

## **Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill**

### **Arrangements for the Accreditation of SUS/ERB Courses**

At the meeting of the Bills Committee on the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill (the Bill) held on 21 February 2006, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) was requested to provide information on the arrangements for accrediting course providers under the Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS) and the Employees Retraining Board (ERB).

#### **Principle of HKCAA Accreditation**

2. The HKCAA adopts the principle of ‘fitness for purpose’ in all accreditation activities. A provider or a learning programme is assessed according to the stated purposes of the education/training involved, while taking into account the ability to maintain and improve standards in a sustainable manner.

3. Under the Bill, the HKCAA will be specified as the QF Accreditation Authority. In preparation for this role, the HKCAA has embarked on a series of researches, surveys, and consultations in order to learn from overseas examples, to know about the courses and providers, to devise sets of new quality assurance guidelines and procedures and to obtain relevant feedback. It is against this background that the idea of pilot study has evolved.

#### **Pilot Study for SUS/ERB courses**

4. The primary purpose of the pilot study is to achieve a deeper understanding of the characteristics of training courses that are traditionally outside the HKCAA’s remit and are to be covered by the QF, notably those under various Government-sponsored training or retraining schemes. This idea was put forth on several occasions in early 2005 to a wide range of training

providers. The general response was favourable. As a result of these consultation sessions, pilot studies on seven groups of providers, including those under SUS and ERB were conducted by the HKCAA.

5. The pilot studies on SUS and ERB were planned with the knowledge that some quality control measures for SUS/ERB courses are currently in place. For the SUS, there are Government appointed Industry Working Groups (IWG) for identifying training needs, developing course content, setting teaching staff appointment criteria etc. For the ERB courses, an advisory committee structure is set up to provide similar advice.

6. In partnership with the SUS and ERB Secretariats, SUS IWG, ERB Course Steering Groups and the providers, 18 site visits were conducted for selected courses under respective “SUS industries” or “ERB categories” between February and March 2005. Meetings were also held with members of the SUS IWGs and the two Secretariats. The visits were conducted with participation of practitioners knowledgeable about the training needs of respective trade or industry. Interactive discussions were made during these visits with course managers, teachers and students. Useful information was collected about the overarching quality control mechanisms for these two schemes.

### **A Sampling Approach**

7. The rather positive outcomes of the pilot studies enable the HKCAA to move a step further to plan for a simplified accreditation process for SUS and ERB courses upon the enactment of the Bill.

8. As all courses under SUS or ERB share common characteristics and come under the same quality control mechanism, the HKCAA sees the feasibility to group SUS/ERB courses of the same genre and same QF levels, and to conduct accreditation work on a sampling basis. The sampling approach is premised on the fact that courses of the same genre share common characteristics which are examined and monitored under the same QA mechanism. Through this approach, a large number of courses can be covered in a relatively short period, without overloading the course providers or compromising the upfront principle that all courses recognized under the QF

must have been quality assured.

9. It is envisaged that with the approach above and given the ground work already done, the great majority of ERB and SUS courses will be able to come onto the Qualifications Register very quickly once the legislated framework is in place.

### **Application of the Sampling Approach**

10. The pilot studies and sampling exercise conducted for the SUS and ERB have provided the HKCAA valuable information and feedback in adapting its accreditation guidelines and procedures for the industrial sector. The same sampling approach may also be used for providers under other Government financed courses, where feasible.

Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation  
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