

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

### **Enquiries made by the Vocational Training Committee of Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions on Operational Details of the RPL Mechanism**

The Vocational Training Committee of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) in its letter of 10 January 2007 to the Bills Committee requests the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) to clarify the operational details of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism and the subsidy for the RPL assessment fee.

### **Principles for handling years of working experience and relevant working experience under the RPL Mechanism**

2. FTU noted that when the RPL mechanism was discussed at the Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), some members advised that apart from possessing the prescribed length of working experience in the relevant industry in respect of different levels of qualifications under the Qualifications Framework (QF), an RPL applicant must also possess the relevant working experience in the specified competencies or posts in that industry (“relevant working experience”). FTU enquired whether “relevant working experience” is a new requirement of EMB and whether the Bills Committee has discussed and reached consensus on this issue.

3. Firstly, we wish to point out that “relevant working experience” is not a new requirement. In fact, we have already explained this concept in para. 7.5 of LC Paper No. CB(2) 196/06-07 (02) submitted to the Legislative Council on 31 October 2006. The paragraph is reproduced below-

“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 (UOC) 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.”

4. Under the QF, the competency standards of individual industries are made up of different UOCs. To facilitate workers to have their qualifications recognized in a simple and efficient manner, RPL will be conducted in the form of clusters of UOCs. The units to be combined into clusters are based on the functional areas or types of occupations of the industry. We consider it fair and reasonable to require an in-service worker to possess working experience relevant to that cluster of UOC for which recognition is sought.

5. When discussing the requirement of “relevant working experience”, the ITACs agreed that to avoid creating obstacles to in-service workers, the assessment should be more flexible and that the “relevant working experience” of an RPL applicant in relation to a particular cluster of UOC can be shorter than his/her years of working experience in the relevant industry (i.e. the minimum years of working experience (one year, three years, five years and six years) required for recognition of QF qualifications at Levels 1 to 4.) The details including the years of “relevant working experience” required for individual clusters of UOC will be deliberated by individual ITACs and will be implemented only when there is consensus. The representatives of FTU may continue to reflect their views to ITACs.

### **Subsidy for RPL assessment fee**

5. FTU also enquired whether employees would be eligible for the proposed reimbursement of RPL assessment fee if they did not have plans to enroll in QF-recognized training courses.

6. We have all along emphasized that the purpose of providing reimbursement of RPL assessment fee is to encourage more employees to pursue continuing learning, which is also our aim of implementing the QF. Hence, under our proposal, we will reimburse part of the RPL assessment

fee (to be capped at HK\$1,000) to an employee upon his/her passing an RPL assessment and completion of a QF-recognised training course. The prime objective of RPL is to help employees with low educational attainment to seek recognition of their skills, knowledge and experience, so that they can pursue further learning and skills upgrading without starting from scratch. With limited resources, we believe that our priority is to assist those employees with low educational attainment to pursue continuing learning/skills upgrading. We have already set out the objective of the fee reimbursement scheme in para.13 of LC Paper No. CB(2)196/-6-07(02). We will seek the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council after the enactment of the Bill.

### **Follow-up work**

7. EMB is arranging a meeting with FTU to explain to the Federation the principles and details of the RPL mechanism. We will also maintain close dialogue with the major labour unions.

Education and Manpower Bureau  
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