

**For discussion  
on 16 October 2018**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Manpower**

### **Policy Initiative on Qualifications Framework by Education Bureau**

#### **Purpose**

The Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address was announced on 10 October 2018. This paper aims to brief Members on the major development of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) in the past year.

#### **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. This year is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the HKQF. The major achievements over the past ten years and the latest developments of the HKQF are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

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

3. At present, we have set up 22 ITACs<sup>1</sup>, covering industries with over 50% of the workforce in Hong Kong for implementation of the HKQF. We shall continue to reach out to stakeholders of other industries for a wider implementation of the HKQF.

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

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

4. ITACs are tasked to draw 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 to facilitate the formulation of training programmes for recognition under the HKQF. 20 ITACs have already drawn up their SCS for their respective industries, and the other two ITACs<sup>2</sup> will complete drawing up their SCS for the industries in 2019. As at 30 September 2018, over 1 060 SCS-based courses have been developed by education and training providers. We will continue to promote the 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 the 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>3</sup>. As at 30 September 2018, about 29 000 applications from practitioners for assessment of RPL involving over 55 000 clusters of competencies were processed/are being processed by the assessment agencies concerned. Details are set out at [Annex A](#). We will continue to work closely with other industries with a view to extending the RPL mechanism to those which have completed their respective SCS.

(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

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<sup>2</sup> Arboriculture & Horticulture and Travel.

<sup>3</sup> Automotive, Beauty, Chinese Catering, Elderly Care Service, Electrical & Mechanical Services, Hairdressing, Import & Export, Jewellery, Logistics, Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals & Plastics), Printing & Publishing, Property Management, Retail, Testing, Inspection & Certification, as well as Watch & Clock.

foundation skills, namely English, Chinese, Numeracy and Information Technology. As at 30 September 2018, about 100 SGC-based courses have been developed by 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 2018, there were over 8 000 academic and vocational qualifications, involving about 240 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 QF credit were introduced in 2012. The ATS specifies the award titles that can be used for qualifications at various QF levels whereas QF credit is a measure of volume or size of learning programmes recognised under the HKQF. Starting from 1 January 2016, the titles of all programmes registered on the QR conform to the ATS, and the QF credit values of all programmes at QF Levels 1 to 4 are shown on the QR. The Education Bureau (EDB) is going to conduct a consultation from mid-October to mid-December 2018 on the implementation of mandatory indication of the QF credit values for programmes at QF Levels 5 to 7 on the QR.

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

9. To promote learners' mobility and progression by minimising duplication of learning, EDB promulgated in 2014 the policy and principles for CAT which apply to all programmes from QF Levels 1 to 7 as Phase 1 of the CAT project. Subsequently, the *Policy, Principles and Operational Guidelines for CAT under QF in Hong Kong* was promulgated in 2016 to facilitate the review of existing CAT systems by providers or establishing a CAT system that suits their own circumstances. As at 30 September 2018, there were about 2 130 and 70 qualifications registered on the QR indicating CAT arrangements at the institutional and programme levels respectively.

*(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 identified 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 were also clearly set out.

11. Pilot projects on the development of VQP for the automotive, banking and property management industries were completed in 2017. Furthermore, the Elderly Care Service industry completed the development of VQP in 2018. 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. At present, there are more than 20 VQP courses for the Banking and Elderly Care Service industries on the QR. We will continue to extend the development of VQP to other industries as appropriate and in phases, in consultation with various ITACs to ascertain the readiness in doing so.

*(i) Recognition of Professional Qualifications*

12. To widen the scope of the HKQF, EDB launched an initiative in September 2018 for recognition of professional qualifications under the HKQF. Professional qualifications recognised under the HKQF refer to qualifications granted by bona fide local organisations that are not underpinned by associated learning programmes. Individuals should meet the requisite academic qualifications and prescribed years of industry or professional experience, as well as complete robust assessments in written or practical formats in order to obtain the qualifications. At present, the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Marine Department are appointed as assessment agencies for issuing Associate Level qualification and seven types of Certificates of Competency (CoCs)<sup>4</sup> respectively to be recognised under

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<sup>4</sup> Namely CoCs for Deck Officer Class 3, Class 2 and Class 1; CoCs for Marine Engineer Officer Class 3, Class 2 and Class 1; and CoC for Electro-technical Officer.

the HKQF. Recognition of professional qualifications promotes a wider application of the HKQF and uplifts the professional image of vocational and professional education and training (VPET).

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

13. The intention to develop the country's QF was announced in the National 13<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan in 2016. Over the years, EDB and the QF Secretariat have shared on different occasions our experience in developing and implementing the HKQF to various organisations and parties on the Mainland. We will continue to liaise with the relevant authorities with a view to sharing our experience and playing an active role in the setting up of the country's QF.

14. We have also been actively establishing network with QF and quality assurance authorities of other places to facilitate qualifications 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. Besides, EDB organised the HKQF International Conference in September 2018 in celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the HKQF. The Conference aimed to explore global trends and issues of developing QF, to promote dialogues among places with advanced QF systems and to examine the role of QF in the changing landscape in VPET. Over 400 local and overseas participants, including government officials, QF and quality assurance experts, academics and professionals in VPET attended the Conference.

*(k) Budget initiatives*

15. As announced in the 2013-14 Budget, EDB allocates a recurrent funding of \$10 million per year to support 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 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

16. 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 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 (Steering Committee) was set up to advise the Secretary for Education on the policy, strategy and administration of the QF Fund. The terms of reference and membership of the Steering Committee are set out at **Annex D**.

17. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address, the Government further injected \$1.2 billion into the QF Fund in March 2018 for the continued implementation of various initiatives of the HKQF. After consultation with the Steering Committee, the additional \$1.2 billion has also been placed with the Exchange Fund for investment.

### Uses of the QF Fund

18. 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 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) as set out at **Annex E**; 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 approved by the Steering Committee that are conducted in 2018 are set out at **Annex F**.

19. The total expenditure on various support schemes/initiatives under the QFSS and the QF Fund over the years amounts to \$236 million.

### **Way Forward**

20. Over the last decade, the HKQF has built up solid infrastructure of 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 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 development of the HKQF will augment the Government's initiative to step up promotion for VPET.

**Education Bureau  
October 2018**

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism  
(as at 30 September 2018)**

<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	959	5 016	99.5%
Printing & Publishing	VTC	Jun 2008	851	1 503	97.8%
Watch & Clock	VTC	Jun 2008	859	977	99.9%
Property Management	VTC	Mar 2011	11 269	17 090	99.1%
Automotive	VTC	Nov 2011	1 496	2 909	98.2%
Jewellery	VTC	Nov 2011	1 705	2 032	99.5%
Logistics	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education	Mar 2012	2 289	3 320	99.9%
Chinese Catering	VTC	Jan 2013	3 987	5 098	99.8%
Beauty	VTC	Jul 2014	1 735	11 378	97.9%
Retail	VTC	Dec 2014	3 072	4 144	100%
Import & Export	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education	Sept 2015	125	190	100%
Elderly Care Service	Hong Kong Association of Gerontology	Sept 2015	290	1 444	99.9%
Testing, Inspection & Certification	School of Science and Technology of the Open University of Hong Kong	Nov 2015	11	11	100%
Electrical & Mechanical Services	VTC	Dec 2015	243	646	98.9%
Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals & Plastics)	Hong Kong Productivity Council	Mar 2017	108	108	100%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>28 999</b>	<b>55 866</b>	<b>99.1%</b>



**Annex B**

**Qualifications registered on the Qualifications Register  
(as at 30 September 2018)**

<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	4 186
(3) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism	803
(4) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Professional Qualifications	7
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8 166</b>

## **Major Developments of the Budget Initiatives on Qualifications Framework (QF) in 2018**

### 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 2018-19 Award Scheme, a total of 71 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 shall invite applications for the 2019-20 Award Scheme starting from the first quarter of 2019.

### Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)-based Training Packages

2. The 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. The first four batches of training packages developed for nine ITACs from 2013 to 2018 involve 25 job functions. The fifth batch of development commenced in August 2018.

### Promotion and Publicity of QF

3. In 2018, we have continued our promotion and publicity targeting at three groups –

- (i) **School sector:** Riding on the ITAC networks and the competency standards and progression pathways developed for the respective industries, we organised 13 school projects with ITACs to promote QF and the relevant industries to senior secondary school students in the 2017/18 academic year. Over 1 900 students from more than 160 schools attended the talks, workshops or visits. We also conducted talks to introduce QF to secondary school students and career masters from time to time. All these efforts aim at enabling teachers, students, parents and the community at large to understand how QF can facilitate students' career and life planning.

- (ii) ***Industry sector:*** In 2018, we organised/co-organised over 70 activities, events and briefing sessions to promote QF for 23 industries, which were attended by stakeholders including employers, employees and representatives from industry organisations.
- (iii) ***Community at large:*** In 2018, we published more than 30 QF-related articles in newspapers as well as publications of professional bodies, trade unions and trade associations to enhance stakeholders' understanding and awareness of QF. We have also made use of various publicity channels, such as MTR Digital Panel Network, flat display panels at commercial buildings, bus body advertisements, tram body advertisements and Facebook to promote QF and the spirit of lifelong learning to the general public.

**Steering Committee on Qualifications Framework Fund**

**Terms of Reference**

The Steering Committee advises the Secretary for Education on –

- (a) the overall strategy for making use of the Qualifications Framework Fund (the Fund) as a vehicle to support the sustainable development and implementation of the Qualifications Framework;
- (b) the scope and parameters of schemes, initiatives and activities to be covered by the Fund; and
- (c) any other matters that may be referred to the Steering Committee by the Education Bureau concerning the policy and administration of the Fund.

Where necessary, the Steering Committee also advises the Trustee of the Fund on the formulation of policies for and monitoring of the investment of the 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 2018 to 31 August 2020)

Chairperson: Dr York LIAO, SBS, JP  
Vice-Chairperson: Ms Caroline MAK Sui-king, JP  
Members: Dr Lawrence CHAN Wan-ching  
Mr Eric CHIU Yat-sing  
Mr Dennis HO Chiu-ping  
Mr IP Wai-ming, MH  
Mr LAM Chun-sing  
Mr Sunny LEE Wai-kwong, JP  
Ms Carrie LEUNG Ka-lai, MH  
Mrs Agnes MAK TANG Pik-yee, MH, JP  
Mr Jonathan NG Tai-shing  
Miss TSOI Kuen-kuen  
Mr WONG Kit-loong  
Prof Peter YUEN Pok-man

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

**Designated Support Schemes for Qualifications Framework**

***1. Accreditation Grant Scheme***

<b>Scope</b>	<p>The scheme aims to encourage education and training providers to seek accreditation at the institutional and programme levels under the Qualifications Framework (QF), and assist mature providers in seeking self-accrediting status in specified programme areas. Accreditation grant will be provided for the following activities –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Evaluation</li> <li>• Institutional Review and Periodic Review</li> <li>• Programme Validation and Re-validation</li> <li>• Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) (covering both first-time and subsequent exercises; the latter takes the form of Periodic Review)</li> </ul>			
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providers and qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)</li> <li>• Programmes/qualifications concerned must be registered on the Qualifications Register (QR)</li> </ul>			
<b>Level of Subsidy</b>		Courses subsidised by the Education Bureau (then Education and Manpower Bureau) <sup>1</sup>	Non-profit-making providers	Other providers
	Initial Evaluation / Institutional Review fees <sup>2</sup>	100%	100%	50%
	Programme Validation / Programme Re-validation fees			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)-based or Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGC)-based programmes</li> </ul>	100%	100%	50%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other programmes</li> </ul>	100%	70%	35%
	PAA/Periodic Review fees	100%	70%	35%

<sup>1</sup> These courses include those under the “Skills Upgrading Scheme” (which is now renamed “Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus”) and the “Employees Retraining Scheme” (which is now renamed “Manpower Development Scheme”).

<sup>2</sup> Institutional Review (IR) includes IR for registration under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance and IR for private university title.

## 2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Support Scheme

<b>Scope</b>	The scheme covers the fees for accreditation of RPL assessment agencies (AAs) and collaborating organisations, one-off start-up/maintenance grant for the actual expenditure including the staff costs incurred by the AAs in setting up/maintaining the assessment mechanism, retainer grant to AAs for operating RPL for “mature” industries (i.e. the five-year transitional period has lapsed), subsidy for each new application of RPL cluster processed by the AAs and reimbursement to practitioners who have successfully applied for RPL assessment.				
	<b><i>Accreditation grant/Assessment fee to RPL AAs /collaborating organisations</i></b>	<b><i>Start-up /Maintenance grant to RPL AAs</i></b>	<b><i>Retainer Grant to RPL AAs</i></b>	<b><i>Subsidy to RPL AAs</i></b>	<b><i>Reimbursement of RPL assessment fees</i></b>
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time and subsequent accreditations</li> <li>• Successful accreditation by HKCAAVQ</li> <li>• Appointed by the Secretary for Education (SED)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful accreditation by HKCAAVQ (first-time accreditation)</li> <li>• Appointed by SED</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAs for “mature industry” (i.e. the five-year transitional period has lapsed)</li> <li>• Appointed by SED</li> </ul>	Appointed by SED	Practitioners successfully completed the RPL assessments
<b>Level of Subsidy</b>	100% of accreditation/ re-accreditation and assessment fee for RPL AAs and collaborating organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to \$500,000 per agency for the actual expenditure including the staff costs incurred in setting up the assessment mechanism for each phase of RPL implementation</li> <li>• Up to \$300,000 per agency for the actual expenditure including the staff costs incurred in the adjustment of the assessment mechanism arising from the revision/addition of RPL clusters initiated by the Industry Training Advisory Committee concerned</li> </ul>	An annual recurrent grant of \$200,000	\$500 for each new application of RPL cluster processed	100% of RPL assessment fees. To be reimbursed in two stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully completed RPL assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 75% of RPL assessment fees</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Completed a QF-recognised training course afterwards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- remaining 25% of RPL assessment fees</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 3. Programme Development Grant Scheme

<b>Scope</b>	The scheme provides a one-off grant for education and training providers to develop SCS-based or SGC-based courses.	
	<i>SCS-based</i>	<i>SGC-based</i>
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly developed and operating SCS-based courses</li> <li>12 QF credits or above</li> <li>Qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited</li> <li>Must be registered on QR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newly developed and operating SGC-based courses</li> <li>Six QF credits or above</li> <li>Qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited</li> <li>Must be registered on QR</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Subsidy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For courses with 12 to 35 QF credits - \$30,000 each</li> <li>For courses with 36 QF credits or above - \$50,000 each</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For courses with six to 17 QF credits - \$20,000 each</li> <li>For courses with 18 QF credits or above - \$40,000 each</li> </ul>

### 4. Support Scheme for Recognition of Professional Qualifications under QF

<b>Scope</b>	The scheme aims to support bona fide local organisations to seek accreditation for their professional qualifications that are not underpinned by associated learning programmes to be recognised under QF.		
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisations and qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited by the HKCAAVQ</li> <li>Appointed by SED</li> </ul>		
<b>Level of Subsidy</b>		Non-profit-making organisations	Other organisations
	Accreditation/ re-accreditation fees <sup>3</sup>	100%	50%

<sup>3</sup> Including accreditation fees for subsequent inclusion of additional qualifications.

**5. QR Subsidy Scheme**

<b>Scope</b>	The scheme covers the registration and hosting fees of the qualifications/programmes onto QR, and provides an annual maintenance fee of QR to the QR Authority.	
	<i>Subsidy of the registration and hosting fees</i>	<i>Maintenance fee of QR</i>
<b>Eligibility</b>	All qualifications and their associated programmes registered on QR	QR Authority
<b>Level of Subsidy</b>	100% for both registration fees and hosting fees	\$3 million per year



**Projects approved by the Steering Committee on Qualifications Framework (QF) Fund (Steering Committee) that are conducted in 2018**

The following projects, approved by the Steering Committee, are conducted in 2018 –

- (i) *Review of Accreditation Criteria and Standards under the Hong Kong QF (HKQF)*: Since the launch of the HKQF and the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process in 2008, there have been a number of important developments and changes in the education and training sector in Hong Kong. In this connection, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) conducted a review on its accreditation criteria and standards to ensure that they are up-to-date with the prevailing local and international standards, and are capable of meeting community expectations. The project was completed in January 2018 and the revised accreditation standards will take effect starting from 1 April 2019.
- (ii) *Referencing Project of HKQF and the New Zealand QF (NZQF)*: The project aims to provide a translation device to understand the corresponding levels of qualifications between HKQF and NZQF, thereby promoting the transparency and comparability of qualifications awarded in Hong Kong and New Zealand. The project was completed in 2018.
- (iii) *Phase II of Exploratory Study on Possible Alignment of Professional Qualifications under HKQF*: Phase II of the Study was completed in December 2017. Based on the findings of the Study, a new initiative on recognition of professional qualifications under the HKQF was launched in September 2018.
- (iv) *Review of Generic Level Descriptors (GLD)*: Developed and adopted since 2004, the GLD are generally effective in describing the learning outcomes at each QF level. On the other hand, feedback from stakeholders in the past have shed light on the need to review and refine the outcome statements of the GLD to better reflect the outcome standards at each QF level. With the above, a service provider has been engaged to review the GLD and to develop practical tools, such as manuals and guidelines, so as to better support different user groups in adopting the GLD. A public consultation on the revised GLD and practical tools was held in September 2017 and online consultation was also conducted from September to October 2017. The revised GLD and practical tools were published in May 2018.

- (v) *Overall Action Plan for Enhancing Brand Image of HKQF*: As part of the overall action plan to enhance the brand image of HKQF which was approved by the Steering Committee in 2016, we completed in 2017 a baseline survey on the impact of implementation and perception of HKQF. Based on the results of the baseline survey, promotional efforts are being fine-tuned with a view to achieving enhanced awareness and impact in the next two years. A final survey will be conducted in the 2019-20 financial year in order to compare the branding and promotion progress made.

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