the quality of its learning programme(s) and award(s), regardless of whether any third-party is involved in the delivery.
- IE-4.3 The Operator has standards of quality and performance requirements at organisational and programme levels to support evaluation of achievement of educational/training objectives.
- IE-4.4 The Operator systematically collects evidence of attainment of learning outcomes to support evaluation and enhancement of the effectiveness of its learning programme(s).
- IE-4.5 The Operator has mechanisms in place to regularly review the effectiveness of its quality assurance system and to initiate the necessary follow-up actions.

Explanatory Notes for IE-4

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator maintains an internal quality assurance system which can continuously monitor the effectiveness of its learning programme(s) by using multiple sources of evidence to assess the achievement of learning, and takes necessary follow-up actions. It is also important for the Operator to conduct regular reviews and demonstrate continuous improvement in its quality assurance system to meet its educational/training objectives.

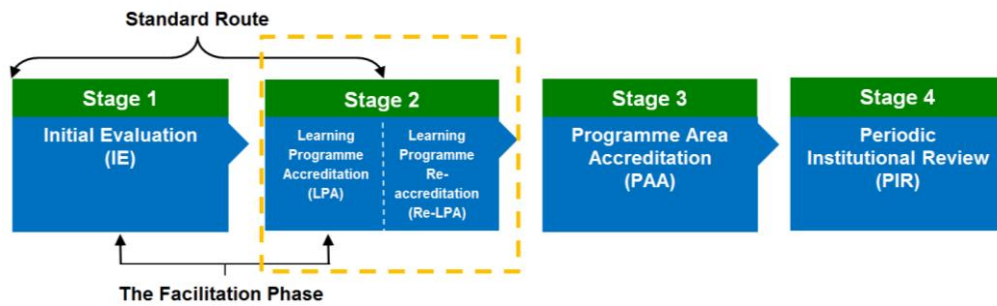
Matters for consideration

- The Operator seeks external input in its quality assurance system. This may include input such as external benchmarking, external examiners and/or advisors.
- The quality assurance system incorporates adequate checks and balances to ensure objectivity between development, delivery and review of learning programme(s).
- The quality assurance system supports systematic collection of feedback from stakeholders such as learners, staff and employers to identify issues requiring follow-up actions.
- The quality assurance system has been effectively implemented for different locations and/or modes of delivery, if any.
- Training is provided to relevant staff to ensure that the quality assurance system is fully understood and implemented effectively at all times.

Special considerations for Collaborative Programmes

- There must be effective integration between the quality assurance systems of the partners, with a clear delineation of the responsibilities of each, particularly with respect to programme development and management, and the authority to make changes to learning programmes.

Learning Programme Accreditation/Re-accreditation



The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

- 5.11 The purpose statement, domains of competence and the accreditation standards for Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)/Re-accreditation (re-LPA) are specified below.

Purpose Statement	Domain of Competence
<p>The purpose is twofold:</p> <p>To ascertain whether a learning programme (proposed or accredited) meets an HKQF standard to achieve the claimed objectives.</p> <p>To ascertain whether the Operator of a learning programme is competent to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of its programme operation to achieve the claimed programme objectives.</p>	<p>LPA-1 Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes</p> <p>LPA-2 Learner Admission and Selection</p> <p>LPA-3 Programme Structure and Content</p> <p>LPA-4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment</p> <p>LPA-5 Programme Leadership and Staffing</p> <p>LPA-6 Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services</p> <p>LPA-7 Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance</p>

Domain: LPA-1 Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

LPA-1.1 The Operator has identified the needs for the learning programme, which is articulated in the programme objectives.

LPA-1.2 The programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) are consistent with the GLDs at the claimed HKQF level(s) and align with the programme objectives for all exit qualifications from that programme.

LPA-1.3 The PILOs are specific, measurable, achievable and relevant.

LPA-1.4 The programme objectives and PILOs are clearly presented for consistent interpretation, implementation and communication to learners and staff.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-1

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the positioning of a learning programme has taken into consideration the needs of the sector, and competences required of its graduates as reflected in the PILOs, which are commensurate with the programme objectives and the relevant HKQF level requirements as stipulated in the GLDs. Each exit point defined for the learning programme represents a standalone study path in its own right.

Matters for consideration

- The PILOs, programme objectives and the educational/training objectives of the Operator are aligned.
- The programme objectives and PILOs are supported by a well-developed programme rationale.
- The programme aims to enhance employability and/or competitiveness of learners.
- The PILOs have been systematically mapped to the GLDs, and internally moderated for consistency.
- The development of programme objectives and PILOs has incorporated input from relevant staff, stakeholders and external experts.

Special considerations relating to government policies

- For Associate Degree and Higher Diploma programmes, the programme objectives, learning outcomes and exit qualifications comply with the latest version of the Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes under the New Academic Structure.
- The use of titles for qualifications obtainable from the learning programme complies with the Award Titles Scheme (ATS).

Domain: LPA-2 Learner Admission and Selection

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

LPA-2.1 The Operator ensures the alignment between the minimum admission requirements and the positioning of the learning programme.

LPA-2.2 The minimum admission requirements are clearly documented for consistent implementation and effective communication with learners and staff.

LPA-2.3 The Operator has formal and valid admission procedures for assessing whether an applicant meets the minimum admission requirements prior to enrolment.

LPA-2.4 The Operator has admission policies which govern the consideration of exemption, non-standard entry, advanced standing, credit accumulation and transfer, which are consistently implemented and effectively communicated to staff and prospective learners.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-2

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator understands the characteristics and diversity of the target learners in order to develop an adequate learning process and to identify the necessary resources for their attainment of the PILOS and achievement of the programme objectives.

Matters for consideration

- There are mechanisms to provide accurate admission information to prospective learners.
- There are reliable procedures to verify the integrity and creditability of the credentials provided by applicants to inform admission decision-making.
- Admission data and decisions are fully and accurately retained and are accessible for review.
- Informed by data/information, the Operator should regularly check the appropriateness of admission standards and integrity of the admission process in order to make sure that the learners selected are able to complete the programme in normal circumstances.
- Training and support is provided to the personnel responsible for carrying out admission functions.
- There are mechanisms in place to ensure that the admission standards are adhered to and admission procedures are fully implemented at all times, for different locations/modes of delivery.

Special considerations relating to government policies

- The minimum admission requirements are consistent with the requirements stipulated in the latest version of the Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes under the New Academic Structure.

Domain: LPA-3 Programme Structure and Content

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

LPA-3.1 The PILOs and programme structure and content are properly aligned, for ensuring adequate development of the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes.

LPA-3.2 The breadth and depth of the learning programme provides sufficient volume of learning and coverage to allow an average learner to achieve the intended learning outcomes, that align with the programme objectives.

LPA-3.3 The programme structure clearly sets out a logical and coherent sequence of learning and the interdependencies of the content.

LPA-3.4 For programmes with multiple exit awards, each exit award represents a coherent programme in its own right.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-3

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the selection and structure of programme content are driven by PILOs, and are appropriate to facilitate the learners' attainment of the PILOs at the claimed HKQF level and to meet the programme objectives. The structure of the learning programme should be based on sound educational/training principles for constructing a coherent learning experience that develops knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes.

Matters for consideration

- There is a definitive programme document describing the programme structure and content, as well as the rules for progression.
- The design of the learning programme appropriately adopts a logical sequence for effective programme management, delivery and assessment.
- The progression of the learning programme has been clearly built into the logic of programme design.
- There is horizontal and/or vertical integration of programme content, for learning programmes that span multiple years or stages.
- The programme structure provides opportunities for demonstration of integrated learning.

Special considerations relating to government policies

- For Associate Degree and Higher Diploma programmes, the generic and specialised content of the proposed learning programme meet the requirement stipulated in the latest version of the Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes under the New Academic Structure.
- For a learning programme to be labelled as SCS-based, SGC-based or VQP, the conditions stipulated in the Qualifications Guidelines for SCS-based, SGC-based or VQP Courses under HKQF are met.
- The assignment of HKQF credits follows the Implementation Table of Use of Credit promulgated by EDB, and complies with the Concepts and Principles of HKQF Credits under HKQF.

Domain: LPA-4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

LPA-4.1 The chosen model(s) and mode(s) of delivery of the learning programme are appropriate in consideration of the programme objectives and content, and are effective in engaging learners in the learning process.

LPA-4.2 The selection of learning, teaching and assessment activities of the learning programme has considered the characteristics and diversity of learners as allowed by the defined admission standards.

LPA-4.3 The selected learning, teaching and assessment activities are aligned with the programme content and PILOs.

LPA-4.4 Assessments are valid, reliable, fair and effective for assessing learners' attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

LPA-4.5 Assessment tasks are based on criterion-referencing to reflect differentiated attainment.

LPA-4.6 The Operator provides timely feedback to learners in all forms of learning, teaching and assessment activities, and identifies learners-at-risk.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-4

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that learning, teaching and assessment activities together provide the learning experience required to facilitate and assess learners' attainment of the PILOs upon completion of the programme. The selection of learning, teaching and assessment activities should aim at maximising the effectiveness of learning, by adopting proved methodologies of learning, teaching and assessment.

Matters for consideration

- Appropriate learning and teaching activities are adopted in the learning programme, which may include e.g. lecture, tutorial, experiment, problem-solving, simulation, online learning, on-the-job-training, work-based learning and workplace attachment.
- Appropriate assessment activities are included in the learning programme, which may include e.g. assignment, examination, project, practical test and interview.
- The Operator has a process for estimating the notional learning hours for different learning and teaching activities for assignment of credits.
- There is a system for internal and/or external moderation of assessments to ensure consistency of standard and marking.
- The Operator has planned for industry and workplace attachment, including the insurance, supervision and assessment arrangements, where applicable.
- The Operator has policies to ensure the integrity and validity of assessments. This may cover photographing/recording of practical assessments, detection of plagiarism, authentication of the identity of learners, external vetting, moderation and benchmarking.

Domain: LPA-5 Programme Leadership and Staffing

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- LPA-5.1 The Operator has appointed staff (e.g. programme leader(s)) with adequate experience in programme management and development, responsible for leading and overseeing the effectiveness of programme operation.
- LPA-5.2 The Operator has sufficient, adequate and competent teaching, training and support staff for conducting the learning, teaching and assessment activities designed for the learning programme, to support the projected number of learners.
- LPA-5.3 The Operator has a staff development plan aligning with the on-going development of the learning programme.
- LPA-5.4 There are processes in place for the programme team to work collaboratively and effectively to achieve the programme objectives.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-5

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that, regardless of the mode of engagement (full-time/part-time, paid/unpaid, internal/external), those engaged in the operation of the learning programme should be qualified and understand the philosophy and design of the learning programme in order to perform effectively on an on-going basis. A stable programme leadership is essential for continuity and oversight of the effectiveness of programme operation to achieve the programme objectives. To ensure that the workload is reasonable, the calculation of workload includes all teaching and non-teaching duties assigned by the Operator.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator has defined programme-specific staff appointment criteria relevant for the learning programme.
- The profile of appointed staff is commensurate with the requirements of the learning programme.
- Staff development activities clearly correspond to professional development, building up of industry experience, as well as enhancement of knowledge or skills about learning, teaching and assessment, which are relevant to the learning programme.
- Staff are active in research, publication, consultancy and/or other professional/scholarly activities.
- There are effective communications within the programme team to ensure consistent delivery of the learning programme and alignment of expectations.
- The Operator maintains a reasonable workload for staff members engaged in the learning programme.

Domain: LPA-6 Learning, Teaching and Enabling Resources/Services

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- LPA-6.1 The Operator has the necessary financial resources to support the operation of the learning programme, in consideration of other educational/training services being provided by the Operator.
- LPA-6.2 Learners have adequate access to the necessary learning, teaching and enabling resources/services, also taking into consideration any other educational/training services being provided by the Operator.
- LPA-6.3 The provision of learning, teaching and enabling resources/services aligns with the learning, teaching and assessment activities.
- LPA-6.4 The learning, teaching and enabling resources are up-to-date and their utilisation is monitored to ensure that they are adequate for the operation of the learning programme on an on-going basis.
- LPA-6.5 The Operator provides learners with clear, accurate information and dependable access to support services that facilitate their successful completion of the programme.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-6

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator has appropriate and sufficient learning, teaching and enabling resources/services for the operation of the learning programme, and is backed by necessary financial resources. Learning, teaching and enabling resources may include lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, libraries, laboratories, studios, supplementary aids, software and online databases. Examples of learner support services include counselling, career/life planning and learning diagnosis.

Matters for consideration

- The learners will have access to suitable and safe facilities and adequate equipment necessary for their learning activities. Arrangements have been made to ensure these resources are accessible at the time of delivering the relevant parts of the learning programme.
- The Operator has supplementary aids and services available to learners with special needs.
- The library and online materials are up-to-date and relevant to the content of the learning programme.
- Feedback on the quality of learning, teaching and enabling resources/services is regularly collected from learners and staff for analysis and enhancement purposes.
- The learners have access to adequate computing and network facilities for learning, conducting research, and communicating with peers and staff.
- Learners and staff are provided with adequate training and information to ensure that they are aware of and know how to use the learning, teaching and enabling resources.
- Steps have been taken to ensure that the learners and staff have the right of use to the materials such as software, photographs and videos required for teaching/learning purpose.
- The support provided to learners is adequate to the delivery mode adopted.
- There is policy to ensure availability of staff for consultation and advice to learners.
- The Operator provides appropriate learner support services, which may include learning

diagnostics, personal counselling and career/life planning for example.

- The Operator has a resource development plan that supports the on-going development of the learning programme.

Domain: LPA-7 Programme Approval, Review and Quality Assurance

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

LPA-7.1 The development or review of the learning programme has strictly followed the approved policies and procedures of the Operator.

LPA-7.2 The overall design of the learning programme has been validated to ensure alignment with the claimed HKQF level(s), PILOs and the learning needs of the target learners, and is supported by adequate staff and other resources.

LPA-7.3 The Operator has incorporated external and internal input for programme development, management and monitoring to ensure continuous improvement of the quality of the learning programme throughout the whole learning process.

LPA-7.4 The Operator evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of its quality assurance policies and procedures for programme approval, development and review, and takes necessary follow-up actions for improvement.

LPA-7.5 Feedback and evidence for programme development, management and review are regularly collected, analysed and interpreted to assess the effectiveness of programme implementation and to identify continuous improvement actions, with proper records and documentation.

Explanatory Notes for LPA-7

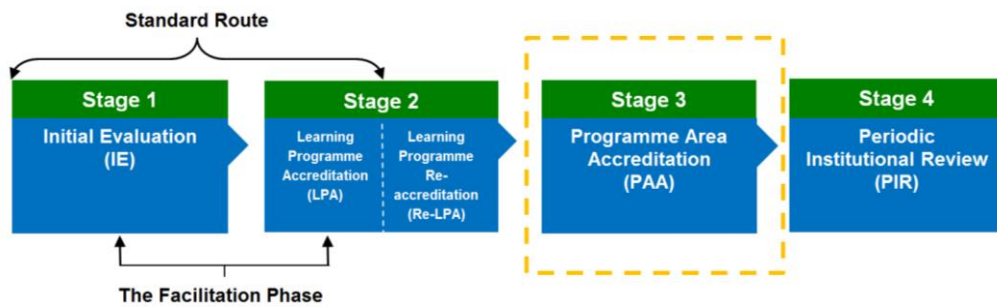
Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator maintains and implements a robust internal quality assurance system which continuously monitors the effectiveness of its learning programmes by using multiple sources of evidence to assess the achievement of learning outcomes, and takes necessary follow-up actions. It is also important for the Operator to regularly review the robustness of its internal quality assurance system for improvement.

Matters for consideration

- Regular quality assurance activities, both internal and external, of the learning programme have been properly planned with allocated resources.
- Retention, progression and completion rates are regularly monitored and follow-up actions are identified and implemented if necessary.
- Admission and assessment data are analysed for possible correlation and patterns for review of admission standards.
- Surveys are conducted of staff, learners and employers to collect feedback on programme delivery and outcomes.
- Learners, staff, employers, alumni, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders are regularly involved in the evaluation and alignment of programme objectives and learning outcomes.
- Issues identified by internal and external quality assurance activities are acted upon appropriately.

Programme Area Accreditation



The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

- 5.12 The purpose statement, domains of competence and the accreditation standards for Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) are specified below.

Purpose Statement	Domain of Competence
<p>To ascertain whether an Operator is competent to quality assure its learning programme(s) within a programme area up to a certain HKQF level, as demonstrated from the track record of its operation of accredited learning programmes in a particular discipline or industry area, and its capacity to enhance its organisational effectiveness to achieve the educational/training objectives.</p>	<p>Institutional Domain: PAA-1 Organisational Governance and Management PAA-2 Strategic Planning and Development PAA-3 Financial Management and Viability PAA-4 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement</p> <p>Programme Area Domain: PAA-5 Programme Area Development and Management PAA-6 Learning, Teaching and Assessment PAA-7 Staffing and Staff Development PAA-8 Programme Area Resources and Services</p>

Domain: PAA-1 Organisational Governance and Management

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-1.1 The vision and mission are appropriate for the Operator's provision of learning programmes, with educational/training objectives demonstrably achieved.
- PAA-1.2 The Operator plans strategically, realistically and effectively and drives the organisation to achieve its objectives, by defining relevant targets and performance measures.
- PAA-1.3 The organisational structure, including roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes, of the Operator shows a high degree of integrity, responsibility and accountability for meeting the educational/training objectives.
- PAA-1.4 The reporting mechanisms and decision-making procedures are effective for governance, management and quality assurance functions.
- PAA-1.5 The governing body regularly engages in self-review and development to enhance its effectiveness and quality of decisions.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-1

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator has governance which can provide overall direction for the organisation with clearly defined lines of accountability and rules of decision-making and systematic consideration of input from key stakeholders, and to ensure that the management can implement the educational/training objectives and is responsible for the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of operation.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator has set up clear procedures to avoid real or perceived conflict of interest, and maintain a clear separation between governance and management functions to ensure checks and balances.
- The Operator has set up clear appointment criteria and procedures to ensure that those appointed to perform governance and key management functions collectively possess the necessary knowledge, skills and experience covering the range of duties to be performed.
- There are processes of training, induction and continuing professional development for key personnel who perform governance and management functions, so that the appointed personnel are fully informed of their duties and responsibilities.
- There is an implemented process ensuring effective succession planning for key positions.
- There is a clear scheme of delegation of authority and line of reporting which is efficient and effective.
- There are clear communication protocols within the organisation to ensure clarity about defined targets and compliance with policy.
- The Operator enhances integrity and transparency in its operation by implementing appropriate policies and procedures to process complaints and grievances, and responding to them in a timely and effective manner.

- Steps have been taken to fulfil legal and social responsibilities and obligations in the prevailing context.
- There are formal channels at different levels to actively incorporate external input into the governance and management decision-making process.
- There is an information management system that can provide reliable data to inform decision-making.
- Independent external review is initiated to provide reflection on governance and management effectiveness.

Domain: PAA-2 Strategic Planning and Development

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-2.1 The Operator has an effective strategic planning process which clearly identifies the actions, priorities and resource allocation for achieving defined objectives while taking into consideration environmental developments, its strengths and weaknesses, and feedback from stakeholders.
- PAA-2.2 The Operator periodically engages with its stakeholders as well as other relevant parties to assess its strategic positioning and alignment of purposes, objectives and actions, in the process of developing its strategic plan.
- PAA-2.3 The periodic planning process responds to the outcomes of implementation and the operational environment in a timely manner.
- PAA-2.4 In relation to its educational and training provisions, the Operator uses a risk management system with potential risks clearly identified and prioritised, and corresponding mitigation strategies appropriately resourced.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-2

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the Operator's strategic planning provides a road map for proactive development of its educational and training provision, instead of reacting to unexpected changes, catching up with the developments or handling crisis. A strategic plan provides the directions and means of realising the vision and mission of an Operator, and often also includes the associated performance indicators. A good strategic planning process helps foster a culture of commitment and transparency.

Matters for consideration

- The strategic plan is based on realistic projections.
- The strategic plan reflects fully informed and well deliberated decisions by the governing body and management.
- The Operator considers relevant current and anticipated changes as part of its strategic planning, review and resource allocation.
- The strategic plan focuses on continuous growth and improvement of learner performance, staff professionalism, and the Operator's competency to achieve its mission.
- Learners, staff and other relevant internal stakeholders are provided with opportunities to participate in and provide input to the planning for improvement purposes.
- External input is regularly taken into consideration in the strategic planning and review.
- There is a risk register, or similar document, which is current and identifies the potential risks, assessment of impacts, action plans, and the owners of the identified risks.

Domain: PAA-3 Financial Management and Viability

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-3.1 The Operator plans realistically to ensure current and future availability of staff, funds, teaching, learning and enabling resources/services for quality operation of its learning programmes.
- PAA-3.2 The financial resources of the Operator have been and are projected to continue to be stable and adequate for future financial needs or challenges, with regard to the establishment of the Operator and nature of operation.
- PAA-3.3 The governing body and management of the Operator exercise prudent control over the financial operations and decision-making.
- PAA-3.4 The financial planning process of the Operator has fully considered the priorities for development and operation of learning programmes.
- PAA-3.5 The Operator has regularly and systematically reviewed the effectiveness of its financial system, with follow-up actions on any issues identified.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-3

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the development of a programme area is supported by sustainable resource planning based on the short-term and long-term financial health and effectiveness of the Operator. It is critical that the Operator is not only able to provide the financial assets or support, but also has the competence to plan and manage, and its financial means are in alignment with the development of the programme area.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator has unqualified independent financial audits in the past three years, if applicable.
- The Operator has functioned without an operational deficit in the past three years. Otherwise, a detailed explanation of how the situation was coped with and how to prevent similar occurrence in the future should be provided.
- Budgets are developed with realistic projections of revenue and expenditures.
- Financial risks are assessed in a regular manner in consideration of actual outcomes and new developments.
- The Operator practices effective oversight of contractual, collaborative and partner relationships.
- Financial planning and budgeting processes have proved to be effective from the record of operation.

Domain: PAA-4 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Accreditation Standard

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).

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-4.1 Management of quality is embedded within all key planning, operational and review processes.
- PAA-4.2 The Operator has implemented a mechanism for effective monitoring and reviewing of organisational performance against defined education and training objectives periodically.
- PAA-4.3 The Operator has well established practices demonstrating a culture of evidence, self-reflection and improvement, informed by analysis, and interpretation of information.
- PAA-4.4 The Operator has adopted a systematic and rigorous approach for consistent interpretation and application of the GLDs for the design of learning programmes within the scope of the programme area.
- PAA-4.5 The internal quality assurance system includes robust procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review to ensure that learning programmes have appropriate content, rigor and standards of learner performance for the stated HKQF level(s). These procedures focus on validation of learning outcomes and enhancement of learning.
- PAA-4.6 The Operator reviews the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system regularly, with follow-up on any issue identified.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-4

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that there is periodic assessment of attainment of educational/training objectives using reliable data to inform decision-making and formulation of evidence-based follow-up actions. Long-term success of a programme area hinges on the quality, effectiveness and relevancy of operation, which rests upon the contribution that each of the learning programmes and services makes toward achieving the educational/training objectives in a coordinated manner.

Matters for consideration

- The Operator has established a track record from the operation of cognate programmes in the proposed programme area that, as a matter of quality assurance, it reviews organisational effectiveness regularly and is able to respond with well deliberated actions and resources. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of governance and management functions, financial and resource planning, programme planning and management, staff planning, and the review process itself.
- The actions implemented for enhancement of effectiveness, both programme and organisational, have proved to be effective.
- There are checks and balances in the quality assurance system to avoid conflicts of roles.
- The Operator collects feedback from the key stakeholders to inform the review process.
- The quality assurance processes are effective for approval and periodic review of

learning programmes, and validation of learning outcomes.

- The quality assurance system is supported by reliable collection, analyses and interpretation of data. The data may include comparative data from external sources, as well as environmental data.

Domain: PAA-5 Programme Area Development and Management

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-5.1 The proposed programme area is underpinned by a framework of consistent body of knowledge, principles and practices, which is appropriate for the relevant disciplines, industries, or professions.
- PAA-5.2 The Operator has established sustainable leadership arrangements for the proposed programme area which ensure that appropriate expertise and experience are in place to provide directions, and to oversee the effective implementation and development of that programme area.
- PAA-5.3 The approved development plan of the proposed programme area reflects the strategic positioning of the Operator, the synergy within and across the proposed programme area, resource implications, and the necessary means of implementation.
- PAA-5.4 The Operator has established criteria and procedures for identifying the needs for, or termination of, a learning programme within the proposed programme area, and the requirements for successful implementation.
- PAA-5.5 The experience from the operation of existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes is relevant and can substantiate the proposed programme area.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-5

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the track record of operating HKQF-recognised learning programmes is relevant and transferrable to the proposed programme area. In particular, it is important to recognise that the leadership required to manage and develop a programme area is different from the leadership required to operate learning programmes. The proposed programme area must be self-consistent and contribute to the development of competencies that meet the needs of the society.

Matters for consideration

- The definition of the scope of the proposed programme area should have been drawn up with reference to the Classification of Areas of Study and Training in the Qualifications Register (QR).
- The proposed programme area has strong distinctive features that align with the vision and mission of the Operator, and they are derived from the features of the existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes.
- The proposed programme area has effective leadership to achieve a shared purpose, which is recognised by the staff.
- The existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes within the proposed programme area consistently meet the planned enrolment targets.
- Programme planning for the existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes has proved to be effective.

Domain: PAA-6 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-6.1 The Operator collects and analyses admission and other necessary data to track learners' achievement and satisfaction for an understanding of learner characteristics and the preferred mode of learning.
- PAA-6.2 The Operator provides learning experiences that are congruent with learner characteristics and the programmes it offers.
- PAA-6.3 The Operator has developed strategies ensuring that its learning programme(s) provide effective learning experience to deliver the intended learning outcomes, as well as driving the alignment of learning, teaching and assessment activities.
- PAA-6.4 There is regular review of the effectiveness of the learning, teaching and assessment strategies using findings from actual implementation.
- PAA-6.5 All learners have access to accurate and complete information about the fees, admission and completion requirements, and the award(s) to be granted upon successful completion of a learning programme.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-6

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the learning, teaching and assessment activities are appropriate for its content and levels of study/training, and contribute to learners' attainment of the intended learning outcomes. Within a programme area, there are teaching and learning activities to encourage integration of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to the extent congruent to the programme area.

Matters for consideration

- The learning, teaching and assessment strategies have proved to be effective in the operation of the existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes.
- The learning, teaching and assessment policies driving the development of learning, teaching and assessment strategies are effective in ensuring the alignment between learning, teaching and assessment activities, to achieve the programme objectives of the existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes.
- The learning, teaching and assessment policies successfully created a high quality learning and teaching environment, physical or virtual, that fosters inquisitive learning and demonstration of competencies, for different learning styles and capabilities.
- There are effective learning, teaching and assessment activities for integration and demonstration of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills within the proposed programme area.

Domain: PAA-7 Staffing and Staff Development

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-7.1 The Operator has in place a staffing plan which is effective in ensuring that there are sufficient management, teaching and administrative staff with appropriate qualifications and experience, and is congruent with the proposed programme area and its future developments.
- PAA-7.2 The Operator has developed procedures which are effective in ensuring that staff recruitment/engagement, development, workload, remuneration and appraisal are aligned with the learning, teaching and assessment strategies within the proposed programme area.
- PAA-7.3 The Operator has developed processes to systematically assess and enhance teaching effectiveness within the proposed programme area.
- PAA-7.4 The Operator has a staff development plan designed to enhance pedagogical knowledge and skills for conducting learning and teaching activities and assessment of learning outcomes.
- PAA-7.5 The Operator has effective policies that encourage continuous professional development.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-7

Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that, regardless of the mode of engagement (full-time/part-time, paid/unpaid, internal/external), qualified personnel are engaged in conducting the teaching, learning and assessment activities, as well as contributing to the healthy development of the programme area. It is important that staff are conversant with the latest developments within their own areas of expertise/profession, as well as committed to providing high quality educational/training services.

Matters for consideration

- Staff planning has proved to be effective in the operation of the existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes.
- The established staff profile is demonstrably commensurate with the proposed programme area.
- There are effective policies and procedures for staff to update themselves in quality assurance, pedagogical advancement and adopting technologies for learning and teaching, and to engage in scholarly and/or professional activities.
- Staff understand and are committed to the vision and mission of the organisation, and the positioning of the programme area within the context of achieving the vision and mission.
- Teaching effectiveness is reliably assessed to inform staff appraisal and development.

Domain: PAA-8 Programme Area Resources and Services

Accreditation Standard

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.

Minimum requirements:

- PAA-8.1 The policies and procedures are effective for the identification, acquisition and maintenance of the necessary resources, which are linked to financial planning.
- PAA-8.2 The Operator regularly monitors and assesses the utilisation and adequacy of resources to inform projective planning, including offering of new learning programmes.
- PAA-8.3 Learners and staff receive the necessary support to acquire the skills to make effective use of the available resources.
- PAA-8.4 The Operator has effective resource planning processes that involve key stakeholders.

Explanatory Notes for PAA-8

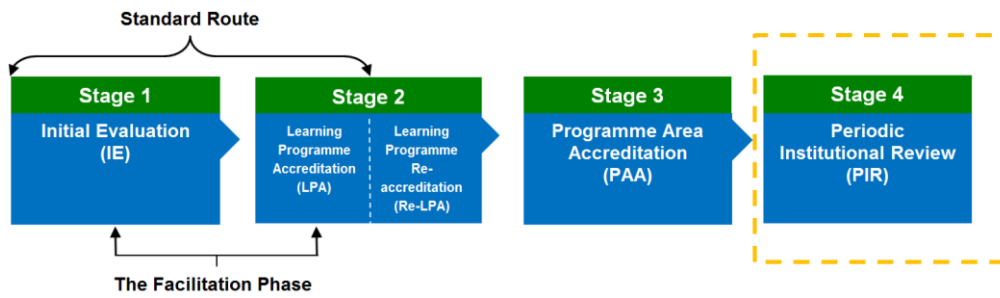
Why this accreditation standard is important

This standard is to ensure that the planning and allocation of learning, teaching and enabling resources/services are based on sound financial planning aligned with programme area planning, and with a clear understanding of the learners' needs. Comparable resources must be available regardless of the location/mode of delivery to achieve the same learning outcomes. Utilisation of such resources is periodically reviewed to ensure adequacy and currency, and to provide reliable information for projective planning.

Matters for consideration

- Resource planning has proved to be effective in the operation of the existing HKQF-recognised learning programmes.
- There is access to library, information and technology resources and these resources are sufficient in quantity and quality to support the learning and teaching activities planned for the proposed programme area, regardless of the location/mode of delivery.
- The physical and virtual learning environment is reliable, supporting and safe for its learners, and is conducive for creating an effective learning atmosphere.
- There are systems to support efficient planning, monitoring and evaluation of resources.
- Resource planning has taken into consideration the social, environmental and cultural impacts.

Periodic Institutional Review



The Four-stage Quality Assurance Process

- 5.13 The purpose statement, domains of competence and the accreditation standards for Periodic Institutional Review (PIR) are specified below.

Purpose Statement	Domain of Competence
To ascertain whether an Operator continues to be effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation by formulating and implementing actions based on evidence.	PIR-1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning PIR-2 Organisational Leadership and Staffing PIR-3 Programme Area Development and Management PIR-4 Management of Resources and Services PIR-5 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Domain: PIR-1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning

Accreditation Standard

The Operator must demonstrate that it is meeting its educational/training objectives, aligned with its vision and mission, and informed by comprehensive review of organisational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives.

Minimum requirements:

PIR-1.1 The Operator actively drives the achievement of its vision and mission through periodic programme review and evaluation of programme objectives and achievement of learning outcomes.

PIR-1.2 The Operator is able to substantiate its attainment of educational/training objectives within the approved programme area(s), using information such as organisational outcomes and/or performance indicators.

PIR-1.3 The internal quality assurance system of the Operator is effective in terms of driving operational and educational/training enhancement within the approved programme area(s).

PIR-1.4 The Operator has used evidence-based practices to improve educational/training offerings and services.

PIR-1.5 The Operator has a high level of oversight over its educational/training offerings and administrative operations through processes that monitor and improve organisational effectiveness.

Explanatory Notes for PIR-1

Why this accreditation standard is important

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

Matters for consideration

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

Domain: PIR-2 Organisational Leadership and Staffing

Accreditation Standard

The Operator must demonstrate that it continues to have a sufficient number of qualified and competent programme leaders, teaching and support staff, as a result of effective staff planning and development, and that these arrangements align with the development of the programme area(s).

Minimum requirements:

- PIR-2.1 The programme management team is effective in planning, development and review of the learning programme(s) they are responsible for, by providing directions and making key decisions relating to programme offering/termination, staff management, resource allocation and quality assurance.
- PIR-2.2 The effectiveness of staff planning is supported by analysis of the established staff profile and the needs of the internal and external environment.
- PIR-2.3 The current policy and practices of the Operator in staff appraisal and development at various levels are effective and efficient.
- PIR-2.4 The appointment and deployment of teaching and support staff of the Operator are effective in ensuring that they have appropriate academic, vocational or professional qualifications. They should also possess relevant and up-to-date experience/knowledge and skills in the development, management, delivery and assessment of outcome-based learning programmes and in the review and quality assurance of such programmes.
- PIR-2.5 The Operator has effective measures to ensure that staff workload is maintained at a reasonable level to ensure staff development and/or undertaking of professional/scholarly activities.

Explanatory Notes for PIR-2

Why this accreditation standard is important

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

Matters for consideration

- The staff profile has an appropriate mix of full-time/part-time, teaching/non-teaching, academic/practitioners, and staff at different stages of their career development.
- Staff members are active in research, publication, consultancy, and/or other professional/scholarly activities.
- The Operator identifies a relevant set of measures of teaching effectiveness and applies them effectively to inform staff appraisal and development.
- Staff engagement is high in programme planning, development and review processes.
- There are mechanisms, such as co-teaching, to facilitate exchange of experience and skills among staff members.

Domain: PIR-3 Programme Area Development and Management

Accreditation Standard

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

Minimum requirements:

- PIR-3.1 The design of the learning programmes is effective in terms of level, coherence, balance and progression.
- PIR-3.2 The learning, teaching and assessment activities remain effective in relation to the intended learning outcomes within the programme area(s).
- PIR-3.3 The learning programmes remain current and valid in the light of developments in the related field of disciplines, industries or professions.
- PIR-3.4 The Operator has appropriately benchmarked the outcome standards and quality with the claimed HKQF level(s) with organisations or learning programmes in a similar context.

Explanatory Notes for PIR-3

Why this accreditation standard is important

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

Matters for consideration

- Depending on the purpose of the approach adopted for benchmarking, an appropriate benchmarking methodology is adopted accordingly. Results of benchmarking are considered at the right level(s) for improvement actions.
- External quality assurance, accreditation or professional recognition confirms the quality of learning programmes, including attainment of learning outcomes.
- Admission profile and ratio of applicants to planned places show that the learning programmes in the approved programme area(s) have high demand.
- Programme planning within the approved programme area(s) promptly responds to new opportunities and challenges, supported by adequate financial and resource planning.
- Strong ties and/or collaborations have been established between the approved programme area(s) and the relevant disciplines, industries or professions.
- Learners, alumni and staff achievements from the approved programme area(s) receive recognition from the relevant disciplines, industries or professions.

Domain: PIR-4 Management of Resources and Services

Accreditation Standard

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

Minimum requirements:

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

Explanatory Notes for PIR-4

Why this accreditation standard is important

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

Matters for consideration

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

Domain: PIR-5 Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Accreditation Standard

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

Minimum requirements:

- PIR-5.1 The policies on admission, assessment, measurement of quality of learning outcomes, programme approval, staff quality, review and feedback mechanisms, resources and support facilities are effective and relevant to the approved programme area(s).
- PIR-5.2 New policies and procedures in regard to the approved programme area(s) are approved through appropriate processes, and implemented through involvement of relevant personnel as appropriate.
- PIR-5.3 The quality assurance system is effective in benchmarking and ensuring that the existing and new learning programmes developed within the approved programme area(s) meet the expected HKQF standards.
- PIR-5.4 The feedback from stakeholders has resulted in improvement actions for the approved programme area(s) and organisational effectiveness.
- PIR-5.5 The staff members responsible for managing, delivering and assessing the learning programmes takes effective actions to address weaknesses, build on strengths, and generally develop a culture of continuous improvement and quality enhancement.

Explanatory Notes for PIR-5

Why this accreditation standard is important

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

Matters for consideration

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

6. Outcomes of Accreditation

- 6.1 In the capacity of the Accreditation Authority provided for under the AAVQO (Cap. 592) and the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150), HKCAAVQ makes an accreditation determination in the accreditation report after considering the Accreditation Panel's recommendation(s) (taking into account the Terms of Reference of the accreditation exercise as specified in the signed Service Agreement) and the available evidence. The possible determinations by HKCAAVQ are:
- (a) Approval
 - (b) Approval with condition(s) and/or restriction(s)
 - (c) Non-approval
- 6.2 For the approval determination, the Operator and/or the learning programme(s) have to meet all the accreditation standards holistically and in part.
- 6.3 A decision to impose Conditions, either as pre-conditions or requirements, forms part of HKCAAVQ's accreditation determination. Conditions are included in the accreditation determination when HKCAAVQ, based on the Panel's recommendation, considers that the Operator is to fill certain critical gaps in order to fully and holistically meet the accreditation standards through the fulfilment of specified Condition(s). Accordingly, if the accreditation report includes Conditions, the approval determination by HKCAAVQ has effect subject to those Conditions being fulfilled. Operator must provide evidence for fulfilment of Conditions by the specified dates. After considering the evidence HKCAAVQ and/or the accreditation Panel may request further information or seek clarifications, if necessary. Operators are expected to complete the fulfilment of the Conditions normally within 3 months from the first submission.
- 6.4 Conditions must be fulfilled in order for the programme or Operator to meet the relevant standards. This being the case, if an Operator fails to fulfil the Condition(s), the approval determination in the accreditation report does not have effect.
- 6.5 **Pre-conditions** must be fulfilled prior to the start of the validity period imposed on an IE, LPA, re-LPA, PAA and PIR status. The accreditation approval does not take effect if pre-conditions are not fulfilled.
- 6.6 **Requirements** must be fulfilled within the validity period. HKCAAVQ may vary or withdraw an accreditation report if requirements are not fulfilled.
- 6.7 A decision to impose **Restrictions** can also form part of the accreditation determination, to be complied with by an Operator by the specified date before the validity period and/or to be complied with during the validity period. The Operator's ability to comply with a

Restriction is normally dependent on actions taken by Third Parties, such as government departments or professional bodies.

- 6.8 An Operator should ensure that it obtains all approvals and registrations necessary in order for it to operate the learning programme(s) and shall maintain and comply with the terms of all such approvals and registrations for the duration of the validity period. If it is stated in the programme aims/objectives or intended learning outcomes that a programme would lead to a third party approval, e.g. professional recognition (e.g. Nursing, Social Work qualifications) licence to practice (e.g. Health Worker training, Security Guard's training), or approval from government bureaux (e.g. early childhood education programmes), HKCAAVQ will impose a Condition or Restriction to specify that the programme has to secure such third party approval.
- 6.9 Third party approval may be granted after HKCAAVQ accreditation. However, some professional bodies/licencing authorities require programme accreditation and a certain period of programme operation before Operators are eligible to apply.
- 6.10 Accordingly, if HKCAAVQ's accreditation determination includes a Restriction in regard to third party approval that is to be obtained immediately after HKCAAVQ accreditation, then the validity period of the programme does not commence until such third party approval is obtained; and the approval of the programme ceases to be effective if the Restriction does not continue to be complied with. For those programmes where third party approval is only granted after programme commencement, failure to obtain the third party approval may lead to variation or withdrawal of the accreditation report.
- 6.11 Operators should liaise with HKCAAVQ and the relevant professional bodies well ahead of time when planning for HKCAAVQ and the related professional accreditation, so as to ensure appropriate timing for the two processes to the extent possible and to avoid unnecessary delay in the offering of programmes.
- 6.12 Operators should inform HKCAAVQ immediately in cases where a required third party approval is withdrawn by the respective authority or professional body. HKCAAVQ may vary or withdraw the accreditation report in cases of non-compliance with a Restriction.
- 6.13 **Recommendations** have a purpose for continuous improvement and are directly related to the accreditation standards. Recommendations are non-binding in nature but an Operator should explain if/how the recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation or PIR.
- 6.14 **Advice** is an opinion of the Accreditation Panel for the improvement of an Operator and/or learning programme(s). It is for the sharing of good

practice in education and training among peers. It is non-binding and the Operator is not required to report follow-up actions taken, if any, to HKCAAVQ.

- 6.15 A Statement of Accreditation Approval confirming the granting of the accreditation status to an Operator is issued along with the accreditation report when no pre-condition is specified, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all the pre-condition(s). For local degree programmes, the Statement of Accreditation Approval is issued upon approval of the Chief Executive-in-Council, where appropriate.
- 6.16 In the accreditation process, if there are significant inadequacies identified by the Panel against the accreditation standards holistically and in part, which are so fundamental that the Operator is considered not ready for the accreditation status it has applied for or to offer/continue to offer an accredited programme, or where the Panel is of the view that the Operator has not demonstrated in a convincing way the capability to address the essential issues of concern within a reasonable timeframe, the accreditation will be non-approved.

Validity Period

- 6.17 Where approval is granted, a validity period will be specified as part of the accreditation determination in the accreditation report as follows:

Stage	Validity Period (Years)
Initial Evaluation	2
Learning Programme Accreditation/Re-accreditation	N + 1*
Programme Area Accreditation	5
Periodic Institutional Review	5

* The validity period for LPA and re-LPA is linked to programme quality and programme duration. Under normal circumstances, the validity period is N + 1 years, where N is the programme duration (or the duration of the home programme in the case of NLPs) in years.

Appeals

- 6.18 Under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 592), organisations aggrieved by QF-related decisions made by the HKCAAVQ may appeal to the Appeal Board of the Education Bureau. Please refer to Cap. 592A (www.elegislation.gov.hk) for the appeal rules. Details of the appeal procedures are available at www.hkqf.gov.hk.

7. Accreditation Status

Entry of Qualification into the QR

- 7.1 Successfully (re-)accredited programmes can be entered into and stay on the QR for the approved validity period upon the fulfilment of any conditions and/or compliance with any applicable restrictions, and payment of the fee as determined by the QR Authority. In the case of qualifications of NLPs, such qualifications attained by individual learners are recognised as meeting the same standard of comparable qualifications at the approved HKQF level(s) obtained in Hong Kong.
- 7.2 For an Operator with PAA status, the learning programmes under the approved programme area(s) can be entered into and stay on the QR for the approved validity period in accordance with the terms and procedures stipulated by the QR Authority without going through LPA/re-LPA by HKCAAVQ.
- 7.3 Further information on entering qualification(s) of an accredited learning programme into the QR is available on the QR website at www.hkqr.gov.hk.

Other Follow-up Actions during Validity Period

Initial Evaluation

- 7.4 Within the two-year validity period, an Operator must have at least one programme successfully accredited. If an Operator continues to have learning programme(s) accredited through successful LPA/re-LPA, their IE status remains valid. The IE status of an Operator lapses when the validity period of its last accredited programme on the QR expires.
- 7.5 A new Operator without any current accredited programmes on the QR after the end of the initial two-year validity period of their IE status may apply for an extension normally three months before the validity period expires. For an existing Operator fails or plans not to fulfil any Condition of its last accredited programme on QR by the prescribed date, or plans not to seek re-LPA for its last accredited programme, the Operator may apply for an extension of its IE status. The Operator should explain the reason for seeking extension and the plans to offer accredited programme(s) within the extended validity period. An extension of up to two years may be granted. Only one extension of the validity period of IE status will normally be allowed. Notice in writing of the HKCAAVQ's decision will be provided to the Operator.

Learning Programme Re-accreditation

- 7.6 An Operator should submit a Statement of Intent (Sol) for re-LPA at least 10 months before the expiry date of the validity period of its accredited learning programme(s).
- 7.7 If re-LPA is not successfully completed with the approval obtained before the expiry date, including the fulfilment of any pre-conditions and compliance with any restrictions, the accreditation status of the learning programme(s) will lapse and the corresponding qualifications of the learning programme(s) on the QR will be indicated as “expired”.
- 7.8 An Operator that wishes to apply for an extension of validity period for a learning programme, other than by re-accreditation, may only do so on the basis of unforeseen circumstances not within the control of the Operator itself. Details are available in the *Policy on Extension of Learning Programme Validity Period* on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

Programme Area Accreditation

- 7.9 An Operator with PAA status is required to provide an annual return to HKCAAVQ to report the new learning programme(s) offered and the learning programme(s) phased out under the approved programme area(s). Annual returns are vetted by HKCAAVQ.
- 7.10 To maintain the PAA status, an Operator must have successfully completed a PIR that covers the relevant programme area(s) before the expiry of the validity period of the PAA status. An Operator may lose its PAA status if the validity period expires before it can successfully complete a PIR with the approval obtained covering the relevant programme area(s).
- 7.11 If PAA is not successful, an Operator’s accredited learning programme(s) within the proposed programme area will continue to be subject to cycles of re-LPA, before expiry of the validity period for maintaining the accreditation status.

Periodic Institutional Review

- 7.12 If a PIR is successful, the PAA status of the approved programme areas covered by the PIR will remain valid within the validity period.
- 7.13 An Operator who decides not to undertake PIR, but wishes to have its learning programme(s) covered by the formerly granted PAA status recognised under the HKQF must apply for re-LPA at least 10 months prior to the expiry of the PAA status.
- 7.14 An Operator who fails to maintain its PAA status, but wishes to have its learning programme(s) covered by the formerly granted PAA status

recognised under the HKQF must apply for re-LPA. If the re-LPA is not successfully completed with the approval obtained before the expiry of the PAA status, including the fulfilment of any pre-conditions and compliance with any restrictions, the corresponding qualifications of the learning programme(s) on the QR will be indicated as “expired”.

Substantial Change to Accreditation Status

- 7.15 An Operator is required to seek approval from HKCAAVQ for substantial change(s) to the accreditation status in order to maintain the accreditation status.
- 7.16 If an Operator plans to implement substantial change(s) after the completion of a forthcoming re-LPA/PIR, the Operator is advised to consult HKCAAVQ as to whether relevant information of the planned substantial change(s) can be included in the Accreditation Document for the re-LPA/PIR. If the re-LPA/PIR completes successfully with approval that covers any planned substantial change(s), a separate application to seek prior approval for the substantial change(s) is not required.
- 7.17 For an Operator with PAA status, prior approval from HKCAAVQ may not be required for implementing substantial changes to programmes under the approved programme areas of PAA status. The Operator may consult HKCAAVQ before the implementation of the changes, if in doubt.
- 7.18 The purpose of obtaining prior approval or seeking advice from HKCAAVQ for any substantial change is to ensure that the Operator can continue to meet the accreditation standards after implementing the change. The Operator should also observe and ensure compliance with the other relevant standards or guidelines promulgated by the Government, licensing or regulatory authorities and/or professional bodies that may be applicable to their learning programme(s).
- 7.19 Further information on substantial change to accreditation status is available in the Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

Variation of Accreditation Determinations

- 7.20 The provisions of the s.5(2) of AAVQO (Cap. 592) specify that HKCAAVQ may vary or withdraw an accreditation report if it is satisfied that:
- (a) in any particular case, the report has been produced in reliance on any misleading or false statement, representation or information, either oral or in writing;
 - (b) in the case of a report on an Operator, the Operator is no longer competent to achieve the objectives as claimed by the Operator

- whether by reference to the Operator's failure to fulfil any conditions and/or comply with any restrictions specified in an accreditation report or otherwise;
- (c) in the case of a report on a learning programme, the programme no longer meets the standard to achieve the objectives of the programme as claimed by the Operator whether by reference to the Operator's failure to fulfil any conditions and/or comply with any restrictions specified in an accreditation report or otherwise;
 - (d) in the case of a report on a qualification, the skills, knowledge or experience recognised by the qualification no longer meet the particular standard as determined in the report; or
 - (e) 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.

HKCAAVQ shall give notice in writing of the decision to the Operator.

Cessation of Operations and/or Accredited Programmes

- 7.21 An Operator of accredited programmes may decide to cease operations or cease operating accredited programmes for various reasons. The relevant policy and advisory notes are available in the *Policy and Advisory Notes on Cessation of Operations and Teach-out Arrangements for Cessation of Accredited Programmes* on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

8. Feedback

- 8.1 HKCAAVQ seeks feedback on its services. Feedback is usually collected via the following formal means with respective stakeholders, with a view to continuously enhancing HKCAAVQ's services:
- (a) Accreditation Panel's opinion survey after the issuance of accreditation report or outcome letter of each accreditation exercise.
 - (b) Annual survey of Operators using the accreditation services.
 - (c) Meeting with Operators on various occasions, e.g. focus groups and Operators' consultations, liaison committee meetings, or meetings to clarify points made in the accreditation report.
 - (d) Online collection of public comments and suggestions on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/contact-us/comments-and-suggestions.
- 8.2 Findings from the feedback collected and follow-up actions are shared with stakeholders through written reports, during training workshops and in briefings to Operators.

9. Accreditation Fees

- 9.1 HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit, self-financed body. HKCAAVQ's accreditation fee schedule is approved by the Secretary for Education for accreditation exercises undertaken by HKCAAVQ. Each fee in the Process relates to accreditation of an Operator or a programme at a particular HKQF level and at a particular stage in the Process. The exact accreditation fee for a specific exercise is specified in the Service Agreement.
- 9.2 The fee schedule is subject to annual review. The latest fee schedule is available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk.

Roles and Responsibilities of Operators in Accreditation

1. Accreditation is voluntary and initiated at the request of the Operator. The Service Agreement signed by both HKCAAVQ and the Operator provides terms and conditions, including the roles and responsibilities of the parties. Upon signing the Service Agreement, the Operator is expected to cooperate with HKCAAVQ and its Accreditation Panel so as to ensure that accreditation process proceeds as smoothly as possible.
2. Under the evidence-based principle, it is the responsibility of the Operators to provide evidence to demonstrate their compliance with the accreditation standards as well as any applicable statutory requirements in Hong Kong. The Evidence Guide provides guidance in general to Operators for the selection and presentation of evidence to demonstrate that the accreditation standards have been met. Operators should determine the evidence as appropriate to their individual application(s).
3. The Operator is responsible for the full and frank disclosure of all relevant documents as evidence required for assessment by HKCAAVQ and the Accreditation Panel throughout the accreditation process. Limited disclosure will therefore be considered by the Accreditation Panel as insufficient evidence. HKCAAVQ understands that some of the information requested may be sensitive and of a confidential nature and will keep such information confidential. All Accreditation Panel Members will be required to sign a confidentiality statement and all confidential information will be treated as such by the Accreditation Panel.
4. Operators are expected to perform the following responsibilities in the accreditation exercise:
 - (a) To clear the list of Accreditation Panel membership for potential conflict of interest between the proposed Panel member(s) and the Operator.
 - (b) To submit an Accreditation Document of a self-evaluative nature (or a Submission Form, as appropriate, for Operators with vocational and professional programmes) to demonstrate that the Operator/learning programme meets the standards promulgated in this Manual.
 - (c) To attach to the Accreditation Document (or the Submission Form, as appropriate) supporting documents as evidence in respect of its application.

- (d) To provide additional information/documentation at the Accreditation Panel's request, including information requested before and during the site visit.
- (e) To prepare for the site visit, in line with the requirements stipulated in the relevant set of guidance notes as well as on further advice by HKCAAVQ Secretariat. This includes ensuring that all persons that the Accreditation Panel has requested to interview are available for the specified interview sessions during the site visit. To prepare the interviewees for meaningful discussions with the Accreditation Panel, the Operator is to adequately brief them in advance. The Operator may provide input to the planned site visit programme for HKCAAVQ's consideration prior to finalisation. If deemed necessary, the Accreditation Panel may make changes to the visit programme during the site visit.
- (f) To participate in the interview sessions and engage in the discussions with the Accreditation Panel during the site visit.
- (g) To ensure that there are suitable facilities available during the site visit, including availability of a private meeting room with sufficient space for the Accreditation Panel and the interviewees, access to documents requested, and provision of reasonable refreshments in accordance with the administrative guidance notes for site visits.
- (h) To provide feedback on the factual accuracy of the draft accreditation report.
- (i) To comply with all requirements that underpin the Process, the HKQF and the QR.
- (j) To provide feedback during the Annual Operators' Feedback exercise.

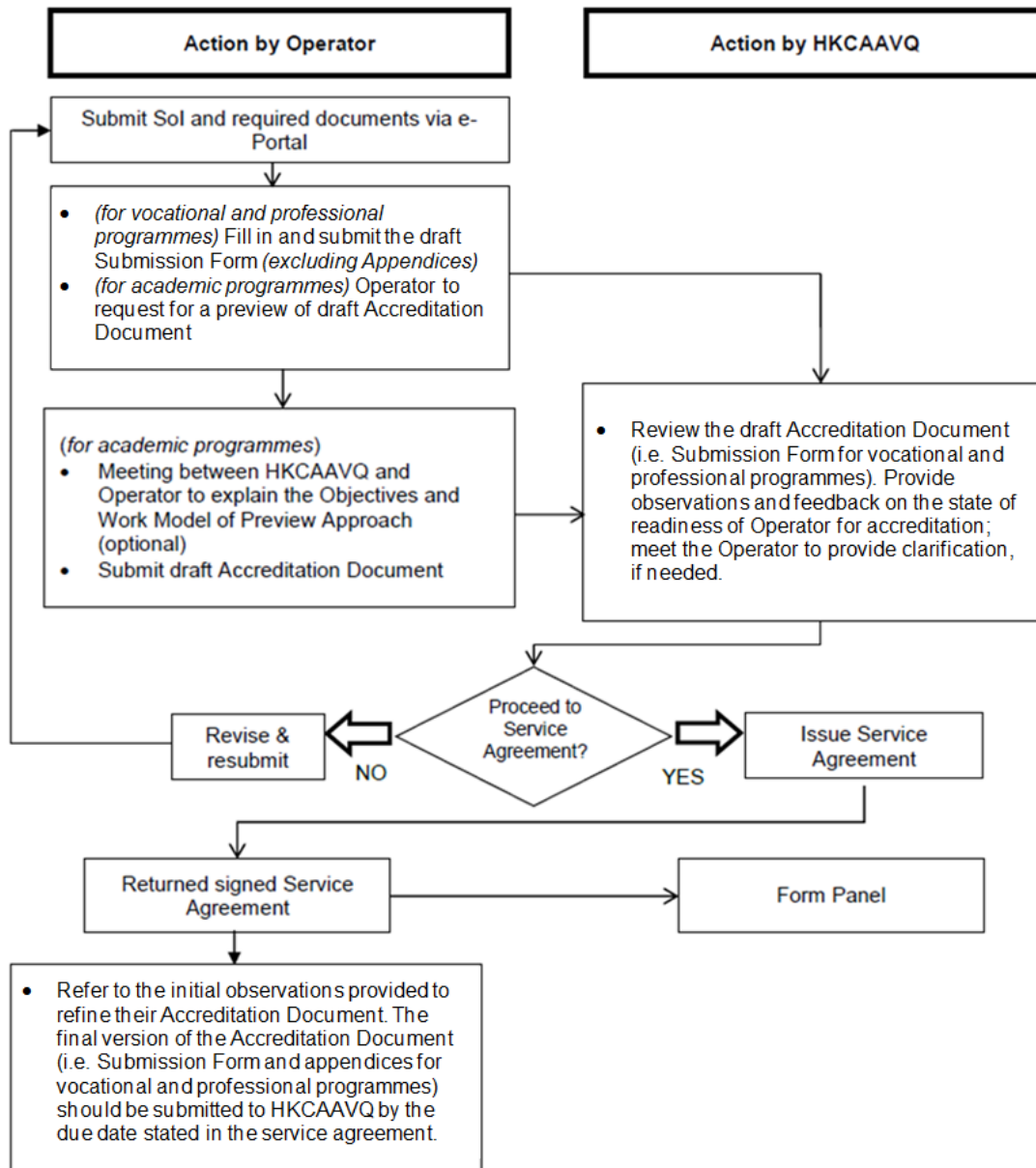
The Facilitation Phase

The purpose of the Facilitation Phase is to enhance Operators' awareness of the accreditation requirements and facilitate their preparation for the accreditation exercise. Both new and accredited Operators can apply for the preview of the Accreditation Document (for academic programmes)/Submission Form as appropriate (for vocational and professional programmes). The Facilitation Phase may also be initiated by HKCAAVQ. Some examples of such Operators are:

- Operators applying for combined IE and LPA for the first time;
- Operators with valid IE status but applying for IE at a HKQF level higher than the approved level; and
- Operators applying for Learning Programme Accreditation for programmes in a new area or at a higher HKQF level.

Initial observations on the completeness and relevance of the submitted draft document will be provided to Operators. No judgement is made on whether the Operators can meet the accreditation standards. The initial observations are independent from any judgement made by the Accreditation Panel.

The following flow chart shows the main steps of the Facilitation Phase:



Roles and Responsibilities of Accreditation Panel Members/Finance and Corporate Governance Expert

Accreditation Panel

1. Under the “peer review” principle, accreditation determination and decisions are made by HKCAAVQ after consideration of recommendations made by peers involved in the exercise as members of an Accreditation Panel.
2. The role of the Accreditation Panel is to assess the quality of Operators and their learning programmes in accordance with the required accreditation standards of the respective stages of the Process; and to collect and evaluate evidence and form a judgement as to whether the Operators or their learning programmes meet the required accreditation standards and stated aims. The Accreditation Panel works according to the principles set out within the relevant Guidelines and guidance notes for the fulfilment of the Terms of Reference specified in the signed Service Agreement for the accreditation exercise.
3. In order to perform their duties effectively and efficiently, Panel Members are required to do the following: attend training and/or a briefing session(s), familiarise themselves with HKCAAVQ accreditation requirements and procedures, thoroughly read the Accreditation Document and supporting documentation supplied by the relevant Operator(s), make initial comments on the Accreditation Document and supporting documentation against the required evidence, accreditation standards and matters for consideration, participate in the site visit; and share views and put forward recommendations to HKCAAVQ as an Accreditation Panel. Accreditation Panel Members are also expected to share their views on the draft accreditation report as well as on the fulfilment of the condition(s) and/or compliance with the applicable restriction(s) by the Operator(s) as and when appropriate.
4. The respective roles of the Accreditation Panel Chair, the Accreditation Panel Members and the Accreditation Panel Secretary are outlined below:
 - 4.1 Accreditation Panel Chair
 - (a) To lead the Accreditation Panel in the accreditation exercise.
 - (b) To advise on the visit programme of the accreditation exercise.
 - (c) To receive the expert opinion of the Finance and Corporate Governance Expert (if appointed for the case in point) via the Accreditation Panel Secretary on issues relating to financial management and corporate governance; and to relay the

information to the Accreditation Panel for consideration when making a judgement on the accreditation outcome.

- (d) To chair the pre-visit meeting and any meetings of the Accreditation Panel.
- (e) To direct the flow of discussion in all meetings and to maintain a focus on the issues in hand.
- (f) To provide overall guidance in order to satisfactorily complete the exercise.
- (g) To lead the Accreditation Panel deliberation on the accreditation outcome for recommendation to HKCAAVQ.
- (h) If required, to put the matter to the vote; where votes are tied, the Panel Chair shall have a second vote.
- (i) In addition to the above, to perform all other roles required of Accreditation Panel Members.

4.2 Accreditation Panel Members

- (a) To make preparations for the accreditation exercise in good time.
- (b) To comply with all relevant guidelines and guidance notes of HKCAAVQ, and Code of Conduct for Accreditation Panels.
- (c) To provide observations and findings throughout the accreditation exercise including but not limited to providing initial comments, participating in site visit and sharing views during Accreditation Panel meetings.
- (d) To deliberate on the accreditation outcome and make recommendation to HKCAAVQ.
- (e) To provide comments on the draft accreditation report and make recommendations to HKCAAVQ on the fulfilment of any pre-condition(s)/requirement(s).

4.3 Accreditation Panel Secretary (i.e. HKCAAVQ Case Officer)

- (a) As a member of the Accreditation Panel and as the Secretary of the Accreditation Panel.
- (b) To perform the following roles:
 - (i) To assist the Accreditation Panel to understand HKCAAVQ's accreditation policies and standards, HKQF standards and practices, local educational system and development, special features of the accreditation exercise at hand, and any precedents that may be relevant to the exercise for alignment and consistency.
 - (ii) To provide professional support in the conduct of the accreditation exercise, and preparation of accreditation reports.

Finance and Corporate Governance Expert (Expert)

- 5. A specialist with expertise in finance and/or corporate governance may be engaged as an Expert in an accreditation exercise by HKCAAVQ to advise on the financial viability and sustainability of the

Operator/learning programme under accreditation. The Expert only provides expert opinion to the Accreditation Panel Chair via the Accreditation Panel Secretary on related issues and is not part of the Accreditation Panel. Therefore, he/she does not participate in the Accreditation Panel's decision-making process and shall not attend the site visit, unless considered necessary by the Accreditation Panel Chair on the advice of the Accreditation Panel Secretary. If necessary, the Expert may be invited by the Operator to pay a pre-visit to facilitate triangulation and evidence collection as supplement to a purely paper based approach.

Code of Conduct

6. The Accreditation Panel and the Expert are subject to the same code of conduct and compliance with confidentiality applicable to all HKCAAVQ Panel Members. Before finalisation of the Accreditation Panel and/or the Expert, there is a checking of conflict of interest with the Operator as declared in writing by potential Accreditation Panel Members and/or the Expert. Further details are available in the *Code of Conduct for Panels* available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/policies.



Detailed Workflow of the Four-Stage Quality Assurance Process

The detailed workflow with the actions to be taken by the corresponding responsible parties for each stage of the Process are outlined below:

Responsible Parties	Steps	Indicative Timeline (Week No.)			
		IE and LPA/ re-LPA		PAA	PIR
		For HKQF Levels 1-3	For HKQF Levels 4-7		
Operator	1. Submission of Statement of Intent (Sol) 1.1 An Operator indicates its intention to seek accreditation by submitting an Sol and the required attachments.	Preparation Period			
HKCAAVQ / Operator	2. The Facilitation Phase (if applicable) 2.1 Please refer to Appendix 2 of this Manual for details.				
HKCAAVQ	3. Notification of differentiation approach, if applicable.				
HKCAAVQ Operator	4. Signing of Service Agreement 4.1 HKCAAVQ issues a Service Agreement setting out the purpose, time schedule and fee for the exercise. 4.2 After signing the Service Agreement and making payment of the initial/full accreditation fee, the Operator is required to submit the Accreditation Document according to the schedule specified in the Service Agreement.				
Operator	5. Preparation of Accreditation Document 5.1 To prepare the Accreditation Document, the Operator is advised to conduct a self-evaluation making reference to the respective accreditation standards and matters for consideration, and the respective Evidence				

	Guides/Submission Forms (if applicable).				
HKCAAVQ Operator	6. Formation of Accreditation Panel 6.1 The Panel Members are nominated by HKCAAVQ 6.2 Appointment is confirmed after checking for conflict of interest with the Operator in writing.				
HKCAAVQ / Operator	7. Accreditation Document submitted and reviewed by Accreditation Panel	Weeks 1-3	Weeks 1-4	Weeks 1-4	Weeks 1-4
HKCAAVQ Operator Operator	8. Accreditation Panel's initial comments on Accreditation Document and Operator's response 8.1 The Accreditation Panel provides initial comments on the Accreditation Document and requests additional information as needed. 8.2 The Operator provides response to the Accreditation Panel's initial comments. 8.3 Further information/clarification may be needed from the Operator.	4-7	5-8	5-10	5-10
HKCAAVQ / Operator	9. Site visit or meeting 9.1 There is a site visit conducted by the Accreditation Panel or meeting(s) held at HKCAAVQ office between the Operator and the Accreditation Panel. 9.2 The Accreditation Panel typically meets management representatives, other key staff, learners and external stakeholders; and inspects facilities and examines records and other supporting documents. 9.3 There is an exit meeting session with representatives of the Operator at the end of the site visit or meeting(s). The exit meeting will provide a general overview of the Accreditation Panel's key observations. 9.4 There may be post-visit or post-meeting follow-up, if necessary.	9	10	12	12
HKCAAVQ	10. Preparation of accreditation report 10.1 HKCAAVQ may issue an interim report based on the	10-15	11-19	13-23	13-23

HKCAAVQ	Accreditation Panel's recommendations (if applicable). 10.2 HKCAAVQ finalises the accreditation report after considering the Accreditation Panel's recommendations. HKCAAVQ makes the final determination.				
Operator	11. Operator's check of factual accuracy of accreditation report				
HKCAAVQ	12. Notification of outcome 12.1 HKCAAVQ issues the accreditation report.	16	20	24	24
Operator	13. Follow-up Actions 13.1 If Conditions (i.e. pre-conditions and/or requirements) and/or restrictions are stipulated in the accreditation report, the Operator must provide evidence of having fulfilled them by the specified dates. After considering the evidence HKCAAVQ may request further information or seek clarifications, if necessary.	Operators are expected to complete the fulfilment of Conditions normally within 3 months from the first submission.			
HKCAAVQ	13.2 If the Operator cannot fulfil / comply with the Conditions and/or restrictions within the allowable period, HKCAAVQ may deem that the Operator and/or programme is no longer competent to achieve its objectives and the accreditation report may be varied or withdrawn.				
HKCAAVQ	13.3 HKCAAVQ will issue an outcome letter on the fulfilment of Conditions.				

Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation Authority (AA)	HKCAAVQ is specified in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap. 592) to accredit Operators and learning programmes for the purpose of entering their qualifications into the Qualifications Register (QR), for recognition under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF).
Accreditation Document	Prepared by the Operator to substantiate its claim of meeting the required standards when undertaking any stage(s) of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process.
Accreditation Panel	A panel consisting of specialists with expertise in the relevant discipline/industry/quality assurance issues. It is formed to assess the Operator/learning programmes in each stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the guiding principle of 'peer review', with a HKCAAVQ staff member, who is also a Panel Member, serving as the Accreditation Panel Secretary.
Accreditation Report	A report issued by HKCAAVQ pursuant to section 5 of the AAVQO on completion of any stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process after conducting the relevant accreditation tests.
Accreditation Standards	The level of competence or quality that an Operator or a learning programme has to demonstrate in an accreditation test, for operation of learning programmes that meet HKQF standards.
Advice	An opinion of the Accreditation Panel for the improvement of an Operator and/or learning programme(s). It provides for the sharing of good practice in education and training among peers. It is non-binding and the Operator is not required to report follow-up actions taken, if any, to HKCAAVQ.
Collaborative Provision	A learning programme leading or contributing to the award of credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement involving more than one parties.

Term	Definition
Condition	Part of the accreditation determination which is to be fulfilled by an Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status (pre-condition), or by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period (requirement).
Differentiation	The approach with which track record of good performance of an Operator is being recognised for consideration of customised treatments in individual accreditation exercise.
Domain of Competence	An aspect of organisational competence to be assessed in a stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. Under each domain, an accreditation standard is developed to describe the level of competence required in relation to the purpose of that stage.
Evidence-based	One of the guiding principles in accreditation that accreditation judgement is to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the Operator to support its claimed attainment of the accreditation standards and its own objectives.
Facilitation Phase	A step incorporated in Initial Evaluation (IE), Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Re-accreditation (re-LPA) that helps Operators to familiarise themselves with the accreditation requirements and process.
Fitness for Purpose	One of the guiding principles in accreditation that the stated objectives and scope of an Operator are to be taken into consideration in assessing whether the learning programme(s) meet(s) the claimed HKQF level(s).
Four-stage Quality Assurance Process (the Process)	A quality assurance mechanism with four stages, i.e. Initial Evaluation (IE), Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) and Re-accreditation (re-LPA), Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) and Periodic Institutional Review (PIR). It forms the means through which HKCAAVQ evaluates Operators and their learning programmes under the HKQF.
Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)	A seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors with level, credit and award title as the key features.

Term	Definition
Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Level	A level assigned to a qualification to indicate its position in the hierarchy relative to others under the HKQF. The level is determined in accordance with a set of Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) which specifies the outcome standards expected of the qualification at that level.
Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Standards	The skills, knowledge or experience acquired upon the completion of the learning programme that are commensurate with the requirements under the specified level of the HKQF.
Initial Evaluation (IE)	The first stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that ascertains whether an Operator is competent to operate learning programme(s) that meet HKQF standards up to a certain HKQF level.
Learner Outcome	The competence attained by a learner after successful completion of a learning programme which is reflected through assessments.
Learning Outcome	The knowledge, skills and application ability attained by a learner as a result of completing the learning programme.
Learning Programme	A programme of study or training defined by a curriculum (which may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements) that includes, where the context permits, any proposed programme of such studies or training.
Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA)	The second stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process, the purpose of which is twofold: (i) to ascertain whether a learning programme (proposed or accredited) meets an HKQF standard to achieve the claimed objectives; and (ii) to ascertain whether the Operator of a learning programme is competent to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of its programme operation to achieve the claimed programme objectives.
Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA)	The cyclical re-evaluation of an accredited learning programme which shares the same purpose and standards of LPA, but with a focus on improvements and demonstrated outcomes since the LPA or the last re-LPA.

Term	Definition
Matters for Consideration	A set of consideration that sets out important considerations for determining whether a standard has been met, which should be applied within the particular context of an Operator or learning programme.
Minimum Requirements	A set of essential features of an Operator or learning programme to assist making an holistic judgement as to whether an accreditation standard has been met or not. The minimum requirements are not meant to be used as checklists.
Non-local Learning Programme (NLP) Accreditation	Accreditation of a non-local course (learning programme), registered or exempted from registration under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap. 493) for seeking recognition under the HKQF.
Online Learning Programme	A programme delivered through a digital learning platform to provide structured teaching, learning and assessment, and the programme has more than 50% of instruction delivered online.
Operator	A person, school, institution, or organisation or other body, the whole or part of the business of which includes the operation of any learning programme or any part of a learning programme.
Organisational Outcome	The performance of an Operator in relation to achieving its vision and mission through effective governance and management.
Outcome-based Approach	An educational paradigm based on the learner-centred model focusing on what learners can actually do. The HKQF is underpinned by the outcome-based approach, which also set the context of the design and development of HKCAAVQ's accreditation standards and process.
Outcome-based Learning Programme	A programme which is designed with the emphasis on alignment of content, learning and teaching, and assessment to facilitate attainment of the intended learning outcomes by learners.

Term	Definition
Peer Review	One of the guiding principles in accreditation that experts with the expertise and experience in the discipline/industry/quality assurance are engaged to form an Accreditation Panel to collect and evaluate evidence to form an accreditation judgement on the quality of an Operator and its learning programmes.
Periodic Institutional Review (PIR)	The fourth stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that ascertains whether an Operator continues to be effective in achieving its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation by formulating and implementing actions based on evidence.
Pre-condition	Part of the accreditation determination which must be fulfilled by the Operator prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status.
Procedure	A well-defined sequence of operations.
Process	A set of connected or interacting activities designed to deliver the desired outputs given the inputs.
Programme Area	A defined scope of area of the programme(s) applying for Programme Area Accreditation (PAA). A programme area can be an Area of Study and Training, a Sub-area in full or a Sub-area in part, one subject matter or a combination of subject matters under the same Sub-area, but not a combination of Areas of Study and Training or Sub-areas.
Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)	The third stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process that ascertains whether an Operator is competent to quality assure its learning programme(s) within a programme area up to a certain HKQF level, as demonstrated from the track record of its operation of accredited learning programmes in a particular discipline or industry area, and its capacity to enhance its organisational effectiveness to achieve the educational/training objectives.
Programme Outcome	The performance of a learning programme in relation to its objectives, which is typically assessed by analysing information such as stakeholders' feedback and employment data.

Term	Definition
Qualification	A formal award given in recognition of the skills, knowledge and experience acquired by an individual upon the satisfactory completion of a learning programme that meets specified HKQF standards. It is granted on the basis of formal assessment. The award title should follow the policy laid down by the Education Bureau (www.hkqf.gov.hk), and should not include a Statement of Attendance.
Qualifications Register (QR)	The public face of the HKQF containing all qualifications that have been quality assured under the HKQF.
Qualifications Register (QR) Authority	HKCAAVQ is specified in Part 2 of Schedule 1 of the AAVQO to maintain the Qualifications Register.
Recommendation	Part of the accreditation determination which has a continuous improvement purpose and is directly related to the accreditation standards. It is non-binding in nature but an Operator should explain if/how the recommendations have been addressed at the time of re-accreditation or PIR.
Requirement	Part of the accreditation determination which must be fulfilled by an Operator by the specified deadline(s) during the validity so as to maintain the accreditation status.
Restriction	Part of the accreditation determination which is to be complied with by an Operator by the specified deadline(s) before the validity period and/or to be complied with during the validity period.
Service Agreement	A contract between HKCAAVQ and an Operator to undertake an accreditation exercise.
Site Visit	A visit by the Accreditation Panel to the Operator's learning centre/campus used for the purpose of delivering the learning programme(s) undertaking accreditation. This is an integral part of an accreditation exercise, conducted primarily to collect evidence for evaluating whether the accreditation standards are met.

Term	Definition
Standards-based	One of the guiding principles in accreditation that an Operator must demonstrate meeting the accreditation standards setting out collectively the competence requirements expected of the Operator and/or its learning programmes.
Statement of Accreditation Approval	An official document issued by HKCAAVQ confirming the granting of accreditation status to an Operator. It is issued along with the accreditation report when no pre-condition is specified, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all pre-condition(s), or upon approval of Chief Executive-in-Council for degree programmes.
Substantial Change	Any significant modification to an Operator or a learning programme that may impact an Operator's competency to continue meeting the relevant accreditation standards.
System	A framework of policies, processes and procedures to achieve particular purpose(s).
Terms of Reference	The services that will be provided to an Operator as specified in the signed Service Agreement.
Track Record	A record of performance of an Operator against relevant accreditation standards.
Transparency	One of the guiding principles in accreditation that all parties involved in an accreditation test are to have a common understanding of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process and relevant issues that may arise. For the purpose of increased transparency, summary/full accreditation reports of specific types of accreditation tests are published.
Validity Period	The period of time in which an approved accreditation status is effective as specified in the accreditation report.