

Qualifications Guidelines **for SCS-based Courses** *(updated in February 2010)*

This note sets out the principles and guidelines that govern the design of SCS-based education and training courses or programmes (in short the “SCS-based Courses”). SCS-based courses refer to the learning programmes that adopt the Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) formulated by respective Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) under the Qualifications Framework as the main basis in curriculum design. The learning content of these courses or programmes are primarily based on the SCS while the learning outcomes should also match with the performance requirements as set out in the SCS.

Characteristics of SCS-based Courses

2. “SCS-based Courses” should have the following characteristics:
 - (a) the curriculum emphasizes the application and acquisition of knowledge and skills required in the workplace, as explicated in the SCS of the industry concerned;
 - (b) the structure and sequence of the learning content as drawn from the SCS relate to the job skills of the industry;
 - (c) the contexts of teaching as well as learning are either work-based or in work simulated environments; and
 - (d) the assessment of the learning outcomes focuses on the competency achieved, thereby meeting the performance requirements and outcome standards of the concerned Unit of Competency (UoC) stipulated in the SCS.

Qualifications Guidelines (QG)

Guideline #1 : Qualification Titles

3. SCS-based Courses adopt a standardized system of qualification and award titles as follows:

Qualification/Award Titles			Exit Level	
Existing Titles	New Titles for SCS-based Courses			
<i>Graduate Cert/Dip</i> <i>Postgraduate Cert/Dip</i> <i>Professional Cert/Dip</i>	Module Certificate	Qualifier (optional) + Certificate	Qualifier (optional) + Diploma	5 - 7
<i>Higher/Advanced Dip</i>			Diploma	4
<i>Higher/Advanced Cert</i> <i>Dip/Foundation Dip</i>			Diploma	3
<i>Cert/Foundation Cert</i> <i>Intermediate Cert</i>		Certificate		2
<i>Cert/Foundation Cert</i>		Certificate		1

4. The following examples are used to illustrate how the qualification or award titles should be adopted:

- (a) the title of **Module Certificate** is used as a generic term for all courses or programmes at Levels 1 to 7 with small learning size of < 36 QF credits;
- (b) the title of **Certificate** is used for Levels 1 to 2 with learning size of ≥ 36 QF credits;
- (c) an optional **qualifier** (e.g. “*Professional*”, “*Advanced*” etc) can be used in front of the title of Certificate if the programmes are at Levels 3 to 7 with medium to large learning size of ≥ 36 QF credits;
- (d) the title of **Diploma** is used for programmes at Levels 3 to 7 with larger learning size of ≥ 120 QF credits;

- (e) an optional **qualifier** is allowed in front of the award title of Diploma if the programmes are at Levels 4 to 7 with learning size of ≥ 120 QF credits.

5. A qualifier refers to a prefix preceding the generic title of “Certificate” or “Diploma” at Levels 3 to 7. Though there is not a set of rules regulating the use of qualifiers, it is suggested that the providers should consider adopting the appropriate qualifier in relation to the learning outcomes of the award. The qualifiers of “*Advanced*” and “*Professional*”, for instance, normally refer to the learning outcomes at the relatively higher Level 4 or above, whilst the qualifier of “*Postgraduate*” will normally be used for award titles above Level 5.

6. In addition to the qualifiers and the generic award titles of “Certificate” and “Diploma”, the Qualification Guidelines also require that the qualification titles should comprise two other parts, i.e. the industry or job competency, and the level of the award in bracket. The full title of a SCS-based course should be stated (in English or Chinese version) as the following examples:

- Module Certificate in Hair Cutting (Level 2)
(剪髮單元證書 (二級))
- Certificate in Watch and Clock Repair (Level 1)
(鐘錶維修證書 (一級))
- Diploma in Digital Printing and Design (Level 3)
(數碼印刷及設計文憑 (三級))
- Higher Diploma in Hair Perming and Styling (Level 4)
(電髮及造型高級文憑 (四級))

Guideline #2 : Qualification Levels

7. All SCS-based Courses are level-rated from the lowest QF Level 1 to the highest Level 7. The QF Level reflects the relative depth and complexity of learning.

8. Each QF Level is characterized by the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD)¹, which set out the generic learning outcomes of the qualifications located at that level. Qualifications with the same level indicate that the qualifications are comparable in terms of their generic learning outcomes, but yet they may differ in terms of their objectives/purposes, content or specific learning outcomes.

Guideline #3 : QF Credits

9. SCS-based Courses are credit-rated based on the QF credit definition and principles, which equate one QF credit to 10 notional learning hours². SCS-based Courses are governed by the following credit framework:

Exit Level	New Title			Minimum Number or Percentage of Credits at Exit Level
5 - 7	Module Certificate < 36 credits	Qualifier (optional) + Certificate ≥ 36 credits	Qualifier (optional) +	Diploma 72 credits
4			Diploma ≥ 120 credits	
3			Diploma ≥ 120 credits	
2		Certificate ≥ 36 credits		Module Certificate 60% of total credits
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¹ For details, please refer to the website: http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_GLD.asp

² For details on the concept and principles of QF credit, please refer to the website http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_Credit.asp

10. The credit framework stipulates that 36 credits or above is required for a **Certificate** and 120 credits or above (at Level 3 or above) is required for a **Diploma**. **Module Certificate** will be awarded for courses below 36 credits.

11. To qualify for an award at an exit level, a minimum of 60% of total credits or 72 credits, whichever is less, should be at the exit level.

Guideline #4 : Curriculum Design

12. The curriculum design governs the learning content and outcomes. The Qualification Guidelines require that **60% or above** (in terms of the QF credits) of the learning content be drawn from the SCS.

13. In addition to the industry-specific SCS, and subject to paragraph 14, the provider can use the Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGC) and count the use of the SGC within the 60% SCS. SGC comprises four strands of foundation skills, namely, English, Chinese (including Putonghua), Numeracy and IT. They are developed for use in vocational context with the focus of meeting workplace requirements.

14. The use of SGC counted as SCS in SCS-based courses is currently set at a ceiling of 10% of the total learning credits of the courses. This applies to courses of 120 QF credits or above only. For courses of less than 120 QF credits, the requirement of using 60% industry-specific SCS will remain.

Accreditation Issues

15. In order to be qualified as “SCS-based”, the courses must comply with the principles and requirements of the four guidelines under this QG. Such courses must have to go through the normal accreditation procedures of the Accreditation Authority (except those courses offered by the self-accrediting

institutions), which will cover the entry requirements, the curriculum content, the instructional methodologies, the assessment criteria, the exit standard and others, before they can be uploaded onto the Qualifications Register and be labeled as “SCS-based Courses” under QF.

Education Bureau

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