

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

### **Recognition of Prior Learning Mechanism**

This paper briefs Members on the guiding principles, implementation details, the pilot scheme and the review mechanism of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism as proposed by the Administration.

#### **Background**

2. The establishment of the Qualifications Framework (QF) by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) is to provide a platform to promote lifelong learning. We hope that by setting out clearly the standards required of different qualifications, ensuring the quality of these qualifications, and specifying the articulation ladders between them, a QF with multiple pathways can be established for members of the public to draw up their own road maps for learning and acquire the relevant qualifications.

3. The QF provides an objective platform which systematically categorizes recognised qualifications into different levels with well-defined standards. The QF covers the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors and provides pathways for credit accumulation and transfer. Moreover, under the QF, qualifications are not confined to academic and training attainments. Workers' skills, knowledge and relevant experience accumulated at work can also be recognised through the RPL mechanism.

#### **Industry Training Advisory Committees**

4. Over the past two years, the EMB has set up 12 industry-led Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) by phases in the implementation of the QF. Their primary functions include setting industry-recognised competency standards as the basis for developing training programmes relevant to industry needs and implementing the RPL mechanism. Before establishing a specific ITAC, the EMB will conduct detailed discussion and consultation with major organisations or bodies of the industry, in particular with labour unions, trade associations, relevant professional bodies and government departments. An ITAC will be set up only when a consensus is reached within the industry that the implementation of the QF would benefit the industry. The setting up of ITACs is industry-led and their members mainly come from representatives of employers, employees and relevant professional bodies. We will continue to implement the QF for different industries by phases based on the "voluntary participation" and "industry led"

principles.

5. The first three ITACs (i.e. Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock and Hairdressing ITACs) have completed drafting of the Specification of Competency Standards (SCSs) and conducted extensive consultation within the industries.

### **RPL Mechanism**

6. The purpose of establishing the RPL mechanism is to encourage workers to pursue continuing education and lifelong learning. Having considered the prior learning of workers, training providers may grant exemption to them from embarking on parts of the training programmes so that the workers concerned need not start from the basics or repeat training.

#### **(a) Guiding Principles**

7. The guiding principles of the RPL mechanism are as follows:

##### **(i) Making reference to SCSs**

7.1 Being the necessary reference for the RPL process, SCSs for each industry have to be developed first before details of the implementation of the RPL mechanism can be worked out.

##### **(ii) Levels of qualifications for recognition**

7.2 **QF qualifications at Levels 1 to 4** will form the basis of recognition for the pilot scheme of the RPL mechanism. Such arrangement should be able to cater for the needs of the majority of serving workers who have no formal academic qualifications but intend to acquire the relevant qualifications through the RPL mechanism.

##### **(iii) Clustering of units**

7.3 To facilitate workers to have their qualifications recognised in a simple and efficient manner and to ensure that the RPL process is cost-effective, the RPL mechanism will be conducted **in the form of clusters of units**. Units of competency to be combined shall be based on the functional areas or types of occupations of the industry. While the number of units in each cluster may vary, the units to be involved must tally with the overall competency requirements of the

relevant job types.

7.4 A cluster of units may consist of units of the same level or different levels. Hence, the overall level of qualification for the cluster of units should be determined by making reference to the level of units with the greatest weight of credit values, which should at least account for **60%** of the total.

(iv) **Criteria for recognition**

7.5 Years of working experience and relevant experience will form the basic requirements for recognition of qualifications under the RPL mechanism. According to the recommendations from various ITACs, the **minimum** years of relevant working experience required for recognition of QF qualifications at Levels 1 to 4 will be one year, three years, five years and six years respectively. Job duties for posts previously held by the applicant should correlate with the cluster of units of competency for which recognition is sought. Individual ITACs will carefully consider the requirements on relevant experience by taking into account the actual circumstances of their respective industries.

7.6 During the RPL process, applicants have to undergo certain assessment besides being considered in respect of their years of working experience. Transitional arrangements, however, will be put in place for workers applying for recognition of QF qualifications at Levels 1 to 3. Details are set out in paragraph 8 below. Assessment may be in the form of interview, written examination, trade test, workplace examination or any combination of the above, subject to the circumstances of individual industries or types of occupations. Specific requirements will be developed by the ITACs concerned.

7.7 Given that workers may change jobs and their posts or job functions may change accordingly, the years of working experience should be defined as the **cumulative total number of years engaged in the relevant job.** Consecutive years of working experience are not required.

(v) **Proof of years of working experience and relevant experience**

7.8 The applicant must provide evidence of years of working experience or other supplementary evidence to prove that the functional areas that he/she has previously engaged in tally with the combination of units of competency that has been applied for recognition. To ensure authenticity of such evidence, the documentary proof must be issued by the employer or an authorised person (such as division head or supervisor).

7.9 If the applicant is unable to provide the aforesaid evidence of years of working experience, other supporting evidence (e.g. attestation of job issued by registered trade associations or labour unions, tax demand note, payroll slip, or self-employed person's proof of business registration) may be submitted to the assessment agency for reference.

7.10 The assessment agency will verify the evidence of years of working experience submitted by the applicant. If the information is incomplete or cannot be verified, the assessment agency will invite the applicant to attend an interview in order to assess the validity of the applicant's years of working experience.

(b) **Transitional Arrangements**

8. To address the concerns of the industries, especially from the labour unions, we agree to introduce a five-year transitional period under the RPL mechanism. The transitional period refers to the first five years after the assessment agency has started receiving RPL applications from workers of the relevant industries. During the transitional period, workers may apply for recognition of QF qualifications at Levels 1 to 3 based on their years of working experience and relevant experience, without the need for taking any assessments. After the end of the transitional period, all levels of qualifications must be attained through assessments. The form of assessment will be in line with the skills and knowledge required of individual levels. It is suggested that a simpler form of assessment (such as interviews) for QF Level 1 would be used.

(c) **Pilot Scheme**

9. Subject to the enactment of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill, we intend to introduce a **two-year** pilot

scheme for specific industries and conduct an interim review one year after its implementation. The pilot scheme will be implemented in the first three industries that have formulated their respective SCSs, namely the Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock and Hairdressing industries. These industries have extensively discussed and reached a preliminary consensus on the mode of operation and specific arrangements of the RPL mechanism.

**(d) Ways of Recognition**

10. An applicant will be issued a Statement of Attainment (at Annex) if he/she can prove that he/she possesses the years of service and relevant experience as required. The Statement of Attainment contains the following basic information:

- (a) Name of the recognised cluster of units;
- (b) Registration number of the recognised cluster of units on the Qualifications Register; and
- (c) Overall level of qualification of the recognised cluster of units.

11. It is expected that some workers may not be able to provide sufficient documentary proof of their years of service and relevant experience, or though they possess the relevant years of service and relevant experience, they intend to prove that they possess the relevant competencies through assessments. In this connection, we suggest that applicants should be allowed to opt to obtain QF qualifications at Levels 1 to 3 under the PRL mechanism through assessments. Aside from the Statement of Attainment, assessment agencies might issue another document to applicants who have attained the relevant qualifications through assessments.

**(e) Assessment Agencies**

12. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) will be appointed as the recognised assessment agency for the first three industries covered in the pilot scheme. With its ample and rich experience in skills training and trade tests, the VTC is endowed with adequate assessment facilities and manpower to cater for the implementation of the pilot scheme. As the VTC has been responsible for drawing up the SCSs for the first four industries participating in the QF, it is well acquainted with the criteria and method for the assessment of the units of competency.

**(f) Review Mechanism for the Pilot Scheme**

13. We shall review the RPL mechanism to see if it is operating smoothly and meets the needs of the industries one year after the implementation of the pilot scheme. We shall maintain close liaison with the industries, particularly with representatives of labour unions. Subject to the findings of the review, we shall consider how the mechanism can be extended to cover those industries that have formulated their respective SCSs, and report the review findings to the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower.

Education and Manpower Bureau  
October 2006

## Recognition of Prior Learning

**【Statement of Attainment】**

This is to certify that

**Mr. CHAN TAI MAN**

has been granted recognition of the following  
cluster of units of competency \*  
in **Hairdressing**  
under the Qualifications Framework

**Shampooing, Conditioning, Winding & Blow-drying Techniques : Level 1**<sup>@</sup>

(Registration Number : xxxxxxxx)



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Head, ABC Assessment Agency

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**Note:**

@ The Qualifications Framework comprises seven levels, from Level 1 (elementary) to Level 7 (most advanced).

\* For details of the clustering of units of competency, please visit the following website on Qualifications Register:

**【[www.hkqr.edu.hk](http://www.hkqr.edu.hk)】**