

For discussion
on 8 June 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications Awarded by Institutions in the Mainland and Taiwan

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the recognition of higher education qualifications awarded by non-local institutions, including those in the Mainland and Taiwan.

Qualification Assessments

2. Recognition of qualifications is essentially user-defined. Generally speaking, it is up to individual employers, professional bodies or education institutions to decide as to whether a particular qualification obtained by an applicant should be regarded as having met the applicable requirements for filling a job position, membership registration or enrolling in a study programme. As regards education qualifications awarded by granting bodies outside Hong Kong, the assessment of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) will often be sought, and such assessments will often be taken into account by the relevant employer/body/institution. This notwithstanding, decisions as to whether or not to accept particular qualifications for employment, registration and study purposes still, in the final analysis, rest with the employer/body/institution.

3. Established under HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150), HKCAAVQ, and the former Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation, have been providing professional assessment service to individuals possessing education qualifications awarded by granting bodies operated outside Hong Kong since 1994. Each application is considered independently on the basis of the totality of the applicant's academic qualifications, with emphasis on the integrated learning outcomes of the highest and terminal qualifications and the components of the course of study (including advanced standing or transfer of credits) acquired by the applicant. The assessment intends to offer a

non-binding professional opinion to the individual on whether the totality of his/her educational qualification(s) meets the standard of a particular qualification level in Hong Kong.

4. Generally speaking, HKCAAVQ will take into account the following factors in assessing qualifications from places outside Hong Kong, including the Mainland and Taiwan -

- (a) Was the granting body of the qualification accredited and recognized in the home country at the time of the award of the qualification?
- (b) Was the education programme accredited and the related qualification recognised in the home country at the time of the award of the qualification?
- (c) What were the entry requirements, exemption/advanced standing practice, assessment and graduation requirements and the progression pathways of the education programme?
- (d) Were the learning outcomes and competencies, as well as the quality of the delivery of the education programme leading to a qualification that meets the standard of a particular qualification level in Hong Kong?

5. In assessing the qualifications, HKCAAVQ will also make reference to international databases on foreign credential recognition such as those provided by credential recognition bodies set up by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) of Australia or the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) contracted by the United Kingdom Government.

6. The number of completed assessment cases from applicants holding qualifications of Bachelor Degree or above and those considered comparable by the HKCAAVQ in 2006/07¹ and 2007/08 are tabulated below -

¹ The annual reporting cycle of HKCAAVQ is from 1 August to 31 July of the following year.

	August 06 to July 07	August 07 to July 08
No of cases completed		
a) Taiwan	110	124
b) Mainland	161	244
c) Other places ²	1 484	1 621
Total	1 755	1 989
No of cases considered comparable (Percentage over cases completed)		
a) Taiwan	66 (60%)	96 (77%)
b) Mainland	144 (89%)	226 (93%)
c) Other places	1 297 (87%)	1 379 (85%)
Total	1 507 (86%)	1 701 (86%)

The majority of the applications were for employment purposes in Hong Kong.

Qualifications assessment of awards from Taiwan

7. Taiwan's higher education system has undergone rapid development in recent years and its quality assurance mechanism has also improved significantly. In 2005, the University Act was amended to ensure universities regularly carry out self-evaluation on teaching, research, services, instruction, academic affairs, administration, student participation and other proceedings, and for the Ministry of Education to organize an evaluation committee and entrust academic organizations or professional evaluators to carry out regular evaluation on the universities. Subsequently, in 2007, the Regulations Regarding the Evaluation of Universities were enacted to set out implementation details of the evaluation to be undertaken by the universities. Since May 2008, HKCAAVQ has implemented a new set of guidelines on assessing Taiwan qualifications. The new guidelines have taken into account the education system, nature, recognition and/or accreditation status of the

² Other places mainly include Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States of America, New Zealand and India.

awarding institution, level, length, structure and nature of the programme, and level of academic achievement.

Qualifications assessment of awards from Mainland

8. In order to promote co-operation between the Mainland and Hong Kong in education and student exchange, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mainland and Hong Kong on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education (MoU) was signed between the Ministry of Education and the then Education and Manpower Bureau in July 2004. The MoU facilitates the mutual recognition of academic qualifications for the purpose of further studies in recognized Mainland and Hong Kong higher education institutions with powers to award degrees at Bachelor or above levels and has been adopted by HKCAAVQ since 2005 as the internal guidelines for assessing qualifications awarded by Mainland institutions. Recognition of Mainland qualifications for employment purposes, however, is not covered under the MoU.

Employment by the Civil Service

9. Qualification requirements for civil service posts in Hong Kong are normally set with reference to qualifications obtainable under the local education system or from local institutions. Candidates holding non-local qualifications, including those awarded by Mainland and Taiwan education institutions, may also apply and they will be considered for appointment if their qualifications are assessed as comparable in standard to the entry qualification requirements of the posts being applied for. Where necessary, the Civil Service Bureau will seek the advice of HKCAAVQ on a case-by-case basis for the assessment of non-local qualifications.

Other Employment

10. As mentioned above, decisions as to whether or not to accept particular non-local qualifications for employment purposes essentially rest with employers. For example, prospective teachers with non-local qualifications, including those awarded by institutions in the Mainland and Taiwan, would need to have their qualifications assessed by HKCAAVQ for teacher registration/appointment purposes. The procedures for teacher registration/appointment are otherwise the same for all local and non-local qualification holders. As regards recognition

of non-local qualifications by other professional bodies for registration purposes, it is at the discretion of individual professional bodies and each case will be considered on its own merits.

Further Studies

11. Higher education institutions in Hong Kong enjoy a high degree of autonomy in managing their internal affairs and student admission is within their institutional autonomy. Applications are considered on the basis of merit, and it does not matter whether an applicant has obtained his/her qualifications locally or outside of Hong Kong. Where necessary, institutions will request the applicants to have their non-local qualifications assessed by HKCAAVQ.

12. Members are invited to note the above findings.

Education Bureau
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