

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Education

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 8 June 2009

Recognition of non-local academic qualifications

Purpose

This paper sets out the existing arrangements concerning the recognition of non-local academic qualifications and the concerns raised by Members on qualifications awarded by higher education institutions in the Mainland.

Existing arrangements

2. At present, there is no formal arrangement for the Government to recognize in general academic qualifications conferred outside Hong Kong, including the Mainland and Taiwan. The private sector, tertiary institutions and professional bodies may decide for themselves whether to accept academic qualifications awarded in other countries for enrolment or recruitment purposes.

3. In devising the entry qualifications for the civil service, the Government primarily makes reference to the qualifications awarded by the local institutions. Degree qualifications awarded by non-local institutions are subject to individual assessment to determine whether they are comparable in standard to the local qualification requirement set for a civil service post. The Civil Service Bureau will seek advice from the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) where necessary.

The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications

4. The HKCAAVQ is a statutory body established under the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Chapter 1150) which came into effect on 1 October 2007. It replaced the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA). The HKCAAVQ is

appointed by the Secretary for Education as the Accreditation Authority and Qualifications Register Authority under the Qualifications Framework to provide qualifications assessment services by offering a professional opinion on whether the totality of the educational qualifications of an applicant, i.e. the integrated learning outcomes of the highest and terminal qualification, meets the standard of a particular qualification level in Hong Kong. The qualifications assessment services also include the provision of professional opinion on non-local teacher training qualifications for prospective teachers who wish to lodge applications to the Education Bureau for appointment to teaching posts and for teacher registration purpose.

5. Qualifications assessment is neither an institutional nor a programme accreditation. The result pertains only to the individual whose qualification is being assessed, and the assessment is not pertaining to a particular educational institution or a particular programme. The outcome of the assessment takes the form of a statement to the applicant, and represents a non-binding professional opinion of the HKCAAVQ. Each application is considered independently, and the assessment result is solely for the reference and use of the applicant. Individual employers, organisations, or educational institutions exercise their own discretion as to whether they accept the professional opinion of the HKCAAVQ in considering the qualification of any particular individual for employment, study or registration purposes.

Mutual recognition of academic degrees in higher education between the Mainland and Hong Kong

6. On 11 July 2004, the Education Bureau and the Ministry of Education of the Government of the People's Republic of China signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mainland and Hong Kong on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education (the Memorandum). The Memorandum aims to strengthen the cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong in the domain of education and to promote the exchange of students between the two places. The mutual recognition arrangement in the Memorandum applies to all the recognized higher education institutions with powers to award degrees at Bachelors or above levels, but does not cover academic awards below Bachelors level awarded by education institutions in both places. Holders of a qualification awarded by listed institutions on one side in the Memorandum may apply for enrolment to postgraduate programmes offered by listed institutions on the other side, but admission decisions rest with the institutions concerned. The list of recognized higher education institutions in both places are updated regularly by the designated bodies.

Members' concerns

7. The Panel on Education has not discussed the subject of recognition of

non-local qualifications per se. Questions had been raised in the Council concerning Hong Kong students pursuing studies in the Mainland and recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions there. The concerns of Members are set out in the following paragraphs.

Number of Hong Kong students studying in the Mainland

8. In the Third Legislative Council, Members had sought information on the number of Hong Kong students studying at Mainland universities and the subjects studied.

9. According to the Administration, it did not maintain records of the number of Hong Kong students studying in the Mainland. The University Grants Committee had commissioned the Census and Statistics Department to conduct a Thematic Household Survey on the "Pattern of Study in Higher Education" from June to August 2004. The survey revealed that among the 2.2 million of domestic households in Hong Kong at the time of enumeration, some 72 000 persons aged 15 and above were pursuing higher education outside Hong Kong. Among them, around 8%, or 5 500 persons, were studying in the Mainland. About 1 400 persons aged 15 and above had completed higher education in the Mainland in the three years before the survey was conducted. The survey further revealed that most Hong Kong students studied "Arts and Humanities" and "Social Sciences" subjects.

10. According to the 2006 Population By-census conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, about 22 900 Hong Kong residents were studying full-time courses in the Mainland, and about 18 700 of them were Hong Kong permanent residents. Among the Hong Kong permanent residents, about 9 600 of them were aged 16 or above, mostly studying post-secondary courses; and the remaining 9 100 aged below 16, mostly studying courses at secondary level or below.

Assessment of qualifications awarded by Mainland institutions

11. In the Second Legislative Council, Members had enquired about the number of qualifications assessment conducted by the HKCAA on bachelors' degrees obtained in the Mainland by residents of Hong Kong and the result of the assessment.

12. According to the figures provided by the HKCAA, it had processed 640 qualifications assessment cases that involved qualifications obtained in the Mainland in the period from 2000 to 2002. As the HKCAA did not require the applicants to declare their nationalities, no breakdown was available in this respect. When assessing a person's overall educational attainment, the HKCAA only considered in totality all the qualifications declared by the applicant. As the assessment was not meant to be a comparison of individual institutions or their programmes, the number of Mainland qualifications that were considered

equivalent to local degrees was not available.

Relevant papers

13. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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**Relevant papers on
recognition of non-local academic qualifications**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Legislative Council	9.7.2003	Oral Question No.2 : asked by Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung Assessment of academic qualifications obtained in the Mainland Hansard (English) (page 25-29)
Legislative Council	3.5.2006	Written Question No.13 : asked by Hon Abraham SHEK Hong Kong students studying at Mainland universities Hansard (English) (page 78-80)
Legislative Council	30.1.2008	Written Question No.13 : asked by Hon David LI Support for Hong Kong students studying on the Mainland Reply