

Guidelines for Recognition of Professional Qualifications under Hong Kong Qualifications Framework

Introduction

1. The Education Bureau (EDB) introduced in September 2018 an initiative for eligible organisations to seek accreditation to become appointed assessment agencies for issuing Professional Qualifications recognised under Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF).

2. “Professional Qualifications” refers to qualifications (other than mere membership status) granted by a bona fide local organisation to individuals who meet the requisite academic qualifications plus prescribed years of industry or professional experience and have passed through a robust assessment in written or practical format, not necessarily underpinned by an associated learning programme.

3. In connection with the policy objective of the QF, it is fundamentally important that the assessments to which the Professional Qualifications relate are accessible to practitioners and the workforce in Hong Kong so that they are able to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences and enhance their capability and competitiveness through these assessments.

4. The Professional Qualifications and the assessments concerned are offered, assessed and awarded by competent local organisations. The organisations issuing the Professional Qualifications should be requested to demonstrate that the assessments concerned can cater for the learning needs of people in Hong Kong.

Target Applicants

5. Target applicants include the following types of bona fide local organisations, whether statutory or non-statutory, profit making or non-profit making¹:

¹ Non-profit-making organisations refer to approved charitable institutions or trust of a public character exempt from tax under the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112).

- *Professional bodies* which administer professional certifications for a discipline, or a profession, or an industry or a branch of an industry;
- *Regulatory bodies* which issue licences through assessments, e.g. trade tests or licentiate examinations.

Scope of Professional Qualifications

6. Types of qualifications covered include:

- Professional qualifications;
- Occupation-based qualifications;
- Licence-related qualifications; and
- Trade tests.

Conditions for Application

7. An organisation applying to become an appointed assessment agency for issuing Professional Qualifications should provide evidence to justify:

- It has close affiliation with an industry or a branch of the industry concerned;
- It has broad representation and support of an industry or a branch of the industry concerned, including employers, employees, relevant regulatory agencies, etc.;
- It has extensive membership coverage of practitioners in an industry or a branch of the industry concerned; and
- It makes significant contributions to an industry or a branch of the industry concerned.

Process of Application

8. The application process involves the following steps:

Step 1 - The applicant organisation discusses its initial plan with the Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS).

Step 2 - The applicant organisation submits a proposal to the EDB via QFS for initial screening. For non-statutory applicant organisations, an Assessment Panel made up of representatives of EDB, QFS and relevant experts may be set up to scrutinise the proposal as deemed necessary by EDB and QFS.

Step 3 - On the recommendation of the EDB/QFS or the Assessment Panel, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) conducts an accreditation with the applicant organisation to determine whether it is competent to be an assessment agency for issuing selected Professional Qualification(s).

Step 4 - Upon successful completion of the accreditation, the Secretary for Education will consider appointing the applicant organisation as an assessment agency under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592), taking into consideration the accreditation result and the proposal submitted by the applicant organisation.

- Upon appointment by the Secretary for Education as an assessment agency, the applicant organisation will be able to issue Professional Qualifications recognised under the QF and registered in the Qualifications Register in the category of Professional Qualifications, to be distinguished from qualifications underpinned by learning programmes, and those issued under the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism.

9. If the appointed assessment agency intends to expand the scope of accreditation status by including additional Professional Qualifications, it is required to go through the above application process. The expiry date of the validity period of such additional Professional Qualifications will tie

in with the appointed assessment agency's term of appointment.

10 The appointed assessment agency shall submit to EDB via QFS a written expression of intent to pursue re-accreditation and seek continuous appointment by Secretary for Education at least 18 months before the expiry of the current appointment term. The appointed assessment agency shall follow Steps 3 – 4 in paragraph 8 above if no new additional Professional Qualifications are to be included in the new appointment term. The proposal should be submitted to the EDB via QFS at least 3 months before the expiry of the current appointment term.

Accreditation fees

11. The latest accreditation fee schedule is available on the HKCAAVQ website at www.hkcaavq.edu.hk. The exact accreditation fee for a specific exercise will be specified in the Service Agreement signed between the HKCAAVQ and the applicant organisation or the appointed assessment agency.

Financial support to successful applicant organisations

12. Financial subsidy will be provided under the Designated Support Schemes for QF to the successful applicant organisations on a reimbursement basis as follows:

for non-profit making organisations:

- 100% of the accreditation / re-accreditation fees;
- 100% of the accreditation fees for subsequent inclusion of additional Professional Qualifications.

for other organisations:

- 50% of the accreditation / re-accreditation fees;
- 50% of the accreditation fees for subsequent inclusion of additional Professional Qualifications.

Enquiries

13. For enquiries, please contact the QFS via the following means:

Telephone: 3793 3955

Facsimile: 3106 2035

Email: hkqf@edb.gov.hk

Qualifications Framework Secretariat

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