

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Professional Accreditation by the Nursing Council of Hong Kong

The Role of the Nursing Council of Hong Kong

1. The Nursing Council of Hong Kong (“**the Council**”) accredits training courses for nurses for the purpose of registration or enrolment provided under the Nurses Registration Ordinance (Cap. 164).
2. The accreditation carried out by the Council is a professional assessment aiming to ensure the professional standard of a training course. It is different, and should be distinguished, from academic assessment concerned only about the academic level. Since November 2002, graduates of courses accredited by the Council are eligible for direct registration or enrolment to practise in Hong Kong. The Council accredits no course failing to achieve the requisite professional standard lest putting the public health and interest at stake.

Information about Accreditation

3. To achieve the above-mentioned purpose, the Council has set up a fair and independent accreditation mechanism. An Accreditation Committee (“**AC**”) has been set up to handle applications for accreditation. The AC consists of Council members, as well as co-opted members, appointed by the Council in consideration of their expertise. To maintain objectivity and expertise in the accreditation process, members with different backgrounds are appointed to the AC. They include experts from the nursing field, the academic field, the medical field, the public sector and private hospitals.
4. Members of the AC are divided into several panels. Each application for accreditation is assigned to one of the panels on condition that the assigned panel members do not have any affiliation with the programme under consideration. As part of the accreditation process, an accreditation panel will be formed to conduct the accreditation visit. It consists of seven members, including three Council members, two non-council members of the AC, one external member who does not have nursing background and the Secretary of the Council or his/her designate. The Council has invited 11 renowned professionals who are respectable leaders in the healthcare system or academic field to serve as external members. They provide valuable contribution for the accreditation panel to make objective and comprehensive recommendations.
5. All the members involved in the accreditation take part on a voluntary basis, and will declare interest and abstain from participating, if necessary.

6. The well-established mechanism will govern each application to be handled in an objective, professional and fair manner. The accreditation panels will act in accordance with the process and procedure set out in the Handbook for Accreditation of Training Institutions.

7. Insofar as the merits of the applications are concerned, the accreditation panels will take into account factors such as the teaching team, curriculum of the programme concerned, quality assurance mechanism and clinical teaching, etc. by reference to the Syllabus, the Core Competencies, the Code of Professional Conduct, Scope of Professional Practice and Guide to Good Nursing Practice developed by the Council which have been made available to the public on the web.

8. The accreditation panels will forward their findings to the AC for consideration. The AC will in turn make recommendations to the Council for deliberation.

9. Following the Council's decision to allow direct registration and enrolment of students graduated from accredited programmes in November 2002, the Council has approved 11 applications for accreditation or re-accreditation, and rejected 3. The courses accredited are not confined to degree programmes, but include also programmes at the level of Higher Diploma.

Application for Accreditation from Hong Kong Institute of Technology

10. As regards Hong Kong Institute of Technology (“HKIT”), it first submitted an application for accreditation of its Associate Degree in Nursing to the Council in August 2005. The Council rejected the application in February 2006 by reason of its failure to meet with the professional standard required. HKIT submitted again in April 2006.

11. Subsequent to its second submission, the Council has all along been informing HKIT about the shortcomings of its programme and the areas of deficiencies requiring improvement in the exchange of correspondences. Unfortunately, HKIT has still failed to meet with the standard expected for accreditation to the satisfaction of the Council. Accordingly, the Council has decided to reject HKIT's application, and notified it on 3 April 2008 with detailed reasons given in writing.

Latest Development

12. Subsequent to the rejection of HKIT, the Hospital Authority has presented to the Council a bridging programme designed for the existing students of HKIT in transition to the Hospital Authority's 3-year Higher Diploma Program and EN (General) Program already accredited by the Council. Having considered the relevant circumstances of the case, the Council has confirmed that it has no opposition to the arrangement made by the Hospital Authority on 22 April 2008.

13. Training institutions will be advised not to commence programmes or to admit students prior to accreditation by the Council. They will also be reminded that they are obliged to keep their students fully informed of the accreditation progress and the risks incurred in studying a programme not accredited by the Council.

The Nursing Council of Hong Kong
April 2008