

**For information**

**Legislative Council Panel on Manpower**  
**Latest Developments of**  
**the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the latest developments of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF).

**Background**

2. The HKQF defines clear and objective standards applicable to qualifications in the academic, vocational, professional, as well as continuing education sectors. The primary objective of establishing the HKQF is to promote lifelong learning with a view to continuously enhancing the quality, professionalism, and competitiveness of our workforce in an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy. The latest developments of the HKQF are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

(a) *Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)*

3. We have set up 22 ITACs<sup>1</sup>, covering industries with over 50% of the workforce in Hong Kong for the implementation of the HKQF. We will continue to reach out to stakeholders of industries not yet covered by the HKQF, with a view to promoting further and wider adoption of the HKQF.

---

<sup>1</sup> Arboriculture and Horticulture, Automotive, Banking, Beauty and Hairdressing, Catering, Elderly Care Service, Electrical and Mechanical Services, Fashion, Human Resource Management, Import and Export, Information and Communications Technology, Insurance, Jewellery, Logistics, Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals and Plastics), Printing and Publishing, Property Management, Retail, Security Services, Testing, Inspection and Certification, Travel as well as Watch and Clock.

(b) *Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)*

4. The ITACs are tasked with drawing up SCS for the relevant sectors, which set out the skills, knowledge, and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas of the respective sectors. The drawing up of SCS facilitates the formulation of training programmes for recognition under the HKQF. 21 out of the 22 ITACs have drawn up SCS for their respective industries, and the only remaining ITAC (i.e. Travel ITAC) will complete the drawing up of SCS in 2021. As at 30 September 2020, over 1 270 SCS-based courses have been developed by education and training providers. We will continue to promote SCS to gain wider acceptance by employers as useful guides for the development of in-house training and human resources management, such as staff recruitment and performance assessment.

(c) *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Mechanism*

5. The HKQF not only covers qualifications obtained from academic education and training, but also enables formal recognition of the skills, knowledge, and relevant experience acquired by practitioners in the workplace through the RPL mechanism which is based on the competency standards set out in SCS of various industries. Practitioners may pursue further learning with their RPL qualifications as a starting point to acquire higher and broader qualifications. At present, the RPL mechanism has been implemented in 15 industries<sup>2</sup>. As at 30 September 2020, near 35 800 applications from practitioners for assessment under the RPL mechanism, involving over 78 400 clusters of competencies, were processed/were being processed by the assessment agencies concerned. Details are set out at **Annex A**. Three more industries, namely Security Services industry, Information and Communications Technology industry, and Fashion industry, will launch their respective RPL mechanisms tentatively in 2021. We are working closely with other industries with a view to extending the RPL mechanism to more industries.

(d) *Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGC)*

6. Generic (Foundation) Competencies are generic skills and knowledge that are shared across different industries and trades and are relevant to most people in the workplace. SGC covers four strands of foundation skills, namely English, Chinese, Numeracy, and Information

---

<sup>2</sup> Automotive, Beauty, Chinese Catering, Elderly Care Service, Electrical and Mechanical Services, Hairdressing, Import and Export, Jewellery, Logistics, Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals and Plastics), Printing and Publishing, Property Management, Retail, Testing, Inspection and Certification as well as Watch and Clock.

Technology. As at 30 September 2020, about 110 SGC-based courses were developed by the education and training providers.

(e) *Qualifications Register (QR)*

7. QR, a web-based database containing information on qualifications and their respective learning programmes that have been quality assured and recognised under the HKQF, is available to the public free of charge. As at 30 September 2020, there were more than 8 200 academic and vocational qualifications, involving about 250 education and training providers, registered on the QR. As the statutory Accreditation Authority and QR Authority, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) will continue to ensure the quality and standards of HKQF-recognised programmes. Statistical information on the qualifications registered on the QR is set out at **Annex B**.

(f) *Award Titles Scheme (ATS) and the use of QF Credit*

8. The ATS and the use of the QF credit were introduced in 2012. The ATS specifies the award titles that can be used for qualifications at various QF levels whereas the QF credit is a measurement of the volume or size of learning programmes recognised under the HKQF. Starting from 2016, the titles of all programmes registered on the QR have conformed to the ATS, and the QF credit values of all programmes at QF Levels 1 to 4 have been shown on the QR. Following the consultation with stakeholders in 2018, operators have been required to indicate the QF credit for their newly registered learning programmes at QF Levels 5 to 7 (except for research-based programmes) on the QR with effect from September 2020. Operators will be required to indicate the QF credit of all learning programmes at QF Levels 5 to 7 (except for research-based programmes) on the QR with effect from September 2022<sup>3</sup>.

(g) *Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)*

9. To promote learners' mobility and progression by minimising duplication of learning, the EDB promulgated in 2014 the policy and principles for CAT which apply to all programmes from QF Levels 1 to 7

---

<sup>3</sup> Self-accrediting operators with their own established credit systems are voluntary to indicate the QF credits of their learning programmes at QF Levels 5 to 7 on the QR. However, two types of programmes, namely full-time, four-year bachelor's degree programmes and full-time, one-year taught master's degree programmes, are given a remark indicating a range of QF credits on the QR starting from September 2020, if self-accrediting operators do not indicate the QF credits of such programmes on the QR.

as Phase 1 of the CAT project. Subsequently, the *Policy, Principles and Operational Guidelines for CAT under the QF in Hong Kong* was promulgated in 2016 to facilitate the review of the existing CAT systems by providers or the establishment of a CAT system that suits their own circumstances. The CAT centralised database was introduced on the QR in 2018 to set out the CAT information and articulation arrangements with a dedicated search function. As at 30 September 2020, there were about 3 070 and 230 qualifications registered on the QR indicating CAT arrangements at the institutional and programme levels respectively, including over 20 qualifications which accept RPL qualifications for CAT arrangements.

(h) *Vocational Qualifications Pathway (VQP)*

10. VQP represents a roadmap for progression in learning and employment in an industry, along which learners and practitioners can progress at various levels through attainment or acquisition of the required occupation-based qualifications. Specifically, VQP identifies the QF Level, scope of learning, SCS required, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria of the required occupation-based qualifications for each principal job role. Major tasks, entry requirements, qualifications required, and employment pathway for each principal job role are also clearly set out. VQP is developed in consultation with the ITACs concerned to ensure that occupation-based qualifications developed under VQP best meet the needs of the industries and assure that the abilities of the qualifications holders could perform the occupations concerned well. As a result, synergy between learning and employment can be further enhanced.

11. The development of VQP for the Automotive, Banking, Property Management, Elderly Care Service, Printing and Publishing, as well as Insurance industries have been completed. At present, there are more than 50 VQP courses on the QR. The Human Resource Management industry is developing VQP, and Security Services industry will develop VQP in 2021. We will continue to extend the development of VQP to other industries as appropriate and in phases, in consultation with the respective ITACs to ascertain the readiness in doing so. The development of VQP will also be included in the process of drafting or revising SCS for industries to ensure the inclusion of competencies for key job roles in SCS.

(i) *Recognition of Professional Qualifications*

12. To widen the application of the HKQF, the EDB launched an initiative in 2018 for recognition of professional qualifications under the HKQF. Professional qualifications recognised under the HKQF refer to

qualifications granted by bona fide local organisations and underpinned by requisite academic qualifications, prescribed years of industry or professional experience, and robust assessments in written or practical formats. Recognition of professional qualifications promotes a wider application of the HKQF and uplifts the professional image of vocational and professional education and training (VPET).

13. The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Marine Department, and the Hong Kong Institute of Bankers have been appointed as the assessment agencies for issuing designated professional qualifications recognised under the HKQF.

(j) *Co-operation with Other Places on QF*

14. The intention to develop the nation's QF was announced in the National 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan in 2016. Over the years, the EDB and the QF Secretariat have shared our experience in developing and implementing the HKQF with various organisations and parties on the Mainland. In 2019, the EDB signed a Letter of Intent on QF Co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong with the Department of Education of Guangdong Province to strengthen collaboration on QF between the two places. The EDB, the QF Secretariat, and the HKCAAVQ will continue to cooperate with the relevant authorities in the Guangdong Province to foster collaboration between the two places on QF and to facilitate qualifications recognition in more industries.

15. We have also been actively establishing a network with QF and quality assurance authorities of other places to facilitate qualification recognition, support mobility of learners and labour, and enhance opportunities for future cooperation between Hong Kong and other places. Referencing projects have been undertaken to provide a translation device to understand the corresponding levels of qualifications between the HKQF and the QF of other places. We have completed referencing / comparability projects with the European Qualifications Framework, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, the Irish National Framework of Qualifications, and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

(k) *Budget initiatives*

16. As announced in the 2013-14 Budget, the EDB allocates a recurrent funding of \$10 million per year to support the ITACs to launch new initiatives to further enhance the knowledge and skills of workers in the industries as well as their competitiveness in the labour market. These

initiatives include –

- (a) introducing the QF Award Scheme for Learning Experiences for outstanding practitioners to engage in learning activities in different places around the world;
- (b) designing SCS-based Training Packages that meet the needs of the industries; and
- (c) stepping up the promotion and publicity of the HKQF for its wider acceptance among all sectors.

Major developments of the above initiatives over the past year are set out at **Annex C**.

## **Qualifications Framework Fund**

### Establishment of the QF Fund

17. With the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council in 2007, a non-recurrent commitment of \$208 million was created to implement a basket of financial assistance schemes, known as Qualifications Framework Support Schemes (QFSS) to provide time-limited financial assistance to encourage relevant stakeholders to participate in the HKQF. Recognising the importance of the HKQF in maintaining a quality workforce, the QF Fund with an endowment of \$1 billion was established in 2014 to provide a steady source of income to support the sustainable development and implementation of the HKQF. The Government further injected \$1.2 billion into the QF Fund in 2018 for the continued implementation of various initiatives of the HKQF. The QF Fund has been placed with the Exchange Fund, which is administered by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority for investment. The Steering Committee on QF Fund was set up in 2014 to advise the Secretary for Education on the policy, strategy, and administration of the QF Fund.

18. To follow up on the recommendations of the Task Force on Promotion of VPET and to foster collaboration and create synergy between the promotion of VPET and QF, the Steering Committee on Promotion of VPET and QF was set up on 1 September 2020 to replace the Steering Committee on QF Fund. The new Steering Committee advises the Secretary for Education on the promotion of VPET and QF through a coordinated approach and means of better utilising the QF as a tool to promote VPET, as well as the policy, strategy, and administration of the QF

Fund. The terms of reference and membership of the Steering Committee on Promotion of VPET and QF are set out at **Annex D**.

### Use of the QF Fund

19. The QF Fund supports schemes/initiatives for the sustainable development and implementation of the HKQF, including but not limited to the following two areas –

- (a) Designated Support Schemes for the QF (with the previous time-limited QFSS incorporated and regrouped as the Accreditation Grant Scheme, RPL Support Scheme, Programme Development Grant Scheme, Support Scheme for Recognition of Professional Qualifications under the HKQF, and QR Subsidy Scheme)<sup>4</sup>; and
- (b) Funding for ITACs, QF-related studies/projects and public education such as referencing projects with the QF in other places. Details of the projects being conducted are set out at **Annex E**.

20. The total expenditure on various support schemes/initiatives under the QFSS and the QF Fund over the years amounts to \$355 million.

### **Way Forward**

21. Over the last decade, the HKQF has built up solid infrastructure for a quality qualifications system that supports progression and fosters recognition. More and more organisations, institutions, and employers recognise the importance of the HKQF and adopt it in their recruitment, training, promotion, and student admission. Looking forward, the Government will further strengthen and drive the development of the HKQF to enhance recognition of qualifications for different industries and provide youngsters with quality-assured pathways for further studies and career development. In particular, the HKQF will continue to provide a solid foundation to establish vocational and professional pathways with a view to enhancing the promotion and development of VPET in Hong Kong.

### **Education Bureau October 2020**

---

<sup>4</sup> Details of the Designated Support Schemes for the QF can be found on the HKQF website (<https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/support/dss/index.html>).

**Annex A****Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism  
(as at 30 September 2020)**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Current Appointed Assessment Agency</b>	<b>Launch Date</b>	<b>No. of applications processed/ being processed</b>	<b>No. of clusters of competencies</b>	<b>Success rate</b>
Hairdressing	Vocational Training Council (VTC)	Jun 2008	1 044	5 320	99.3%
Printing & Publishing	VTC	Jun 2008	863	1 517	97.7%
Watch & Clock	VTC	Jun 2008	865	983	99.9%
Property Management	VTC	Mar 2011	11 424	17 361	99.1%
Automotive	VTC	Nov 2011	1 500	2 913	98.2%
Jewellery	VTC	Nov 2011	1 753	2 086	99.4%
Logistics	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education	Mar 2012	2 404	3 440	99.7%
Chinese Catering	VTC	Jan 2013	4 069	5 192	99.7%
Beauty	Caritas Institute of Community Education	Jul 2014	4 208	25 251	99.1%
Retail	VTC	Dec 2014	6 002	7 836	100%
Import & Export	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education	Sept 2015	166	255	100%
Elderly Care Service	Hong Kong Association of Gerontology	Sept 2015	1 112	5 340	99.7%
Testing, Inspection & Certification	School of Science and Technology of the Open University of Hong Kong	Nov 2015	15	15	100%
Electrical & Mechanical Services	VTC	Dec 2015	292	814	99%
Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals & Plastics)	Hong Kong Productivity Council	Mar 2017	135	135	100%
<b>Total</b>			<b>35 852</b>	<b>78 458</b>	<b>99.2%</b>



**Qualifications registered on the Qualifications Register  
(as at 30 September 2020)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>No. of qualifications</b>
(1) Qualifications offered by self-accrediting institutions	3 170
(2) Qualifications offered by non-self-accrediting institutions	4 364
(3) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism	745
(4) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Professional Qualifications	17
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8 296</b>

**Major Developments of the Budget Initiatives  
on the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) in 2020**

QF Award Scheme for Learning Experiences (Award Scheme)

The Award Scheme aims to recognise outstanding or emerging practitioners who can serve as exemplars and role models for their respective industries and help attract the younger generation to pursue career in these fields. For the 2020-21 Award Scheme, a total of 70 practitioners have been selected by the respective Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) for the award. Awardees engaging in learning activities in Hong Kong receive an award of \$10,000 while those engaging in learning activities outside Hong Kong receive an award of \$30,000. We will invite applications for the 2021-22 Award Scheme starting from the first quarter of 2021.

Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)-based Training Packages

2. SCS-based Training Packages, developed with reference to SCS of respective industries, aim to serve as a catalyst for the development of SCS-based training and assessment materials for wider adoption by enterprises and course providers to meet the needs of the industries. Training packages involving 31 job functions for 12 industries have been developed from 2013 to 2020.

Promotion and Publicity of the HKQF

3. In 2020, we continued our promotion and publicity targeting three groups –

- (i) **School sector:** Riding on the ITAC networks and the competency standards and progression pathways developed for the respective industries, we organised 19 school projects with the ITACs to promote the HKQF and the relevant industries to senior secondary school students in the 2019/20 academic year, while most of the activities and talks have been rescheduled for the next academic year in view of the need for social-distancing due to COVID-19 epidemic. To enable teachers, students, parents, and the community at large to understand how the HKQF can facilitate students' career and life planning, we produced a series of animated explainer videos targeting different groups of audience and launched the videos on social media and the HKQF website in July 2020. We also produced a corresponding set of

posters for secondary schools to use in school-based activities related to career and life planning.

- (ii) ***Industry sector:*** In 2020, we organised/co-organised 28 activities and briefing sessions to promote the HKQF for 23 industries, which were attended by stakeholders including employers, employees, and representatives from industry organisations.
- (iii) ***Community at large:*** In 2020, we published more than 37 HKQF-related articles in newspapers as well as publications of professional bodies, trade unions, and trade associations to enhance stakeholders' understanding and awareness of the HKQF. We have also made use of various publicity channels, such as MTR Digital Panel Network, HKedCity, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to promote the HKQF and the spirit of lifelong learning to the general public. To enhance awareness of the HKQF, we issued the Guidelines for Featuring the HKQF in Certificates in 2019 to all education and training providers to encourage the use of the QF logo and the indication of the QF Level and the QR Registration Number on certificates given to graduates of all learning programmes recognised under the HKQF.

**Steering Committee on Promotion of  
Vocational and Professional Education and Training  
and Qualifications Framework**

**Terms of Reference**

The Steering Committee on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training and Qualifications Framework (the Steering Committee) advises the Secretary for Education on the promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) and Qualifications Framework (QF) through a coordinated approach, including:

- (a) the overall strategy to promote VPET;
- (b) the ways to strengthen coordination and foster closer industrial partnership in the Government's VPET promotion measures;
- (c) the promotion of VPET and related programmes in secondary schools;
- (d) the development, implementation, and promotion of QF, in particular, to support a qualifications system for VPET, and the strategy for making use of the QF Fund including the scope and parameters of the schemes, initiatives, and activities to be covered by the QF Fund; and
- (e) any other matters that may be referred to the Steering Committee by the Education Bureau concerning the promotion of VPET and QF, as well as the policy and administration of the QF Fund.

Where necessary, the Steering Committee also advises the Trustee of the Fund (i.e. the Permanent Secretary for Education) on the formulation of policies for and monitoring of the investment of the QF Fund.

In discharging its functions, the Steering Committee may set up sub-committees, conduct studies, engage professional services and co-opt members as and when necessary.

**Membership**

(from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2022)

Chairperson: Dr Daniel YIP Chung-yin

Vice-Chairperson: Ms Caroline MAK Sui-king

Members: Dr CHAN Cheuk-hay  
Dr Lawrence CHEUNG Chi-chong  
Ms Joanne CHONG Sze-pui  
Professor Ronald CHUNG Chi-kit  
Mr Eugene FONG Yick-jin  
Dr Alex KAI Sze-fai  
Mr LAM Chun-sing  
Mr Freddy LAW Wai-hung  
Dr Ringo LEE Yiu-pui  
Mr Joseph TSANG Chi-to  
Miss TSOI Kuen-kuen  
Ms Shirley WONG Hau-yeung  
Dr Vincent WONG Wai-lun  
Miss Winnie YING Fung-sau

Ex-officio Members: Executive Director, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications or his/her representative  
Executive Director, Vocational Training Council or his/her representative  
Secretary for Education or his/her representative

**Projects funded by the Qualifications Framework (QF) Fund  
that are being conducted**

The following projects funded by the QF Fund are being conducted –

- (i) Research Project on the Use of QF Languages in Recruitment Advertisements: In order to track the changes of the popularity of QF languages in recruitment advertisements, the Steering Committee on QF Fund approved in 2019 to conduct a series of research on recruitment advertisements with the use of QF languages. The research is conducted from 2019 to 2021 to identify the trends and reasons for using QF languages in recruitment advertisements in different industries and in the job market as a whole.

The Education Bureau also continues to feature QF language in its civil service recruitment exercises with a view to raising public awareness of the QF. We expect to extend the arrangement to more recruitment exercises and to encourage application of the QF in training of other Government departments.

- (ii) Project on Development of Good Practices on Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) under the QF: The Policy, Principles and Operational Guidelines for CAT (the Guidelines for CAT) under the QF was promulgated in 2016 to provide an overarching framework that facilitates the articulation of qualifications across different sectors at all QF Levels and the establishment of progression pathways. At present, the Guidelines for CAT focus on the CAT arrangements for qualifications obtained by completion of learning programmes. In light of the expanded application of CAT beyond the institutional and programme levels at the time of announcement of the policy in 2016, the Steering Committee on QF Fund endorsed in July 2020 to conduct a project to develop a set of good practices on CAT in support of its application across institutions, industries, and various levels of education and training, and to update the Guidelines for CAT in view of the latest developments of the QF and Vocational and Professional Education and Training in Hong Kong and overseas.

- (iii) Development of the Qualifications Register (QR) mobile version: The QR is a web-based database providing information of qualifications and related learning programmes recognised under the QF. It is the Government's initiative to introduce mobile version for government websites to facilitate users of mobile devices. In February 2020, the Steering Committee on QF Fund endorsed the development of mobile version of the QR.