

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Progress Report on the Development and Implementation of the Qualifications Framework

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest progress of the development and implementation of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF).

Latest developments

(a) Industry-led development

2. To ensure relevancy to industry needs, the Education Bureau has been assisting various sectors in setting up Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)¹. Two industries, namely the Testing, Inspection & Certification industry and the Retail industry, have recently set up ITACs in August and September 2010 respectively. With the establishment of these new ITACs, there are at present 15 ITACs for the industries², covering about 42% of the total labour force in Hong Kong.

3. The ITACs have made good progress in drawing up Specifications of Competency Standards (SCS)s of their respective industries, 12 of which have completed the SCSs of specific functional areas. We will continue to support the ITACs in the development of SCSs.

4. Up to end September 2010, there are 126 courses developed by the education and training providers based on the SCSs, with around 7,000 employees taken part in these SCS-based programmes. A number of employers also started making reference to the SCSs for the development of in-house training and human resources management.

¹ ITACs are tasked to draw up Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) for the relevant sectors. The SCSs set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas of the respective sectors, and provide a basis for course providers to design training courses to meet the needs of the sectors.

² Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, Chinese Catering, Hairdressing, Property Management, Electrical & Mechanical Services, Jewellery, Information & Communications Technology, Automotive, Beauty, Logistics, Banking, Import & Export, Testing, Inspection & Certification and Retail.

5. In February 2010, the Education Bureau introduced the Specification of Generic Competencies (SGC) as a complement to the industry-specific SCSs. The competencies identified in the SGC are generic foundation skills required of employees, namely, English, Chinese (including Putonghua), IT and Numeracy, and are developed to meet workplace requirements.

6. We have invited the Vocational Training Council to design vocational English enhancement courses tailored to the needs of specific industries. It is planned that the first batch of courses would be developed and tried out in 2011 after they have been accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).

(b) Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism

7. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism has been developed in parallel with the implementation of the QF so as to enable employees to obtain formal recognition for the knowledge, skills and experience they acquired at the workplace, and facilitate further learning without starting from scratch. The RPL mechanism has been piloted for three industries³ with effect from June 2008.

8. As at end September 2010, more than 1,400 applications involving over 5,200 clusters of competencies at various QF levels have been processed by the assessment agency of the three industries. Nearly all applicants (99.5%) were successfully awarded statements of attainment in respect of the competencies assessed. Applicants who failed in the assessment tests were offered free-of-charge counseling service by the assessment agency to prepare them better for further assessment, if they so wish. The statistical information on these applications is set out at Annex A.

9. We have been working closely with other industries with a view to extending the RPL mechanism to the sectors which have completed their respective SCSs. Following consultations with the relevant ITACs, two more sectors, namely the Property Management industry and the Chinese Catering industry, are ready to launch the RPL mechanism under a

³ Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock and Hairdressing

“collaborative model” for their practitioners in order to cater for the specific circumstances and needs of the industries concerned.

10. In the “collaborative model”, the assessment agency appointed will work together with the other interested parties of the industry, such as the relevant trade associations and/or trade unions, for the provision of venues with the required equipments and facilities for conducting assessments. The assessment agency will remain the sole authority for assessing the skills, knowledge and experience acquired by individuals. Subject to accreditation of the proposed assessment agencies of both sectors, it is expected that the RPL mechanism will be in place for the Property Management industry and the Chinese Catering industry in early 2011 and late 2011 respectively.

11. In the light of the successful experience of the RPL pilot scheme, a higher participation rate of the RPL mechanism towards the later stage of the 5-year transitional period⁴ will be expected. With the introduction of RPL mechanism to another two industries, we also envisage that more practitioners will benefit from the RPL mechanism.

(c) Quality Assurance mechanism

12. The HKCAAVQ, specified as the Accreditation Authority and the Qualifications Register (QR) Authority under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, Cap. 592, is tasked with the responsibility of assuring the quality of qualifications recognised under the QF. The “collective approach” for bulk applications under the same disciplines to streamline the accreditation process and minimise the cost of the exercises is welcomed by the market. Subsequent to a review on vocational accreditation, the HKCAAVQ has devised a new set of checklist and application forms in order to facilitate providers to go through accreditation exercises. The HKCAAVQ will closely monitor the feedback of the market, and keep constant reviews and refinement to the model in the light of operational experience and feedback from education and training providers.

⁴ There is a 5-year transitional period for each industry during which employees may apply for recognition of QF qualifications at QF Levels 1 to 3 based on their past relevant working experience, without the need to take any assessments.

(d) Qualifications Register

13. As a public face of the QF, the QR, a web-based database containing information on qualifications and their respective learning programmes that have been quality assured and recognised under the QF, is available to the public free of charge. As of September 2010, there are over 6,400 academic and vocational qualifications, involving about 200 providers, registered in the QR. Since the implementation of the QF in 2008, the accumulative hit rate continued to rise to 326,000. This is particularly the case around the release of public examination results from July to August 2010. It indicates the increasing popularity of the QR which is gradually accepted and frequently used by the learners. The system was enhanced and upgraded in June 2010 to enhance its user-friendliness and effectiveness. To complement launching of the enhanced interface of the QR, the HKCAAVQ conducted a briefing session for the education and training providers in June 2010 to introduce the new functions of the system. We will continue our efforts to promote the use of the QR to the public. The statistical information on the qualifications registered in the QR is set out at Annex B.

(e) Qualifications Framework Support Schemes

14. To support the implementation of the QF, we have launched a number of financial assistance schemes including the accreditation grants for course providers, subsidies for registration of qualifications in the QR, accreditation and start up grants for RPL assessment agencies, and reimbursement of RPL assessment fees to employees. Up to end September 2010, a total of 192 education and training providers have applied for the accreditation grants of about 3,200 qualifications and 5,000 qualifications have been subsidised for registration in the QR. So far, a total of \$15 million has been disbursed under these financial assistance schemes to the education and training providers.

15. As the financial assistance schemes have been launched for over two years, we are now conducting a mid-term review on the scope and criteria of the schemes. Our aim is to encourage more providers to join the QF and benefit from the schemes.

(f) Promotion and publicity

16. We shall continue to enhance our network with the industries and other stakeholders through various activities, including company visits, seminars, exhibitions, briefings, experience sharing sessions, and so forth. Apart from vocational education and training providers, we also conduct school talks on QF and its underpinning quality assurance mechanism to schools. In addition to promoting the QF through ITACs, we are also pursuing plans to partner with various major stakeholders to organise promotional activities to achieve synergy effects for wider scope of audience.

17. A new series of announcements of public interest (APIs), which aims to reinforce the message that the QF denotes “quality” and “relevancy” in the context of skills upgrading, teaching and learning will soon be produced. It is expected that the new APIs will be broadcasted on TV, radios, mass transit railway networks and through various media channels starting from December 2010, together with featured articles and advertisements to supplement the APIs. We are also continuing our efforts to re-vamp the website of QF (www.hkqf.gov.hk), aiming to make it more informative and user-friendly.

Way Forward

18. Implementation of the QF in Hong Kong is a long term endeavour. We will continue to reach out to stakeholders with a view to soliciting more support. We are also exploring with stakeholders of different sectors, including the four economic pillars and the six priority industries identified, with a view to setting up new ITACs in these industries.

Education Bureau
October 2010

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism
(as at end of September 2010)**

(a) Number of applications by industry

Industry	Printing & Publishing	Hairdressing	Watch & Clock	Total
No. of applications	619	639	182	1,440

(b) Number of RPL clusters of competencies by QF Level

QF Level	Printing & Publishing	Hairdressing	Watch & Clock	Total
1	14	23	4	41
2	66	57	8	131
3	752	3,264	119	4,135
4	337	483	115	935
Overall	1,169	3,827	246	5,242

QF Levels 1 to 3: By verification

QF Level 4: By assessment

(c) Number of RPL clusters of competencies by successful rate

Level	Printing & Publishing	Hairdressing	Watch & Clock	Total
1	100%	100%	100%	100%
2	100%	100%	100%	100%
3	100%	100%	100%	100%
4	93.3 % *	99.8%#	100%	99.2 %
Overall	97.7%	99.97%	100%	99.5 %

** With 24 applications failed in the assessment*

With 1 application failed in the assessment

Annex B

**Qualifications registered in the Qualifications Register
(as at September 2010)**

Category	No. of qualifications
(1) Qualifications offered by universities and other self-accrediting institutions	2,630
(2) Qualifications offered by non-self-accrediting institutions	3,671
(3) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism	125
Total:	6,426