**For discussion
on 20 October 2011**

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. In May 2008, the Government launched QF to promote lifelong learning with a view to enhancing the capability and competitiveness of our local workforce. QF is a seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors. All qualifications recognised under QF are quality assured.

3. As at end September 2011, the number of Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)[1] has increased to 17[2], covering about 44.5% of the total labour force in Hong Kong.

4. The ITACs have made good progress in drawing up Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) of their respective industries. Twelve of these ITACs have drawn up the SCSs. So far, there are 340 SCS-based courses developed by the education and training providers. We have also

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[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, Retail, Insurance and Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals and Plastics).

invited the Vocational Training Council to launch a pilot project on the development of vocational English courses based on the Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies of the QF. Twenty courses in transport logistics, import/export wholesale, hospitality, retail, banking & finance are being rolled out during April 2011 to August 2012. In addition, SCSs are gaining wider acceptance by employers as useful guides for the development of in-house training and human resources management, such as staff recruitment and performance assessment.

(b) Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism

5.   The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism, which assists practitioners in pursuing further learning, has been implemented in four industries[3]. As at end September 2011, about 2 000 applications (representing 43% increase when compared to the number of applications as at end September 2010), involving over 6 300 clusters of competencies at various QF levels, were processed by the assessment agency of the four industries. Almost all applicants (99%) 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 better prepare them for further assessment, if they so wish. Statistical information on these applications is set out at **Annex A**.

6.   We will continue to work closely with other industries with a view to extending the RPL mechanism to the sectors which have completed their respective SCSs. With the introduction of RPL mechanism to more industries and the relaxation measures under the Qualifications Framework Support Schemes (QFSS), we envisage that more practitioners will benefit from the RPL mechanism.

(c) Quality assurance mechanism

7.   The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), specified as the Accreditation Authority and the Qualifications Register (QR) Authority under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592), continues to safeguard the quality and standards of the learning programmes recognised under QF. HKCAAVQ is currently conducting a

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[3]   Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, Hairdressing and Property Management.

review of its Four-stage Quality Assurance Process with a view to streamlining the accreditation process and strengthening its underpinning role for QF development.

(d) Qualifications Register

8. 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 at end September 2011, there are some 6 600 academic and vocational qualifications, involving about 160 providers, registered in the QR. Since the implementation of QF in 2008, the cumulative hit rate has steadily increased to over 454 000, indicating the progressively wider acceptance of the QR by learners. The QR Authority will soon conduct a mid-term review of the QR with a view to enhancing its user-friendliness and effectiveness. We will continue our efforts to promote the use of QR to the public. Statistical information on the qualifications registered in the QR is set out at **Annex B**.

(e) QFSS

9. To support the implementation of QF, the Education Bureau has launched a number of financial assistance schemes, collectively known as QFSS, including 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 practitioners.

10. As at end September 2011, a total of 198 education and training providers have applied for the accreditation grants of about 3 800 qualifications. So far, a total of about $23 million has been disbursed under QFSS to education and training providers and practitioners.

11. Starting from August 2011, we have improved the operating parameters of QFSS, including the scope, eligibility criteria and level of assistance to boost the development of QF. We have also introduced a new one-off grant under QFSS to encourage and provide a greater incentive for education and training providers to develop SCS-based courses. Given these improvement measures, we anticipate that the utilisation rate of QFSS will further increase hence further boosting the development of QF.

(f)   Promotion and publicity

12.   To promote the improvements to QFSS and the development of SCS-based courses, we have organised two large-scale workshops in August 2011 with participation of more than 500 providers and industry stakeholders.   We have also conducted individual briefings for all ITACs as well as the major education and training providers to promote the improvements to QFSS and encourage them to adopt the SCSs in the development of in-house training and human resources management.

13.   In parallel, we continue to enhance our network with industries and relevant stakeholders through different activities, including visits, seminars, exhibitions, experience-sharing sessions etc.   We also set up a booth in the International Education Forum and Expo in July 2011 to promote awareness of QF to the public including students, learners, parents and educators.   We have also published more than 30 articles in the first nine months of 2011 in newspapers and publications of professional bodies, trade unions and associations with a view to promoting the better understanding of QF among industry stakeholders.

14.   The APIs on QF and QR continue to be broadcasted on TV, radio, Roadshow on buses, QF website (*www.hkqf.gov.hk*) and EDB YouTube Channel (*www.youtube.com/user/edbgovhk*).   The dedicated web-pages for the industries joining QF are also well received by industry stakeholders and learners who consider them informative and useful.

Way Forward

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

Education Bureau
October 2011

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism
(as at end September 2011)

(a) Number of applications by <u>industry</u>

Industry	Printing & Publishing	Hairdressing	Watch & Clock	Property Management	Total
No. of applications	656	671	184	550	**2 061**

(b) Number of RPL clusters of competencies by <u>QF Level</u>

QF Level	Printing & Publishing	Hairdressing	Watch & Clock	Property Management	Total
1	22	23	4	14	63
2	69	68	8	171	316
3	772	3 403	123	584	4 882
4	353	484	116	142	1 095
Overall	1 216	3 978	251	911	**6 356**

QF Levels 1 to 3: By verification
QF Level 4: By assessment

(c) Number of RPL clusters of competencies by <u>successful rate</u>

Level	Printing & Publishing	Hairdressing	Watch & Clock	Property Management	Total
1	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
2	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
3	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
4	91.8%[*]	99.8%[#]	100%	100%	97.3%
Overall	97.6%	99.97%	100%	100%	**99.5%**

* With 29 applications failed in the assessment
\# With 1 application failed in the assessment

Qualifications registered in the Qualifications Register
(as at end September 2011)

Category	No. of qualifications
(1) Qualifications offered by universities and other self-accrediting institutions	2 814
(2) Qualifications offered by non-self-accrediting institutions	3 697
(3) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism	155
Total:	**6 666**