

Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill

Arrangements for Forming Assessment Panels

At the meeting of the Bills Committee on the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill (the Bill) held on 21 February 2006, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) was requested to provide information on the arrangements for forming assessment panels.

HKCAA as an independent accreditation authority

2. The HKCAA is an independent statutory accreditation body. Although members of the HKCAA Council are appointed by Government, the HKCAA has full autonomy in carrying out its accreditation functions independent of influence from Government or other bodies. The HKCAA is held accountable for the outcome of its accreditation activities.

3. The HKCAA adopts a “fitness for purpose” principle in accreditation. An independent panel comprising members with relevant knowledge and experience in the discipline is formed for each accreditation activity. The membership of accreditation panels is determined according to the principle of ‘peer review’ and balanced representation. The institution asking for the accreditation service may review the tentative list of panelists to check conflict of interest but the final decision rests with the HKCAA itself. At no stage is the Government consulted.

Formation of accreditation panels

4. The HKCAA maintains a “*Register of Subject Specialists*” from which it draws to assemble accreditation panels and to seek advice on matters related to quality assurance. The *Register* comprises local and overseas specialists covering a wide spectrum of academic and vocational disciplines. To prepare for the quality assurance roles under the Qualifications Framework (QF), the

HKCAA has expanded the *Register* particularly in the vocational sectors in order to ensure that the skills, knowledge, attributes and standards required of the workforce in the industry will be reflected and the relevance of the courses to the requirements of industries are ensured. Starting from 2004, through contacts with the Industry Training Advisory Committees, providers of Government-funded training and retraining schemes (such as the SUS and ERB) and other industrial organizations, the HKCAA has added over 300 vocational experts and professional practitioners in 35 industrial sectors to the *Register*, with a view to enlisting the help of these experts in exercises arising out of the QF. These experts in particular will be entrusted to accredit courses which are “skill based” and at the lower ends of the QF levels. The current *Register* has over 1,500 specialists.

Responsibilities of accreditation panels

5. The panel will make independent judgement with a peer-review and evidence-based approach, with due reference made to the information provided in the accreditation document and gathered in a site visit. The panel will formulate its summative views based on all information provided before and during the accreditation visit and submit its recommendations to the HKCAA in the form of accreditation report, after confirming with the provider on points of factual accuracy.

6. All members on accreditation panel serve in their own personal capacity. The panel provides recommendations on the accreditation which are subject to the approval of the HKCAA. As such, members of the panel will not be personally liable to the final outcome of the accreditation.

7. As not all subject specialists have relevant accreditation experience, the HKCAA has organized some training workshops for these experts. Further effort in this regard will continue to ensure that all accreditations are conducted by trained panelists.

8. When the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications starts to discharge its duties under the QF upon the enactment of the Bill, the Council will step up its efforts in inviting suitable vocational experts (in the industries/associated professions where the QF has

been implemented) to participate in the accreditation work under the QF. The Council will also strengthen its knowledge of different industries and professions.

Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation
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