

Concept and Principles of QF Credit under Hong Kong Qualifications Framework

Purpose

This paper explains the concept and principles of QF credit under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF).

Qualifications Framework

2. All qualifications recognised under the QF are quality assured. These qualifications are characterised and distinguished from one another by their **levels, credit values and titles**. In the context of the QF in Hong Kong, the Education Bureau has already drawn up Qualifications Guidelines to regulate the **titles** of qualifications designed on the basis of Specification of Competency Standards. Generic Level Descriptors which set out the typical learning outcomes of qualifications at different levels have also been developed, against which providers can benchmark the **levels** of their qualifications under the QF. As regards **credit value** which provides information on the learning size of a qualification, the concept and practical guidelines are elaborated below and in the **Annex**.

QF credit - Concept, definition and principles

Concept and definition

3. QF credit is a measure of the size or volume of learning. It enables learners to know the extent of effort to be spent in order to complete a learning programme (or a module) and acquire the relevant qualification.

4. In line with the definition commonly adopted in other economies, **one QF credit point consists of 10 notional learning hours**

(definition of a QF credit). The definition is built upon a learner-centred concept. It is defined in terms of **notional learning time**, and takes into account the total time likely to be spent by a learner in all modes of learning in respect of a specified programme, e.g. attendance in classes, experiment in laboratories, supervised or unsupervised sessions, practical learning at workshop, independent study in library, reading at home, and any other forms of study of the learner. Notional learning time is not limited to time-tabled teaching/lecturing hours in classrooms.

5. The credit value assigned to a learning programme according to the definition is therefore a simple arithmetical expression of the estimated total hours involved by the learner to achieve the learning outcomes specified for the relevant programmes (at the rate of one QF credit point for each 10 hours).

6. It should also be noted that the QF credit value assigned to a learning programme is determined on the basis of the ability of an **average learner** selected for the programme.

Principles

7. The principles relating to QF credit assignment, quality assurance and award of QF credits are set out below:

- (a) **QF credit assignment** – QF credit value of a learning programme is normally determined by teachers and designer of the programme using their professional judgment and drawing on their knowledge of the subject, experience of the abilities and aptitude of typical cohort of learners. QF credit value is a rough estimation rather than a precise calculation of the learning time to be spent by an average learner; and
- (b) **Quality assurance** – To ensure credibility, the QF credit value assigned to a programme should be quality assured as part of the accreditation process of the programme. In the context of Hong Kong QF, this will be the responsibility of the institution designing and offering the programme if it is a self-accrediting

institution¹ within the meaning of Schedule 2 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance. Where the qualifications are under the purview of the Joint Quality Review Committee, the institutions concerned should also seek advice from the Committee. In respect of programmes offered by non-self-accrediting institutions, the QF credit values assigned should be quality assured by the HKCAAVQ as part of the accreditation exercise for the programmes; and

- (c) **Award of QF credits** – QF credits should only be awarded after it has been assessed that the specified outcomes of the learning programme have been achieved. It should not be so awarded simply because the learner has spent sufficient learning time on the programme. It is therefore important that a reliable and valid assessment be incorporated as an integral part of the learning programme in order to ensure that the QF credits awarded is credible.

Development of QF credit

8. Understanding QF credit is an important step in the development of QF. It provides a common currency which allows learners to better understand the qualifications and the associated learning programmes they intend to pursue. It enables learners to measure and differentiate among qualifications recognised under the QF. Also, it helps promote the development of modularized or bite-size learning to suit the need of learners. With the introduction of QF credits, the QF will become a more effective platform for promoting and facilitating lifelong learning.

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¹ A self-accrediting institution includes an institution which has been granted Programme Area Accreditation status and eligible to accredit its own qualifications within a selected programme area.

QF Credit
- Definition and Principles -

1. QF Credit	
Definition QF credit is a quantified means to measure learning. Upon verified achievement of the specified learning outcomes, learners will be awarded the QF credit.	Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none">● QF credit is measured in terms of notional learning hours.● One QF credit is equal to 10 notional learning hours of successful learning activity.● Emphasis of assessment is on the learning achieved and not the time served.● Learners will be awarded the QF credit fully (and not partially) if they have attained the designated learning outcomes.● QF credit is awarded independent of grading or achievement with merit or not.
2. Notional Learning Time	
Definition Notional learning time refers to the amount of time an average learner is expected to take to complete all the learning and achieve the learning outcomes.	Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Taught or contact time will vary according to delivery mode, but notional learning time will not.● Notional learning time is different from and not equal to actual learning time.● Notional learning time is estimated based on time required of a typical and average learner.● All learning relevant to the learning outcomes should be considered in estimating the notional learning time.● Learning outcomes are important considerations when notional learning time is estimated.

3. Average Learner	
<p>Definition</p> <p>An average learner refers to a typical learner among a class of learners with varying abilities, aptitudes, experiences and motivation.</p>	<p>Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In estimating the notional learning time, it is essential to identify the expected learner profiles and what constitutes a typical learner. ● Notional learning time refers to the amount of time learners on average is expected to take.
4. Level and QF Credit Value	
<p>Definition</p> <p>QF credit value refers to the amount of credit attached to a particular unit at a specified level.</p>	<p>Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● QF credit size will be meaningless without specification of the level of learning. Level of the learning can be mapped against the Generic Level Descriptors. ● Amount of learning that can be achieved in a given number of hours by a learner will vary with the level of the learning programmes. ● QF credit value is expressed in terms of a number of QF credits at a specified level. ● An award or qualification may be composed of modules and units at different levels.
5. Learning Outcomes and Achievements	
<p>Definition</p> <p>QF credit is awarded to learners who have achieved the designated learning outcomes after the appropriate assessments.</p>	<p>Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning outcomes must be assessed so that QF credit can be granted. ● Assessment system and criteria should spell out what the learner is expected to know and do, in order to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved.