

# **Policy and Principles for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)**

## **FAQs**

### **General Questions**

**1. What is credit accumulation and transfer (CAT)?**

CAT refers to the process by which credits accumulated in one qualification or context of learning are counted (and transferred) towards completion of the requirements for another qualification, minimizing repeated learning.

**2. Why is the development of CAT important in the context of the Qualifications Framework (QF)?**

The main objective of establishing QF by the Government is to promote lifelong learning. In 2012, we introduced the use of QF credit. The subsequent development of CAT under QF will facilitate prior learning to be recognized and transferred to future learning, thus building effective pathways to support learner mobility and progression .

**3. How is the overall implementation of CAT policy in jurisdictions with QFs?**

At present, there are about 100 countries and places with QF systems, mostly in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Africa. Some of these advanced QF systems, including those in New Zealand, Scotland, Ireland and other EU member states, are underpinned by CAT policies.

**4. What is the implementation plan of the Education Bureau (EDB) upon the promulgation of the CAT policy and principles? Will there be any pilot projects?**

Upon the promulgation of the CAT policy and principles, EDB plans to launch several pilot projects, including the following:

- a. Pilot project in encouraging providers to devise criteria and procedures to grant credit transfer or course exemption to people holding qualifications under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism;
- b. Pilot project in supporting cooperation between the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) and Vocational Training Council (VTC) to grant credit transfer or course exemption for ERB learners progressing to relevant VTC programmes; and
- c. Pilot project in fostering bilateral and multilateral agreements among providers, professional bodies and enterprises to establish progression pathways with credit transfer for students or employees in pursuit of lifelong learning.

**5. What are the benefits of CAT for different groups of stakeholders?**

For learners, CAT allows recognition of their prior learning and minimizing repeated learning.

For providers, the CAT policy encourages a more holistic approach to qualification planning and development, and facilitates better communication and cooperation between providers and across sectors.

For the society as a whole, CAT optimises the use of educational resources and strengthens the integrity and coherence of the education system.

**6. What is the expected outcome following the CAT promulgation? Will EDB expect more transparent procedures for CAT applicants, and more transparent information on CAT arrangements and mechanism of the providers?**

The promulgated policy and principles set out the key features and considerations in implementing CAT, and serve as valuable reference for training providers. EDB encourages training providers to make reference to the document in developing or refining their CAT mechanism according to their own circumstances. In particular, they are encouraged to enhance the transparency of CAT-related information through the institutional websites. Useful information may include application procedures, criteria for granting credit transfer, successful cases or statistics, articulation agreements with other training providers, etc.

Learners and the public will also have better awareness of CAT upon the promulgation of the CAT policy and principles.

### **Adoption of CAT Policy and Principles**

#### **7. How should the providers adopt the CAT policy and principles?**

Providers which have already set up their CAT systems may review and refine their existing systems with reference to the policy and principles. For providers which have yet to set up their CAT systems, they are encouraged to establish their own system making reference to the promulgated policy and principles.

#### **8. Will there be any timeline or deadline for adoption?**

There is no timeline or deadline for adoption at present. We encourage providers to develop, refine and enhance the transparency of their CAT systems and databases as appropriate.

#### **9. Will there be any supporting measures to providers for adoption of the CAT policy and principles?**

First of all, EDB will organise two briefings in August and September 2014 to explain in more details the essential principles and practicalities in establishing or refining CAT systems. Successful experience in CAT implementation will also be shared by

experts. EDB also plans to display CAT-related information of individual programmes in centralized websites such as the Qualifications Register.

EDB welcomes views from stakeholders on how to further encourage the adoption of the policy and principles by training providers.

### **Key Features and Consideration for CAT Implementation**

**10. Will the adoption of different credit units by different institutions affect the implementation of the CAT policy?**

At present, higher education institutions in Hong Kong may adopt different credit units. However, this should not affect recognition by institutions of the previous learning of students as the QF credit may serve as a common currency to facilitate credit conversion, accumulation and transfer.

**11. Will the promulgation of the CAT policy and principles facilitate mobility of learners, such as the articulation between sub-degree and degree programmes?**

The CAT policy and principles cover all levels of accredited learning under QF, including sub-degree and degree programmes. The Common Descriptors governing the associate degree and higher diploma programmes stipulate the general articulation policy towards an undergraduate programme. We hope that the promulgation of the CAT policy and principles will facilitate providers to take into account credit transfer in designing their programmes and to conclude agreements with other institutions on credit transfer as appropriate.

**12. Will an institution and its programmes be subject to further accreditation after adoption of CAT?**

Most institutions, as a current practice, consider credit transfer applications upon admission of students to their programmes and decide on whether to grant course/module exemption. Generally speaking, adoption of a clear CAT policy and making the CAT system transparent to students do not constitute any major change to the institution or its programmes. Further accreditation of the institution or its programmes due to CAT is not necessary.

**13. Does CAT system cover “old” qualifications and credits?**

CAT system does not impose any restriction for institutions to consider qualifications obtained before the introduction of QF. Decisions on credit transfer would be based on the concept of learning outcomes which are applicable to all qualifications and credits. However, learners should be aware that review of such cases may take more time than normal.

Institutions have the full discretion to establish guidelines pertaining to the acceptance or otherwise of the “old” credits and qualifications, particularly in content areas subject to rapid changes in knowledge such as computing and information technology, etc. .

**14. Will there be commonly accepted norms on the shelf life and grades of credits that can be transferred?**

Such norms are for the institutions themselves to decide and regulate.

**15. How can the institutions enhance the transparency of the CAT policy, system and database? Will EDB establish a central database for public access?**

Institutions are encouraged to publicize the CAT information in their institutional websites. CAT information may include application procedures, criteria for granting credit transfer, successful cases or statistics, articulation agreements with other training providers, etc. Development of institutional database of CAT activities with

statistical information will also facilitate future review of the institutional CAT system.

Besides, EDB plans to display CAT-related information of individual programmes in centralized websites such as the Qualifications Register.