

**Guidelines**  
**On**  
**Accreditation**  
**Of**  
**Non-local Learning Programmes**

**Version 1.1**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Preamble</b>	1
<b>1. Who should read the Guidelines?</b>	3
<b>2. What is Qualifications Framework?</b>	3
<b>3. What is HKCAAVQ's role in the QF?</b>	3
<b>4. Why seek Recognition under the QF?</b>	4
<b>5. What is Accreditation of Non-local Learning Programmes?</b>	4
<b>6. What are the Characteristics of Initial Evaluation for Collective Provision of Non-local Learning Programmes?</b>	5
<b>7. What are the Characteristics of Programme Validation of Non-local Learning Programmes?</b>	7
<b>8. Guiding Principles of HKCAAVQ Accreditation</b>	9
<b>9. How is the Accreditation Process Conducted?</b>	11
<b>10. How is an Accreditation Report Prepared?</b>	17
<b>11. What can be the Accreditation Outcome?</b>	18
<b>12. What is the possible Follow-up after Accreditation?</b>	19
<b>13. How is Feedback Collected?</b>	21
<b>14. What are the Accreditation Timeline and Fees?</b>	21
<b>Appendix 1</b> Accreditation Criteria for Initial Evaluation for Collaborative Provision of Non-Local Learning Programmes	24
<b>Appendix 2</b> Accreditation Criteria for Programme Validation of Non-local Learning Programmes	37
<b>Appendix 3</b> Determining QF Levels	48
<b>Appendix 4</b> Roles of Accreditation Panel Members	52
<b>Appendix 5</b> Roles and Responsibilities of Partnerships in Accreditation	54
<b>Appendix 6</b> Accreditation Document Template	56
<b>Appendix 7</b> Guidance Notes on the Preparation of Accreditation Documents through a Self-evaluation Process	59
<b>Glossary</b>	66
<i>List of Abbreviation</i>	71

## **Preamble**

1. The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) is established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Chapter 1150) as a statutory body responsible for conducting accreditation activities generally or as authorised under any other local enactment. In particular, the HKCAAVQ has the statutory powers under the provisions of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 592) to perform the roles of the Accreditation Authority and the QR Authority. Qualifications of learning programmes that have been granted accreditation status by the Accreditation Authority may be entered into the Qualifications Register (QR) for recognition under the Qualifications Framework (QF) in Hong Kong (HK).
2. These Guidelines are developed for the use of educational institutions (operators) planning to apply for the accreditation of a non-local course (learning programme), registered or exempted from registration under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap 493).
3. Registration / exemption from registration and accreditation of non-local learning programmes are conducted under different ordinances and administered by different authorities. Registration / exemption is based on comparability with the home course of the home country education system. Accreditation is to benchmark the learning programme against the HK education system including the HKQF. Registration / exemption from registration is compulsory whereas accreditation of non-local learning programmes is voluntary. The accreditation of non-local learning programmes will not affect their registration / exemption status.
4. Collaborative provision of a non-local learning programme involves a Hong Kong operator (local operator) and a non-local operator jointly operating a programme of learning in Hong Kong, which leads to a qualification awarded by a non-local operator. The local operator and the non-local operator are treated as acting jointly as the operators of the non-local learning programme to be accredited.
5. In these Guidelines “partnership” refers to the collaborating operators (local and non-local) responsible for the collaborative provision of a non-local learning programme of the non-local operator. “Local operator” refers to the operator whose base of operation is in Hong Kong (including the local office / campus of a non-local educational institution), and “non-local operator” to the partner whose base of operation is outside Hong Kong.

6. These Guidelines are by no means exhaustive. The Guidelines also supersede any prior guidance notes, other guidelines or handbook that the HKCAAVQ or the former Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) has published or issued previously regarding accreditation of non-local learning programmes.
7. These Guidelines serve as reference for the accreditation panel (panel) which is established by the HKCAAVQ to be responsible for the accreditation exercise pursuant to the principle of 'peer review'. The panel will exercise its professional judgement according to the principles laid down within these Guidelines.
8. Whilst the HKCAAVQ endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the information contained herein, the HKCAAVQ reserves the right to delete, suspend or edit all information at any time in its absolute discretion without giving any prior notice. To obtain the most up-to-date information, users may look up the electronic version of these Guidelines from the homepage of HKCAAVQ at [www.hkcaavq.edu.hk](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk).
9. For enquiries please contact the HKCAAVQ at [info@hkcaavq.edu.hk](mailto:info@hkcaavq.edu.hk) or by phone at Tel: 3658 0000.

## **1. Who should read these Guidelines?**

- 1.1 These Guidelines only apply to non-local courses (learning programmes) that have been registered, or exempted from registration, under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap 493). Relevant operators who wish to have the qualifications of registered / exempted non-local courses accredited for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR) leading to recognition under the Qualifications Framework (QF) in Hong Kong (HK) should read these Guidelines.

## **2. What is the Qualifications Framework?**

- 2.1 The QF is a hierarchy of qualifications of academic, vocational and continuing education as well as qualifications attained by employees through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme. It consists of seven levels, characterised by outcome-based Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Education Bureau (EDB). The GLD describes the common features of qualifications at the same level and helps locate a qualification at a specific level on the QF. Information about the QF and the GLD is available at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.
- 2.2 The Qualifications Register (QR) is a centralised online database of QF recognised qualifications. The QR can be accessed via <http://www.hkqr.gov.hk>.

## **3. What is the HKCAAVQ's role in the QF?**

- 3.1 The QF is underpinned by a quality assurance mechanism as provided for under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap 592). In the capacity of the Accreditation Authority and QR Authority specified in the AAVQO, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) assures the quality of the learning programmes and the qualifications awarded by the accredited operators before the relevant qualifications can be considered for entry into the Qualifications

Register (QR).

#### **4. Why Seek Recognition under the QF?**

- 4.1 Upon successful accreditation, the qualifications of relevant non-local learning programmes may be entered into the QR for recognition under the QF, in accordance with the terms and procedures stipulated by the QR Authority. Such qualifications attained by individual students will be recognised as meeting the standard of particular qualifications obtained in Hong Kong.
- 4.2 The Government financial assistance scheme for post-secondary students (FASP) and non-means tested loan scheme for post-secondary students (NLSPS) extend to accredited full-time non-local learning programmes at tertiary level, subject to terms and conditions as stipulated by the Student Financial Assistance Agency.

#### **5. What is Accreditation of Non-local Learning Programmes?**

- 5.1 Accreditation of non-local learning programmes (NLP) is a voluntary quality assurance process that underpins the QF. It comprises two stages.
- 5.2 The first stage is Initial Evaluation (IE) for collaborative provision to determine whether the collaborating operators (partnership) are able to achieve their objectives and to operate the learning programmes (under the collaborative provision) that meet the claimed QF standards (para. 5.3). The partnership must demonstrate that it has the competency to effectively manage and resource the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of its non-local learning programmes related to all the disciplines covered in the partnership at the claimed QF Level(s).
- 5.3 The second stage is Programme Validation (PV). It is an overall evaluation of the non-local learning programme(s) under the partnership. The purpose is to determine whether the learning programme meets the required standards to achieve its claimed objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes. The required standards specified in these Guidelines include but are not limited to the competency standards pertaining to the HKQF as well as those prescribed / generally accepted standards of the local education system (para. 8.5).

- 5.4 IE is a prerequisite for Programme Validation (PV). The granting of an IE status to a partnership permits the partnership to proceed with Stage 2 Programme Validation (PV) of the non-local learning programme(s) it operates subject to prescribed terms and conditions (Section 11). For cost and time effectiveness, IE is normally conducted back to back with the PV. Subsequent PV under the same partnership and at approved QF Level(s) will be conducted independently.

## **6. What are the Characteristics of Initial Evaluation for Collaborative Provision of Non-local Learning Programmes?**

### Operators in Partnerships

- 6.1 Each partnership between the local and the non-local operators is unique in terms of the quality assurance and / or other contractual and operational arrangements in operating non-local learning programmes registered / exempted under Cap 493. Therefore, the NLP IE is separate from, and additional to, any IE / Institutional Review (IR) of the HKCAAVQ which the local operator may have undergone in respect of its local learning programmes or in connection with another non-local partner in another partnership.
- 6.2 Where the non-local operator operates as a branch campus in HK (whether or not established as a separate legal entity) rather than in collaboration with a local operator, the IE reviews the collaborative provision under the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution.

### IE Status

- 6.3 The granting of an IE status is per partnership, covering all disciplines in operation at approved QF Level(s) within the partnership. The status does not extend to partnerships entered into by the operators concerned with other non-local / local partners outside the accredited partnership. If a local / non-local operator wishes to seek accreditation for more than one partnership, a separate application must be made in respect of each partnership.
- 6.4 IE is QF Level specific. This is because the teaching skills and academic qualifications of staff, and the physical resources needed for successful delivery of learning programmes alter between levels. Partnerships applying for IE must specify the corresponding QF Level(s) intended for the non-local learning programmes covered by the partnerships. .

- 6.5 IE status at lower QF Levels cannot be extended upwards. IE status attained at a higher QF Level can however be extended downwards within the range of QF Levels 4 – 7 and the range of QF Levels 1 – 3 respectively. For example, an operator with an accredited status for QF Level 6 can seek validation of a learning programme at QF Level 5 but not at QF Level 7 or Level 3, and an operator with an accredited status at QF Level 3 can seek validation of a learning programme at QF Level 2.
- 6.6 The IE status grants the permission for the partnership concerned to proceed with relevant PV. It does not, however grant permission for the partnership to claim that its NLP operation has been accredited at programme level(s) for QF recognition.

### IE Criteria

- 6.7 To complete IE successfully, the partnership must demonstrate that it has attained the threshold standard of IE in respect of the four key criteria outlined below.

#### 1. Organisational Management

- (a) Institutional Strategy and Authority to Establish the Collaboration
- (b) Accreditation Status of the Non-Local Operator
- (c) Contractual Considerations
- (d) Policy and Operational Framework
- (e) Assessment and Management of Risk

#### 2. Financial and Physical Resources

#### 3. Staffing and Staff Development

#### 4. Quality Assurance

##### *Note:*

*(a) for local operator operating as a branch campus of the non-local partner as outlined in paragraph 6.2, the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution will be reviewed, whether this is covered via a partnership agreement or not.*

*(b) The overseas partner (i.e. non-local operator) being the awarding authority should undertake the final responsibility in the implementation of policies and monitor the effectiveness of quality assurance. The non-local operator's quality assurance mechanism including but not limited to its constitutional / legal provision and accreditation status for granting qualifications in HK, i.e. outside its home country, is one of the*

*key and essential conditions for a successful NLP accreditation exercise and therefore must be complied with.*

- 6.8 For each criterion there is a list of key issues to be considered, and an indication of possible sources of evidence relating to those issues. Potential sources of evidence marked with asterisks are required evidence to be included in the Accreditation Document. Details are available in **Appendix 1**.

### Validity Period

- 6.9 IE status has a validity period of two years. Within the two-year validity period, the partnership must have at least one of its non-local learning programmes at the approved QF Level(s) validated. The IE status will not expire if the partnership continues to have non-local learning programme(s) validated.

## **7. What are the Characteristics of Programme Validation of Non-local Learning Programmes?**

### PV vs IE

- 7.1 PV assesses how the partnership (reviewed at the IE stage) ensures the quality of the non-local learning programme(s), meeting the accreditation standards. In view that some partnerships may make different operational arrangements for individual learning programmes, it is essential for relevant system and arrangement within the partnership to be elaborated and supported by documentary evidence in the PV exercise if such system and arrangement are different from what is presented in the IE. Under this circumstance, the PV will need to also cover all relevant IE accreditation criteria mentioned in para. 6.7.

### PV Principles

- 7.2 The principles for PV of non-local learning programmes are the same as those for local learning programmes, as all learning programmes, regardless of origin and nature, must meet the standards to achieve the stated objectives and the standards for the HKQF before their qualifications can be entered into the Qualifications Register and be recognised under the HKQF.

## Key Features of PV

7.3 PV is a quality assurance process to ensure that:

- Learning outcomes and standards of the NLPs are appropriate for the qualifications to which they lead;
- Content and design of the NLPs and the methods of delivery are likely to achieve their objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes for the target students;
- Other arrangements, including management, facilities, staffing and student services are appropriate for the NLPs and will facilitate successful delivery of the stated objectives and learning outcomes at the proposed QF Level(s);
- Assessment aligns with the content, design and delivery of the NLPs, is valid and appropriate to test the intended learning outcomes based on relevant academic and vocational standards at the proposed QF Level(s); and
- Partnerships have systems, resources and operational processes in place to effectively plan, develop, manage, quality assure and improve their NLPs.

## PV Criteria

7.4 To demonstrate that the NLP meets the required standards, the partnership is required to address the following key PV criteria listed below.

1. Outcome-based learning programme
  - a. Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
  - b. Programme Content and Structure
  - c. Admission Requirements and Student Selection
  - d. Teaching and Learning
  - e. Student Assessment
2. Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes
3. Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes
4. Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)
5. Student Support Services
6. Student Records and Information Management

*Note: In view that some partnerships may have different operational arrangements for individual learning programmes, it is essential for relevant system and arrangement within the partnership to be elaborated and supported by documentary evidence in the PV exercise if such system and arrangement are different from what is presented in the IE. Under this circumstance, the PV will need to also cover all relevant IE accreditation criteria mentioned in para. 6.7. (para. 7.1)*

- 7.5 For each criterion there is a list of key issues to be considered, and an indication of possible sources of evidence relating to those issues. Details are available in **Appendix 2**. Potential sources of evidence marked with asterisks are required evidence to be included in the Accreditation Document. Issues to be considered when determining the QF Level of an outcome-based learning programme is in **Appendix 3**.

#### PV Status

- 7.6 Successfully accredited non-local learning programme will be granted an accreditation status which is QF Level specific with a stipulated validity period, and subject to prescribed conditions and restrictions, if any. (Section 11)

#### Programme Revalidation

- 7.7 Revalidation of the learning programme will take place prior to the expiry of the validity period of the accredited learning programme and will be subject to the same PV process, having regard to the findings of the previous validation exercise as well as follow-up actions taken by the partnerships.

## **8. Guiding Principles of HKCAAVQ Accreditation**

- 8.1 The guiding principles for the NLP accreditation are as follows.

- Peer review
- Fitness for purpose
- Evidence-based
- Threshold standard

#### Peer Review

- 8.2 Under the principle of ‘peer review’, accreditation decisions are made by the HKCAAVQ on the basis of recommendations put forth by peers

involved in the exercise as members of an accreditation panel. The panel members are academic and professional experts with relevant expertise and experience in areas such as institutional management, programme delivery and management in relevant programme area / discipline, collaborative provision of non-local learning programmes, quality assurance and QF matters. The role of the panel is to assess the competency of the partnership in collaborating and reviewing the quality of the non-local learning programme(s) under consideration, evaluate evidence and form a judgement as to whether the partnership and the learning programme(s) meet the required accreditation standards.

### Fitness for Purpose

- 8.3 Under the principle of ‘fitness for purpose’, the partnership and the non-local learning programme(s) are accredited on the basis of their stated objectives, and taking into consideration differences in nature, size, operational complexity and scope of expertise in respective partnerships as prescribed in the partnership agreement and reflected in actual implementation.

### Evidence-based

- 8.4 Accreditation decisions are to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the partnership to support its claim that it meets the accreditation standards stipulated in these Guidelines. Judgement will be made independently of any other previous accreditation decision(s) made on the same local or non-local operator and/or the relevant non-local learning programme(s).

### Threshold Standards

- 8.5 Accreditation decisions are made against threshold standards. The benchmark for NLP accreditation is the minimum requirements of the stipulated accreditation criteria in these Guidelines including but not limited to local (HK) standards generally accepted and adopted by the local education sector as well as standards pertaining to the HKQF, as prescribed in the GLD and any other relevant policy intention / regulations / guidelines / common descriptors / specification of competency standards (SCS) promulgated by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.
- 8.6 In addition to verifying that the partnerships and their non-local learning programmes meet the minimum standards required in these Guidelines, the accreditation process is also a continuous effort for quality enhancement. The accreditation exercises could be helpful in educating

partnerships to develop internal mechanisms aimed at further enhancing the programme quality.

### Transparency in Accreditation

- 8.7 The accreditation process is guided by the “no surprise” principle. This refers to adopting a transparent approach throughout the process so that all parties involved (i.e. the partnership and the accreditation panel) have a common understanding of these Guidelines. The panel has the duty to raise its main concerns with the partnership in the process and give the partnership an opportunity to respond to the panel’s questions / concerns and to justify its claims in the accreditation process.

## **9. How is the Accreditation Process Conducted?**

- 9.1 NLP accreditation is primarily conducted in a Collective Approach. This is an accreditation approach where learning programmes of the same subject area / discipline from different partnerships are accredited by the same Panel (supported by sub-panels if necessary) and/or Panels (depending on the number of accreditation cases) during the same scheduled accreditation period. The purpose of the Collective Approach is to make available accreditation services in an efficient, cost effective and consistent way so as to handle a larger quantity of accreditation requests in a shorter period without compromising quality.

### Initiating the Process

- 9.2 The HKCAAVQ will hold a briefing for relevant operators with partnerships in specified subject area(s) / discipline(s) under the scheduled Collective Approach, to be announced from time to time. Partnerships are strongly advised to attend the briefing before making a decision to participate in the accreditation exercise. The briefing will provide an overview of the NLP accreditation, the accreditation standards, the accreditation process, the preparation for accreditation including submission of Accreditation Document and on-site visit. At the end of the briefing, partnerships should be able to assess for themselves their readiness to proceed with NLP accreditation.
- 9.3 The interested partnership should return a signed Statement of Intent to the HKCAAVQ indicating that it is ready to undergo the Initial Evaluation and Programme Validation of their collaborative non-local learning programmes. In the Statement of Intent a person / representative should be nominated jointly by the local and the non-local

partners as the authorised liaison point with the HKCAAVQ on all matters related to the accreditation exercise in point.

- 9.4 On the basis of the Statement of Intent, the HKCAAVQ will enter into a Service Agreement with the partnership, setting out the time schedule, the terms of reference, the accreditation fee and payment terms. Both the Statement of Intent and the Service Agreement must be signed by both the local operator and the non-local operator.
- 9.5 The HKCAAVQ will only enter into a Service Agreement with the partnership whose non-local learning programmes are permitted to operate legally in HK. This refers to non-local courses that have been registered / exempted from registration under Cap 493 with current valid registration / exemption status.
- 9.6 Upon signing the Service Agreement, the partnership should proceed to prepare a self-evaluative Accreditation Document for submission to the HKCAAVQ by the stipulated deadline. The partnership will also be invited to attend an Operator Workshop organised by the HKCAAVQ for further understanding the accreditation criteria, standards and process, with a view to making preparation for the self-evaluative Accreditation Document and the on-site visit.

#### The Panel

- 9.7 Under the Collective Approach, an accreditation panel will be formed for each subject area / discipline to consider both the IE (if relevant IE status has not been attained by the partnership concerned) and the relevant PV. The panel consists of members with the requisite profiles and expertise. Depending on the number of accreditation cases per Collective Approach, the panel may split into sub-panels or more than one panel may be established to review assigned accreditation cases and conduct on-site visits. The roles of accreditation panel members are outlined in **Appendix 4**.
- 9.8 The HKCAAVQ has full authority in the selection of members of the panel for a particular exercise, after seeking views from the partnerships on any conflict of interest of the potential panel members. The panel will include a HKCAAVQ professional staff member as the Panel Member-Secretary. The Panel Member-Secretary has a full voting right.

#### Preparing for Accreditation

- 9.9 A thorough understanding of what is required of the partnership in the accreditation process is the first step to successful accreditation. The roles and responsibilities of the partnerships in accreditation are outlined

in **Appendix 5**.

- 9.10 Accreditation is conducted by the HKCAAVQ on the assumption that the partnership concerned is involved in a continuous process of self-evaluation. Before seeking the accreditation service, a partnership should undertake an internal self-evaluation for the purpose of assessing its own readiness to meet the intended purpose of the exercise and undertaking any necessary reforms and changes to any aspects of structure and processes of the collaborative partnership, quality assurance or resource planning.
- 9.11 The process of self-evaluation should be a constructive one, and should enable the partnership to identify its own strengths and weaknesses, and to formulate improvement plans for changes and institute any necessary changes. The preparatory / self-evaluation stage can be shorter or longer depending on the circumstances of the individual partnership, its stage of readiness, the plans for programme development, and the internal procedures adopted, etc. The higher the level of preparedness, the greater is the benefit to the accreditation process.
- 9.12 It is important that the process involves personnel from both the local and the non-local operators responsible for the collaboration. There should be involvement of the senior management and senior members of staff as well as the frontline staff. It is advisable that other members of staff who may be affected by any changes brought about by the accreditation or the programme plans are also involved in the process. It is a good practice to involve advisers, external examiners, students and other stakeholders such as employers in the self-evaluation.

#### Preparing Accreditation Document

- 9.13 The Accreditation Document for the IE and PV should comprise two parts. Part 1 on IE should address and reflect critically on the IE criteria, preferably in the order as presented. Part 2 on PV should address and reflect critically on the PV criteria, preferably in the order as presented. There should be appropriate cross-referencing between the two parts of the Accreditation Document to facilitate the panel's analysis of the document. The Accreditation Document Template is in **Appendix 6**.
- 9.14 The partnership undergoing the accreditation exercise is required to present evidence to support its claim. As the partnerships are diverse in nature, collaborative mode and operational arrangements, the key issues and possible sources of evidence listed in **Appendices 1 and 2** are indicative rather than exhaustive. Accreditation is conducted on a trust and voluntary basis. The onus of identifying relevant key issues and providing sufficient and appropriate evidence that demonstrates that an

accreditation criterion has been met for accreditation determination lies with the partnership. Lack of submission of relevant and essential evidence may impact the panel's ability to make an appropriate assessment of the accreditation document.

- 9.15 In these Guidelines, there are several references to “agreements” on particular matters. It is not expected that there will be a separate agreement document covering each matter. In collaborative provision, there are usually two key documents which, between them, will cover all matters. The first is the formal contract between the local and non-local partners, and the second are supplementary documents to elaborate on policy and operational arrangements, for example, a handbook or similar document detailing the policy and operational matters for the purpose of implementation of the collaboration. All matters that need to be agreed between the partners in respect of the collaboration should be covered in one or both of these documents and / or any other relevant documents / correspondence. In view of the significance of the “agreements” and / or relevant document(s) that lay down the responsibilities of the partners in the collaborative provision and the manner and consequence of the exercise of such shared responsibilities, the “agreements” and / or relevant documents will constitute required evidence to be submitted for the IE.
- 9.16 It is essential to enclose the syllabus and programme design chart for the non-local learning programmes as well as sample of teaching plan, teaching materials, assessment paper, marked scripts and marking schemes, etc. as evidence for relevant PV. Normally, to gauge the quality of the learning programme, the Panel may also ask for details and samples about the capstone modules, normally dating back to the last one to two years.
- 9.17 Required documentary evidence that must be submitted together with the Accreditation Document is denoted by asterisk (\*) in **Appendices 1 and 2**. Guidance Notes on the Preparation of Accreditation Documents through a Self-evaluation Process are available in **Appendix 7**.
- 9.18 Prior to submission of the Accreditation Document the HKCAAVQ specifies the number of hard copies of the Document that are required to be submitted. An electronic version of the Document will also be required for electronic distribution under secure arrangement. In terms of the presentation of the Accreditation Document, it should be printed double-sided and ring-bound. The Document should start with a table of contents and a table of required documentary evidence and end with a glossary and a list of abbreviation to enhance readability. There should also be appropriate pagination, indexing and cross-referencing within

the Accreditation Document and between the Document and the required documentary evidence.

#### Initial Examination of the Accreditation Document

- 9.19 The HKCAAVQ may conclude upon an initial examination of the Accreditation Document that the information provided is inadequate and/or the state of readiness of the partnership is such that it is unlikely to conduct a meaningful accreditation process by the HKCAAVQ according to the scope of the Terms of Reference of the exercise specified in the Service Agreement. In this event, the HKCAAVQ may terminate the accreditation exercise and any unused accreditation fee will be refunded to the partnership.
- 9.20 If the panel concludes that there is adequate evidence contained in the Accreditation Document for it to reach a decision without conducting a meeting or on-site visit, then the HKCAAVQ may make the accreditation decisions without a meeting or on-site visit.

#### Initial Comments and Partnership's Responses

- 9.21 After reviewing the Accreditation Document, the panel may seek further clarification and / or ask for other supporting documents as evidence during the Stage of Initial Comments. The supporting documents can be requested to be made available to the panel either prior to the on-site visit or on site.

#### The On-site Visit

- 9.22 The on-site accreditation visit will be planned by the HKCAAVQ in consultation with the Panel Chair. The visit provides an occasion for interaction between the panel and relevant personnel from the partnership, and other stakeholders such as students and employers.
- 9.23 Personnel from the partnership attending the visit should include representatives of the local and the non-local operators. Such representatives should be persons with decision-making authority in and being familiar with the non-local learning programmes, in relation to the partnership.
- 9.24 The timeframe for the on-site visit will be agreed with the partnership and included in the Service Agreement.
- 9.25 It is the responsibility of the partnership to ensure that there are suitable facilities available to the panel during the on-site visit, including availability of a private meeting room with sufficient space for the panel

and the interviewees, access to documents, and the provision of reasonable refreshments (at the cost of the HKCAAVQ). As the stakeholders' meetings are part of the evidence for the panel to make the accreditation recommendations, it is the responsibility of the partnership to ensure that the requested interviewees are available to meet the panel.

9.26 The precise visit programme, including the schedule of persons to be met, will be determined in the light of the full panel's examination of the Accreditation Document. The content of the visit programme will be designed to enable the panel to pursue any relevant issues according to the accreditation criteria of the Initial Evaluation and / or Programme Validation. It is likely that the visit programme will comprise the following activities for the purpose of triangulation.

- Meetings with the senior management of the partnership, teaching and other relevant staff, students, graduates and external stakeholders. (If applicable, meetings with some of the stakeholders of the non-local operator can be arranged via video-conferencing or any other feasible means to reduce the travelling time and cost)
- Review of documentary evidence
- Review of facilities
- Panel's private meetings, during which the representatives of the partnership are required to withdraw from the panel's meeting room.
- Any other session(s) to be requested on-site at the discretion of the panel as and when deemed necessary
- Exit meeting with the senior management of the partnership

9.27 The HKCAAVQ will determine the criteria for the selection of people to be interviewed, and the size of the interview groups for efficient interaction with the panel. The partnership is expected to collaborate with the HKCAAVQ in the prescribed arrangements to ensure a smooth conduct of the on-site visit for the purpose of triangulation of evidence.

9.28 The panel will organise an exit meeting with the senior management representatives of the partnership. The exit meeting will provide a general overview of the panel's key observations. It is not an oral feedback session reporting on the panel's recommendations for the accreditation outcomes as the panel may need to consider all accreditation cases under the same Collective Approach on completion of all on-site visits prior to finalising its recommendations on individual cases to the HKCAAVQ.

## Panel's Evaluation and Accreditation Judgement

- 9.29 Through the IE and PV process, the Panel is to determine:
- whether there are effective internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms, management process and resources for the collaboration, to maintain and ensure the quality of the relevant learning programmes in the partnership to meet the stated objectives and the required accreditation standards
  - whether such implementation and standards are regularly reviewed
  - how recommendations from internal reviews are implemented and followed up
- 9.30 The panel's evaluation will be based on the Accreditation Document and other relevant information gathered throughout the accreditation process, drawing reference from the NLP accreditation framework stipulated in these Guidelines.
- 9.31 The panel takes collective responsibility for its evaluation and findings. Formal preparatory / alignment meeting(s) and decision-making meetings are held by the panel before and after the on-site visits under the Collective Approach.

## **10. How is an Accreditation Report Prepared?**

- 10.1 On the basis of the findings and observations put forth by the panel of all accreditation cases on completion of the on-site visits in the Collective Approach, the HKCAAVQ will make accreditation decisions for respective cases, to be presented in accreditation reports. A report with a positive outcome will also specify the validity period of an accreditation decision and the condition(s) or restriction(s), if any, subject to which the decision is to have effect.
- 10.2 If the partnership considers that there is any material factual inaccuracy in the draft report, there will be an opportunity to draw this to the attention of the HKCAAVQ.
- 10.3 Upon clearance of factual accuracy, the finalised accreditation report stating the outcome for IE and PV will be released to the partnership.
- 10.4 The HKCAAVQ may vary or withdraw the accreditation report if it is satisfied that the report has been produced in reliance on any misleading

or false statement, representation or information, either oral or in writing, and / or if the partnerships are no longer competent to achieve the objectives as claimed in the case of Initial Evaluation and / or if the non-local learning programme(s) no longer meet the standards of the claimed objectives and / or the QF standards in the case of Programme Validation.

## **11. What can be the Accreditation Outcome?**

11.1 Having regard to the terms of reference of the accreditation as stipulated in the signed Service Agreement and in the capacity of the Accreditation Authority as provided for under Cap 592, the HKCAAVQ will consider the accreditation panel's recommendations and make accreditation decisions in respect of the partnership as well as the non-local learning programme(s) concerned. Condition(s) and restriction(s) may be specified.

The accreditation outcome will be one of the following:

- Accreditation is approved at specified QF Level(s) within a stipulated validity period without any condition(s) (i.e. pre-conditions and/or requirements) to be met by the partnership; or
- Accreditation is approved at specified QF level(s) within a stipulated validity period subject to the fulfillment by the partnership of certain condition(s) (i.e. pre-conditions and/or requirements) by the stipulated deadline(s); or
- Accreditation as sought is not approved.

11.2 Pre-conditions are to be fulfilled by the partnership prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status while requirements are to be fulfilled by the partnership by the specified deadline(s) during the validity period.

11.3 Restrictions may be specified in the decision. Under such circumstances, the partnership is expected to comply with the restriction(s) on an on-going basis unless otherwise advised by the HKCAAVQ.

11.4 If the qualification of a learning programme being validated is determined not to be meeting the level of the HKQF that corresponds to the award title of the learning programme, the accreditation decision shall be non-approval. For example, if a bachelor degree programme is determined to be not meeting QF Level 5 under the HKQF, the degree programme cannot be accredited with a qualification title bearing

bachelor degree. Under such circumstances the accreditation decision shall be non-approval.

- 11.5 Statements of Accreditation confirming the granting of the accreditation status to the partnership and the non-local learning programme(s) concerned will be issued together with the Accreditation Report(s) for approval cases, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all of the pre-condition(s) for relevant cases with pre-condition(s). In the latter case, the validity period will only commence after satisfactory fulfilment of the pre-condition(s).
- 11.6 Qualifications of accredited non-local learning programmes may be entered into the QR in accordance with the terms and procedures stipulated by the QR Authority. The accreditation status of the non-local learning programmes only applies to the learning programme that starts **within** the validity period. The accreditation status will cease should the learning programme concerned cease to be a registered / exempted course under Cap 493.

## 12. What is the possible Follow-Up after Accreditation?

### Fulfilment of Pre-condition(s) and Requirement(s)

- 12.1 Where pre-condition(s) and/ or requirement(s) apply, the fulfilment of the pre-condition(s) and/or requirement(s) within a specified timeframe is **mandatory to obtain and to maintain valid accreditation status**.

### Appeal

- 12.2 If the partnership is aggrieved by the decision of the HKCAAVQ, the partnership can lodge an appeal to the Appeal Board against the accreditation decision, the validity period of the decision, the condition(s) or restriction(s) as stated in the Accreditation Report. Details of the Appeal Procedure are published in accordance with Part 3 (Section 13) of the AAVQO and can be accessed at the QF website at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.

### Substantial Changes to Accreditation Status

- 12.3 It is the responsibility of the partnership to inform the HKCAAVQ of any substantial change(s) to the accreditation status, which might have an impact on its competency to continue to meet the criteria for accreditation, before the change is made. In case of doubt, the

partnership should consult the HKCAAVQ on the need for seeking approval on substantial change(s) as soon as feasible, and prior to making any change(s).

12.4 Possible examples of substantial changes are:

- Any material change in the contractual relationship between the local and non-local partners to the collaboration; any suspension or termination of the contractual relationship.
- Changes in the purpose / status / structure of the partnership or of either of its constituent operators (e.g. private or public character, ownership, legal status, merging of operators, creation or change in the component division which is responsible for academic development, engagement of other local or non-local partners in programme planning/delivery).
- Change in the academic model such as a change leading to significant revisions in orientation and programme objectives, including ability to offer learning programmes at the approved QF Level.
- Change leading to a different mode of operation, e.g. from a predominately face-to-face delivery to a distance learning mode.
- Change in the campus plan and/or finance model of the partnership.

12.5 Guidelines on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status are available at the HKCAAVQ website. The accreditation status of Initial Evaluation of the partnership in collaboration or of the programme will lapse if substantial changes have been introduced without the HKCAAVQ's prior approval.

#### Advertisements Relating to the QF and the QR

12.6 Partnership is required to comply with section 18 of Cap 592 when publishing advertisements that relate to the QF and the QR.

#### Entry of Qualifications of Accredited Non-local Learning Programmes into the QR

12.7 Information about how to enter the qualification of an accredited learning programme into the QR is available on the QR website at <http://www.hkqr.gov.hk>.

#### Expiry of Validity Period

12.8 An accredited partnership which has not yet applied for PV at the approved QF Level(s) within the two-year validity period but would wish to retain the granted IE status will have to apply to the HKCAAVQ

to extend the status. Application for extension has to be substantiated with justification and reach the HKCAAVQ at least three months before the expiry of the two-year validity period. The HKCAAVQ will exercise its discretion whether to approve such extension, taking into consideration whether the partnership can demonstrate its capabilities and competency to run a NLP operation in the extended period. Acceptable evidence of its capabilities and competency may include reasonable future plans and an indication of which registered / exempted non-local learning programme(s) will be put forth for PV. An extension will be granted ONCE only. The extended IE status will automatically lapse when the extended validity period expires.

- 12.9 Partnerships must have their non-local learning programmes revalidated by the HKCAAVQ at least six months before the expiry date of the validity period unless otherwise notified. If revalidation is not successfully completed by the expiry date, the accreditation status will automatically lapse and the registration of the related qualifications of the non-local learning programmes in the QR will be indicated as expired.

### **13. How is Feedback Collected?**

- 13.1 The HKCAAVQ regularly seeks feedback on its main services. Feedback will typically be collected via the following formal means with respective stakeholders with a view to continuously enhancing the HKCAAVQ's services:

- Panel's opinion survey at the end of the Collective Approach
- Invitation for operators to meet with the HKCAAVQ to clarify points made in the final Accreditation Report
- Annual survey of operators using the accreditation services.

### **14. What are the Accreditation Timeline and Fees?**

- 14.1 The schedule for accreditation of non-local learning programmes normally takes 33 weeks to complete, depending on the number of interested partnerships and non-local learning programmes per subject area / discipline. The following is an indicative timeline.

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Parties</b>
Preparation Stage I	Briefing to operators of non-local learning programmes of specified subject area / discipline	HKCAAVQ
	Submission of Statement of Intent	Relevant partnerships
	Operators' Training Workshop	HKCAAVQ Relevant partnerships
	Signing of Service Agreement	HKCAAVQ Partnerships
	Preparation of Accreditation Document	Partnerships
	Formation of Panel	HKCAAVQ, Partnerships

<b>Indicative Accreditation Timeline</b>		
<b>Steps</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Parties</b>
Week 1 - 3	HKCAAVQ's initial examination of the adequacy of the Accreditation Document and state of readiness of the partnership to confirm that the accreditation can proceed.	HKCAAVQ
Weeks 4 - 12	Panel's Initial Comments and Partnerships' Responses	HKCAAVQ, Partnerships
Weeks 13 – 16	On-site Visits	HKCAAVQ, Partnerships
Weeks 17 – 30	Drafting of Accreditation Reports	HKCAAVQ
Weeks 31 – 32	Checking of Factual Accuracy	Partnerships
Week 33	Release of Accreditation Report	HKCAAVQ

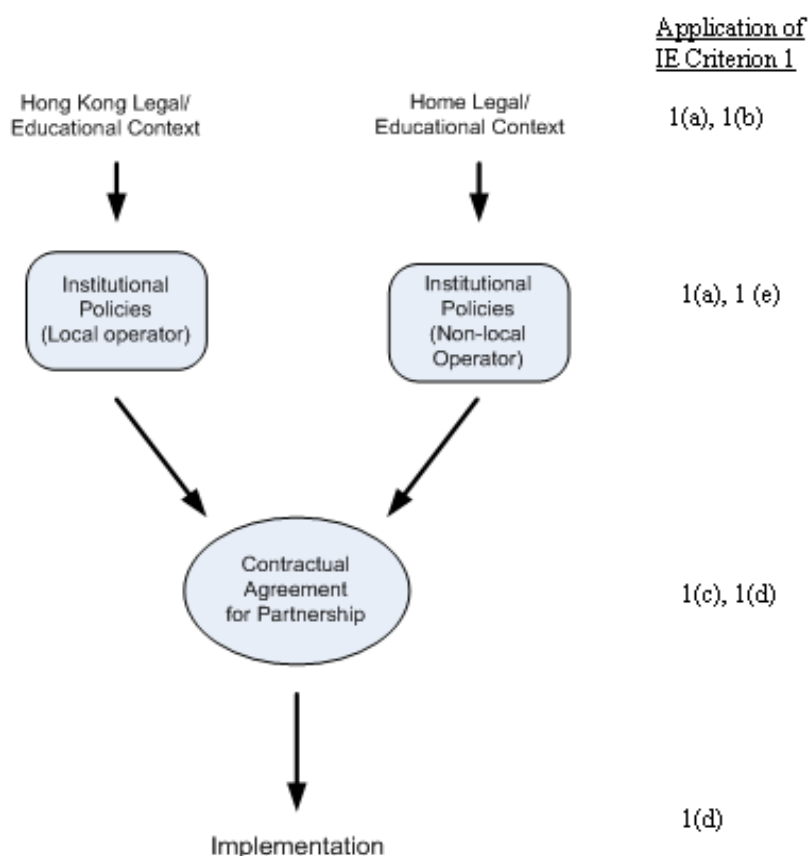
- 14.2 The HKCAAVQ is a statutory, not-for-profit self-financed body. Accreditation fee is levied on a full cost recovery principle. The accreditation fee for Initial Evaluation will be charged per partnership. The fee for Programme Validation varies according to QF Level. The standard accreditation fee schedule, as approved by the Secretary for Education, is available at the HKCAAVQ website.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Accreditation Criteria for Initial Evaluation for Collaborative Provision of Non-Local Learning Programmes**

#### **Preamble**

1. The onus of providing sufficient and appropriate documentary evidence in the accreditation process to enable the HKCAAVQ to make an accreditation decision lies with the partnership.
2. This appendix lists possible sources of evidence under each of the IE criteria to support the claims in the accreditation document. This list is for reference and is not meant to be exhaustive nor does it imply that the partnership must have all of the stated documents / evidence. The possible sources of evidence are indicative of what will be required; it is up to the partnership to offer other evidence that is effective in demonstrating that a criterion has been met.
3. When preparing the accreditation document, the partnerships are only expected to enclose what they have been using on a daily operational basis and / or for planning and decision-making purposes.
4. In principle, in view of the significance of the “agreements” and / or relevant document(s) that lay down the responsibilities of the partners in the collaborative provision and the manner and consequence of the exercise of such shared responsibilities, the “agreements” and / or relevant documents will constitute required evidence to be submitted for the IE. Required evidence is denoted by an asterisk (\*) for easy reference.
5. For a local partner being a branch campus of the non-local partner as outlined in paragraph 6.2 of the Guidelines, the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution will be reviewed, whether this is covered via a partnership agreement or not.
6. Criterion 1 (a) to (e) evaluate the responsibilities of both the local and non-local operators as prescribed in the partnership agreement and permitted by relevant authorities in the home country and HK. The relationship of criterion 1 (a) to (e) is illustrated in the following diagram.



## 1. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

### (a) Institutional Strategy and Authority to Establish the Collaboration

Each partner to the collaboration must make collaborative provision as a matter of institutional policy, and must have taken the decision to contract through a properly authorised body within the governance and management structure of the institution, with the authority to commit the necessary resources.

*Note: Both criteria (a) and (b) explore into the legitimacy of the partnership at institutional and partnership levels, taking into account the home provision as well as that in HK.*

## Key Issues to be Considered

At institutional level for each of the partners,

- What are the policy and objectives of each of the partners regarding the delivery of learning programmes through collaborative partnerships? How are they provided for in the strategic, financial and operating plans of each partner? Why are they planned in such a manner?
- What are the policy, measures, process and decision-making authority of each of the partners to select, enter into and review the collaborative partnerships?
- What due diligence enquiries has each of the partners made to the partner's standing (including legal capacity and academic authority to operate the non-local programmes and grant awards outside the home country) before entering into a partnership agreement?
- What are the mechanisms and measures taken by the partners to ascertain the competency and capacity of the partners before entering into the partnership agreement / re-entering into the partnership agreement?
- What are the risk factors to each of the partners and what provision has been made by respective partners to ensure sustainability of the partnership?

For the specific partnership in point,

- How are the aforesaid policy and mechanism applied to the specific partnership in point and how effective are they?
- What measures have been taken to ensure the partnership is effective and up to quality in the delivery of the non-local learning programmes covered under the collaboration? How well are these measures received and what implications are there to the continued maintenance of the partnership?
- What is the action plan and timeline for the renewal of collaborative agreement of the partnership?
- In the case of the local operator being the branch office / campus of the mother institution (non-local operator), what are the terms of reference, scope of responsibilities and duties between the local branch office / campus and the mother institution? How does the mother institution manage the local branch office / campus? What are the critical decision-making and reporting pathways?

## Possible Sources of Evidence

- Policy statements supporting the principle of providing learning programmes through collaborative partnerships, contained in strategic plans, policy papers, operating documents, minutes of meetings, etc.\*

- Copy of the validation / audit report and any other subsequent follow-up report(s), if any, by partner(s) prior to entering / re-entering into collaborative agreement\*
- Feasibility report and / or latest review report on the partnership\*
- Outcomes of due diligence enquiries
- Strategic, financial and operating plans which cover the collaboration\*
- Copy of the formal agreement between the collaborating operators.\*

### **(b) Accreditation Status of the Non-local Operator**

The non-local operator should be fully authorised to operate in the country in which it is based, and the terms of its accreditation should permit (or not prohibit) its participation in collaborative provision with a partner outside its own country as well as to award qualifications thereof.

*Note: Both criteria a) and (b) explore into the legitimacy of the partnership at institutional and partnership levels, taking into account the home provision as well as that in HK.*

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- Does the non-local operator's authority / recognition / accreditation status to award qualifications outside the home country cover / not prohibit the operation of the non-local learning programmes in HK?
- Is the authority granted by the home government, by statute, by recognised national / regional accreditation agency or any other appropriate authority?

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Where institutional authorisation, recognition or accreditation takes the form of the grant of a periodic authority to operate and to award qualifications (as in the United States of America), evidence of that status and a copy of the most recently available accreditation report, together with the institution's progress report, if any.\*
- Where authority to operate and to award qualifications is derived from the state, via a Government department or (as with some United Kingdom and Commonwealth universities under Royal Charter), evidence of the authority to award qualifications outside home country, and a copy of the most recently available external evaluation of the institution by the relevant national quality assurance agency.\*

- Where the non-local operator uses its branch office / campus to run the non-local learning programme(s) in HK, evidence of approval (be it via accreditation or other means) for the setting up of the branch office / campus by the appropriate authority.\*

### **(c) Contractual Considerations**

There should be a written and legally binding agreement setting out the rights and obligations of the non-local operator and the local operator. The agreement must cover those matters that are the responsibilities of each operator as a whole, and the specific matters relating to each learning programme offered through the collaboration

*Note: Criterion (c) and criterion (d) are complementary. While (c) is with a focus on the collaboration by design, (d) places an emphasis on the collaboration design in implementation. So key issues raised under (c) can also be relevant under (d) and vice versa. They should be discussed and presented with cross-referencing.*

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- How are responsibilities, duties agreed on and set out before the start of the collaboration?
- Do the spirit and essence of the agreement align with the relevant institutional policies of each partner? If not, why not?
- What are the expected performance standards and execution power and processes of each partner in the collaboration?
- How is the collaboration monitored and followed up?
- What are the mechanisms used to safeguard the delivery of contractual responsibilities and obligations, in plan and in actual implementation?
- What are the remedial actions taken to make good the collaboration should the circumstances occur, including but not limited to suspension of the arrangement and residual obligations to students on termination or suspension of agreement?
- How are contingency measures developed and implemented to safeguard the interest of the students? What are the decision-making authority and processes endorsing the contingency measures?
- What are the decision-making processes and authority in academic quality, intellectual property, student enrolment and registration and publicity related matters?

- What information management system is in place including but not limited to share of information between the partners?

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Contractual documents concerning the collaboration. Such documents include the signed partnership agreement as well as any other addendum or MoU, MoC spelling out the rights and obligations of the partners, their respective responsibilities and duties, authority, decision-making power, etc.\*
- Any other discussion papers, policy papers, notes of meetings on significant issues concerning the partnership that can demonstrate the effectiveness of the contractual consideration outlined above.
- In the case where the local operator is the branch office / campus of the non-local operator (mother institution), the internal management policy and segregation of duties (for cases where there are no partnership agreement setting out their duties and obligations)

#### **(d) Policy and Operational Framework**

There should be a clear, written statement of responsibilities for taking policy and operational decisions concerning the learning programmes covered by the collaboration. Being the awarding authority of the non-local qualification, the non-local operator should assume overall responsibility of the academic standards and quality control of the non-local learning programme. The policy and operational framework specific to the partnership should be integrated, seamless and effective to ensure the delivery of high quality educational services to the HK students.

*Note: Criterion (c) and criterion (d) are complementary. While (c) is with a focus on the collaboration by design, (d) places an emphasis on the collaboration design in implementation. So key issues raised under (c) can also be relevant under (d) and vice versa. They should be discussed and presented with cross-referencing.*

#### Key issues to be Considered

- At what level is decision-made under a consolidated partnership? What is the governing and management structure of the partnership from this point onwards?
- What are the terms of reference of the governing and management structure of the partnership? Are such responsibilities appropriately

assigned to ensure effective, integrated and seamless educational services to the HK students, taking into account the local context and the needs of the students?

- What are the decision-making authority and processes as well as the operational arrangement for the partnership in various aspects of the collaboration as outlined in the partnership agreement?
- What are the mechanism and timetable to consider routine and / or predictable matters, such as reviews of overall student performance, consideration of reports of external examiners, teaching quality, etc.? Are they effective?
- What are the mechanism and timetable to consider non-routine and / or unpredictable matters, such as suspension of workplace arrangement by employers, etc.? Are they effective?

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Documents setting out responsibilities and processes (for example, a learning programme handbook for members of staff)\*
- Minutes of meetings of decision-making bodies, notes of follow-up action, other evidence to trail effective making and implementation of decisions.
- Examples of significant policy / operational decisions as evidence of the effectiveness of the policy and operational framework in practice.

#### **(e) Assessment and Management of Risk**

There should be a full assessment of risks to the learning programmes offered through the collaboration, with appropriate and realistic plans to manage risk, and contingency arrangements to protect student interests in the event of the termination of the collaboration.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- What and how are the risk assessments conducted by the partners prior to launching a learning programme? What are the critical indicators for decision-making?
- Has any third party been involved in the development / implementation of the contingency measures for a learning programme? If so, is there any agreement / documentary evidence to prove the availability of such contingency measures?

- Have the contingency arrangements been communicated with the students for their information? Is such information easily available to stakeholders for their reference?

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Risk register or similar document\*
- Evidence of contingency arrangements for students to transfer to other learning programmes in the event of termination of the collaboration such as an Memorandum of Agreement with another Higher Education operator, or a transfer agreement to the Non-local Operator etc.)\*
- Evidence of communication about the contingency arrangements with stakeholders

## **2. FINANCIAL AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

The collaboration should have an adequate financial and physical resource base to support its learning programme(s) at an acceptable level of quality on a continuing basis including provision of classroom, laboratory, library, IT and other teaching and learning facilities.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- Are the facilities named in the Service Agreement for the on-site visit the approved premises for the registered NLP or the exempted premises for the exempted NLP?
- Does the partnership have an adequate financial and physical resource base to support its learning programmes at an acceptable level of quality on a continuing basis at the QF Level(s) and planned student numbers that the partnership wishes to run its collaboration in HK? This includes but not limited to physical resources such as provision of classroom, laboratory, library, IT and other teaching and learning facilities and financial resources.
- What are the initial set-up fund and operational fund for the collaboration? How are these funds shared between the partners? Who is to bear the cost of contingency plans to meet residual obligations to students in the event of termination of learning programmes under the collaboration?
- What are the decision-making authority and processes for managing and monitoring the resources? Should disputes regarding the use and provision of resources take place, how are these to be sorted out?

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Details of facilities available to the learning programmes offered through the collaboration\*
- Details of duration and terms of leases of accommodation not owned by the local operator.
- Audited financial statements for the last three years covering the collaboration, or evidence of the availability of start-up funds.
- Budgets and estimates for the collaboration in the next three to five years.\*
- Resources deployment agreement and plans for the collaboration, decision-making authorisation paper, and critical decision-making pathways as illustrated via organisational chart of the partnership, terms of reference of various decision-making and quality assurance bodies governing the partnership and examples of significant financial decisions made.\*

## **3. STAFFING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

### **(a) Staffing**

The partnership has policies which are effective in ensuring the availability of an adequate number of staff with the appropriate expertise, experience and competency to teach the learning programmes covered by the collaboration.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- What are the policy, criteria and processes for the appointment, retention, performance appraisal, promotion, termination and dismissal of staff members responsible for teaching and managing the learning programme(s) under collaboration?
- What mechanisms are there to ensure that the abovementioned staffing policy, criteria and processes are effectively and efficiently executed?
- What mechanisms are there to facilitate staff members' sharing of their comments, grievances and / or for staff to appeal against any staffing issues / decisions?
- What are the mechanisms for the monitoring, review and enhancement of the staffing policy, criteria and processes?
- How is the enhancement followed up and monitored?

- How are local staff members inducted into the non-local learning programmes (including but not limited to the planning and effective delivery, programme management) as well as the non-local operator's academic, administrative and staffing ethos, performance standards and good practices?
- How are staff members of the non-local partner assigned to manage / deliver the learning programmes under collaboration? Does the travelling arrangement for staff members of the non-local partner ensure quality teaching and assessment while the non-local staff members are in HK?
- What is the communication channel between local and overseas staff members and how is the team managed?
- Whether there are arrangements in place to enable staff teaching in Hong Kong to have adequate contact with the programme leader(s) of the non-local operator.

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Recruitment policies and practices, e.g. staff handbook\*
- Teaching staff's duty assignment, including teaching load and other relevant administrative and management load, e.g. teaching staff timetables, project supervisorship, etc.\*
- Arrangements for staff level liaison between the partners, e.g. staff meeting\*
- CV of staff members\*
- Sample of staff performance appraisal report and follow-up action
- Sample of staff grievances, if any, and follow-up action
- Statistics of staffing profile for the learning programmes under collaboration\*

#### **(b) Staff Development**

There should be effective policies to provide appropriate and sufficient opportunities for teaching staff to enhance their pedagogical skills and subject knowledge and be familiar with the academic ethos of the non-local learning partner.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- What mechanisms, policies and operational processes are there to facilitate staff development?

- What kinds of staff development provision are there by the local and / or the non-local partners to induct, to update the staff members (full-time and / or part-time) of the learning programme(s) under collaboration?
- How are the staff development policy and processes reviewed and monitored? What are the performance indicators to measure their effectiveness?
- How are staff members' development needs addressed?
- Whether teaching staff of the local operator have access to developmental materials and opportunities of the non-local partner operator.
- Whether effective measures are taken to ensure that teaching staff of the local operator have fully up to date subject knowledge relevant to the collaborative programme(s) they are teaching.

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Staff development / induction policy agreed between the partners for those teaching the collaborative programme(s)\*
- Summary of individual staff training / induction records\*
- staff development and induction plan for the coming one to three years\*

## **4. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

There must be an appropriate and effective quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality of the collaboration. There must be effective integration of the quality mechanisms of the partners, with a clear delineation of the responsibilities of each, particularly with respect to programme development and management, and the authority to make changes to learning programmes. The partnership must demonstrate competency to operate the non-local learning programme under collaboration meeting the QF standards and that required of by the HK education system. It must be committed to the provision of accurate, current and complete information to the public and students at policy level.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- What quality assurance mechanisms are there in the local / non-local partners that have been adopted for the collaboration and the respective learning programme(s)? Are they effective and clearly understood by all parties concerned?

- What are the mechanisms adopted for programme development, management and enhancement? Are they integrated and effective?
- What roles and authority does the local partner play / have in terms of programme content, contextualisation, and changes, etc.? How are such process and decision carried out / made and monitored?
- How does the partnership ensure that the non-local learning programmes deliver outcomes that meet the HKQF standards and that of the HK education system?
- Does the non-local partner assume overall responsibility for the quality of the non-local learning programme(s) under the partnership? If affirmative, what mechanism is there to ensure the effectiveness? If not, why not?
- What is the mechanism to review and ensure continuing effectiveness of the collaboration?
- Are external parties (such as external examiners, employers, regional quality assurance bodies, etc.) involved in the review of the effectiveness of the collaboration and the respective learning programme(s)? If so, what are the criteria and conditions for the engagement of such external parties? How is that operated and monitored? How are feedback used to make enhancement to the collaboration / learning programme(s)?
- What is the policy and mechanism adopted by the partnership within the purview of the signed collaborative agreement on the provision of accurate, current and complete information to the public and students?.

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Written agreement on the allocation of responsibilities for quality assurance\*
- Quality assurance manuals applicable to the collaborative programmes(s)\*
- Minutes of joint meetings dealing with quality issues.
- Written confirmation of any authority and process to make changes to the learning programme\*
- Written confirmation (e.g. minutes of a meeting authorised to approve a change) that any change made is properly authorised\*
- Audit / validation report (internal / external) by the partner(s) and / or external quality assurance bodies\*
- Record of monitoring visit by the non-local operator to the local operator\*
- External examiner's report, employers' report, etc.\*
- Statistics and summary report on feedback collected from stakeholders regarding the partnership\*

- Records of / reports on follow-up action taken and evidence to trail effective decision making and implementation of decisions
- Publicity materials and other public information about the collaboration and relevant learning programmes published by the partnership. Records of approval of the release of such information by the appropriate authorities.\*

## Appendix 2

### **Accreditation Criteria for Programme Validation of Non-local Learning Programmes**

#### **Preamble**

1. The onus of providing sufficient and appropriate documentary evidence in the accreditation process to enable the HKCAAVQ to make an accreditation decision lies with the partnership.
2. This appendix attempts to list possible sources of evidence under each of the PV criteria to support the claims in the accreditation document. The list is for reference and is not meant to be exhaustive nor does it imply that the partnership must have all of the stated documents / evidence. The possible sources of evidence are indicative of what will be required; it is up to the partnership to offer other evidence that is effective in demonstrating that a criterion has been met.
3. When preparing the accreditation document, the partnerships are only expected to enclose what they have been using on a daily operational basis and / or for planning and decision-making purposes.
4. In principle, it is essential to enclose the syllabus and programme design chart for the non-local learning programmes as well as sample of teaching plan, teaching materials, assessment paper, marked scripts and marking schemes, etc. as evidence for relevant PV. Normally, to gauge the quality of the learning programme, the Panel may also ask for details and samples about the capstone modules, normally dating back to the last one to two years. Required evidence is denoted by an asterisk (\*) for easy reference.
5. Under the circumstances where the collaborative arrangements of the programme being validated differ from those reviewed under the approved Initial Evaluation exercise, the HKCAAVQ may review the new collaborative arrangements via the prevailing Programme Validation exercise so that the partnership need not undergo another Initial Evaluation purely for the purpose of a different mode of collaboration (para. 7.1 of the Guidelines). Partnership will then be required to address all relevant IE accreditation criteria (para. 6.7 of the Guidelines).
6. Criteria 1 to 5 are fundamental and integrated elements constituting outcome-based learning programmes. The relationship of such criteria in determining QF Level is further elaborated in **Appendix 3**.

## 1. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes must reflect the stated programme objectives and the objectives should be fit for purpose in the local context. The QF Level of the learning outcomes must correspond to the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Hong Kong SAR Government for the purpose of the QF.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether there are clearly stated learning outcomes that contribute to the fulfillment of the programme objectives.
- The proposed QF Levels of the learning programmes, and a rationale as to why the levels are appropriate in relation to the GLD.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Definitive programme document with programme design chart illustrating how intended learning outcomes meet the HKQF standards corresponding to the GLD and how the learning outcomes contribute to the fulfilment of the programme objectives\*.

## 2. PROGRAMME CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The content and structure of the learning programmes must be coherent, integrated and effective in enabling students to achieve the stated learning outcomes and the required standards. The learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessments must be coherent, balanced, enable progression and be pitched at the appropriate level in the QF.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Reasons for proposed title of the learning programme and of qualification\*
- Rationale and the need for the learning programme
- Programme objectives and duration of programme in terms of educational or occupational outcomes for graduates
- Core subjects, any elective subjects/ modules and any pre-requisite or co-requisite subjects/ modules, as appropriate

- Details of any contextualisation of elements of the learning programme, or of learning materials, to the circumstances of Hong Kong, in comparison with the corresponding learning programme offered in home country
- Whether there are clear, measurable, written learning outcomes for the learning programme and for each element or module of it
- How the programme content and structure are coherent and appropriate to the specific objectives of the learning programme

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Definitive programme documents and syllabus\*
- Samples of teaching material and learning activities\*
- Samples of assessment material and activities\*
- Recommended reading lists\*

### **3. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT SELECTION**

The minimum admission requirements for the learning programmes must be clearly outlined for students and staff. These requirements and the student selection processes must ensure that students enrolling in the learning programmes have the knowledge and skills to be able to undertake the learning activities proposed in the learning programmes.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- How the admission requirements are appropriate in light of the programme objectives and learning outcomes.
- Whether there are appropriate procedures for selecting and enrolling students in the learning programme.
- If students are accepted with non-standard entry qualifications, or are granted advanced standing permitting them to enter the learning programme other than at the start, whether it is demonstrable that the prior achievement of those students is comparable to that of others at the same point in the learning programme.
- Whether prospective and enrolled students are provided with clear, accurate and timely information on the learning programme, enrolment details, fees and refund policies, timetabling and assessment arrangements, student rights and responsibilities, and support services.
- Whether the partnership has ethical marketing materials and programme promotion practices.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Admission policy\*
- Student selection and enrolment procedures, including any procedures for the recognition of prior learning\*
- Brochures or website information showing admission requirements and procedures\*
- Data on student recruitment, entry profiles, including students granted advance standing and completion rates\*

## **4. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The teaching and learning activities designed for the learning programmes must be effective in delivering the intended learning outcomes and programme content.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether a range of appropriate teaching methods, materials and activities is used to deliver the learning programme.
- Whether the teaching and learning methods employed result in the achievement of the stated learning outcomes.
- How any employers or other parties who contribute to student learning, such as in industry placement, are effectively engaged in the process and fully informed of their responsibilities.
- Division of teaching responsibilities between the staffs of the local and non-local operators.
- The extent to which student centred approaches to learning are adopted.
- The accessibility of staff to their students, including staff of the non-local operator engaged in teaching the learning programme.
- Quality of online delivery, if any.
- Whether there is in place a system to incubate any workplace attachment and monitor students' performance during attachment.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- A description of the teaching and learning methods, sequence of learning and assessment activities, mode of teaching (e.g. lectures, tutorials, laboratories, practical demonstration, work placement, etc.) and contact hours for each mode\*
- Samples of teaching and learning materials\*

- Recommended reading lists\*
- Guidance materials for employers or other parties involved in student learning\*
- Student and supervisor manual for workplace attachment\*
- Assessment criteria for workplace attachment\*

## **5. STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

Assessments must support effective learning and enable students to demonstrate attainment of the learning outcomes at the required standards. The assessment methods and techniques used for the learning programmes must be valid, reliable, fair, sufficient to reflect the learning outcomes at the claimed QF Levels, and secure against cheating.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether assessment methods and criteria are valid, reliable, and appropriate to judge the learning outcomes of a subject/ module, for achieving the required standards.
- How the assessments test knowledge and skills at each stage of the learning programmes and allow for progressive development of the required outcomes.
- Whether grading of assessment results is based on clear and valid criteria for different classes of performance.
- Whether assessments are reviewed to ensure a consistent application of assessment criteria.
- Whether steps have been taken to manage the security risks that may arise if students sit the same examination at different times, due to time zone differences between the local and non-local operators.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- An outline of assessment methods and assessment criteria for each subject/ module\*
- Criteria and guidelines for activity-based assessment\*
- System of assessment verification or moderation and external examination, as appropriate, including the responsibility for appointing external examiners, and the procedures for the partners in the collaboration to consider jointly the reports of external examiners\*
- Policies and procedures for grading assessment results (if using graded assessment)\*

- Samples of assessment materials/students' work\*
- Measures to ensure examination security.
- Samples of formative and summative assessments\*
- Arrangements for assessment of fieldwork/practicum/workplace attachment\*

## 6. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The partnership must provide students with clear, accurate information and dependable access to support services that give students optimal opportunity for successful completion of the learning programme. Where the non-local operator is responsible for providing a service, or determining an appeal, complaint or other application, there must be clear information available to students as to how they may access the non-local operator; and provision for any appeal or complaint to be heard in Hong Kong or by video-conference link to the non-local operator.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether appropriate **academic** support services are available to students, including orientation at the start of the learning programme, assistance in developing learning skills, and support for finding work placement if required.
- Whether appropriate pastoral support services are available to students, including counselling on personal and financial matters.
- Whether there is appropriate tutorial support, including arrangements for supervising theses and projects.
- Whether there is a clear statement available to students of the respective responsibilities of the local and the non-local operators for the provision of information, guidance and support.
- How the partnership monitors student under-achievement and provides effective guidance, feedback and general supervision of student learning.
- Whether the partnership has fair and consistent policies and procedures for dealing with complaints about academic and disciplinary matters, such as progression, assessment appeals and plagiarism; and that arrangements are made for any hearing on such matters to take place in Hong Kong, or via video-conference or other means with the non-local operator.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Student handbook, brochure or website information outlining programme information, support services and relevant student policies.
- Procedure for monitoring student under-achievement and evidence of appropriate counselling.
- Copy of relevant academic, disciplinary and complaints policies and procedures, as provided to students.
- Memorandum of understanding or agreement with organisation/company providing workplace attachment.

## **7. STAFFING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

The partnership must have adequate teaching and supporting staff with the qualities, competency, qualifications and experience necessary for the effective programme management, planning, delivery and monitoring of their learning programmes. There must be adequate staff development schemes and activities to ensure that the teaching and supporting staff are kept updated for the quality delivery of the learning programmes.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether the partnership has engaged capable teaching staff with the appropriate academic, vocational or professional qualifications and occupational experience for the learning programmes it delivers.
- Whether the partnership has adequate and competent staff to support the educational functions and services it offers, such as student counselling, IT support.
- Whether the partnership has a fair and transparent human resources system including policies such as appointment, appraisal, promotion and termination.
- Whether the partnership has effective processes in place to orientate and develop staff in areas relevant to their learning programmes and services, and in particular with respect to the curriculum structure and organisational values associated with the non-local learning programme.
- Whether teaching staff adopt a professional approach to their teaching responsibilities, such as, they work to clear and well-structured instructional plans and provide effective guidance, feedback and general supervision of student learning.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Human resources policy or human resources management plan\*
- A staff manual\*
- CVs of teaching and support staff which include academic and/or professional qualifications, and work experience; including, where appropriate, CVs of staff of the non-local operator who will teach in Hong Kong, or to whom students will have remote electronic access\*
- Anticipated staff-to-student ratios for each learning programme\*
- Policies and plans for staff development, including any developmental opportunities to be provided to staff of the local operator by the non-local partner\*
- Data on implemented staff development activities\*

## **8. FINANCIAL AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

The partnership must have adequate financial and physical resources for the delivery of their learning programmes.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether there are sound financial policies and practices and sufficient financial resources to ensure that the partnership can sustain and further develop the delivery of learning programmes.
- Whether there are suitable teaching facilities, such as seminar rooms, workshops, laboratories and other instructional facilities for the planned modes of delivery.
- Whether there are adequate facilities, learning resources, equipment, library resources and access to information technology resources to support effective and independent learning.
- Whether there is appropriate access to specialist facilities and equipment required to deliver the learning programmes.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Initial and annual income and expenditure for the learning programmes\*
- Description of the premises and teaching facilities for the learning programmes\*
- A detailed list of the specialist facilities and equipment required to deliver the learning programmes\*

- How the library collection is sufficient in size and relevant to the learning programmes?

## **9. QUALITY ASSURANCE (INCLUDING PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT)**

The partnership must (i) develop learning programmes by addressing the needs of the community, employees and employers delivering learning outcomes that align with the intended QF Level; (ii) monitor and review the performance of all their learning programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that the learning programmes remain current and valid and that the learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and student assessments are effective; and (iii) ensure that there is a clear delineation of responsibilities for all aspects of quality assurance between the partners in the collaboration, and effective integration of the exercise of those responsibilities.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- How does the partnership know that the non-local learning programme(s) to be accredited achieve their objectives?
- How the partnership jointly and effectively monitors and reviews the performance of the learning programmes and how the reviews lead to improvement.
- Whether steps have been taken accurately to identify the market need for the learning programmes and prospective student demand.
- Whether there has been consultation with and feedback from relevant professional and industry bodies, community groups, student groups and academics.
- Whether the formal agreement between the local and non-local operators deals with:
  - Responsibility for the assessment of students, including the appointment and role of external examiners or verifiers.
  - Responsibilities for teaching, where this is shared.
  - Number of students permitted to be recruited to the learning programmes.
  - Responsibility for the recruitment and selection of students.
  - Articulation arrangements with other learning programmes at the overseas and Hong Kong institutions.
  - Language of instruction and assessment (if not English), and responsibilities for the authoritative translation of documents.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Procedure for developing and approving collaborative learning programmes between the local and non-local operators\*
- Notes of liaison meeting with staff responsible for teaching and managing the learning programme.
- Terms of reference, membership and minutes of relevant committees or advisory bodies involved in the development of the learning programmes\*
- Terms of reference, membership and minutes of the programme review committee or equivalent\*
- Review policies and procedures\*
- Consultation reports from external examiner, external advisor and employers\*
- Copy of formal agreement between the local and non-local operators.
- A copy of the most recently available independent review of the learning programme (or that most closely equivalent to it) as delivered by the non-local operator in its own country\* This may be:
  - A report from a national, regional or specialist accrediting or quality assurance body; or
  - A report by a professional or statutory body that accredits the learning programme for its own purposes; or
  - (If no external report is available) documentation from the most recent internal review of the learning programme by the operator itself.

## **10. STUDENT RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

The partnership must have effective administration and management systems and procedures in place to ensure integrity, security, accuracy and currency of their records, and effective arrangements for information to be shared between the local and the non-local operators.

### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether there are effective systems and procedures to collect and maintain information on student enrolments, fees paid, student progress and results, qualifications issued, key data related to the non-local learning programmes, staff qualifications, employment records and other data as needed, in a secure and confidential manner; with effective arrangements for sharing information between the partners in the

collaboration, and arrangements for maintaining records after the collaboration has ended.

- Whether there are systems for verifying student admission information and staff qualifications and experience.
- Whether the partnership has engaged competent staff to manage their administration and records management systems.

#### Possible Sources of Information

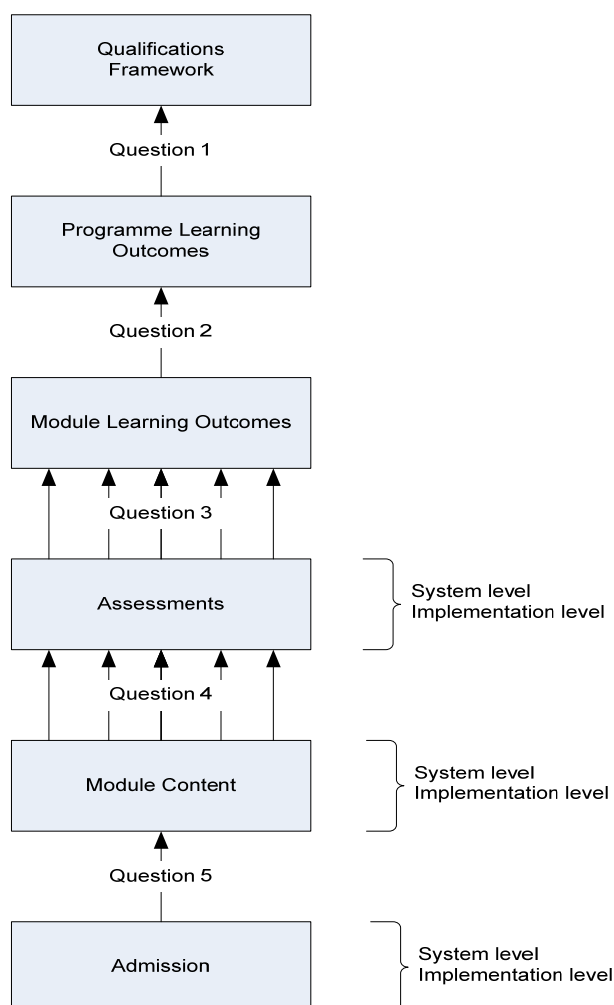
- Documented administration and record-keeping procedures.
- Sample forms such as enrolment forms, class results forms or certificates.
- Actual records of student enrolments, student assessments, qualifications issued, staff CVs and verified qualifications, etc.\*
- Agreement between the local and non-local operators on the sharing of information and the maintenance of records beyond termination of the collaboration\*
- Publicity materials and other public information about the collaboration and relevant learning programmes published by the partnership. Records of approval of the release of such information by the appropriate authorities.\*

## Determining QF Levels

1. There are ten criteria for programme validation (PV). Of these, five are the fundamental core underpinning the design and delivery of outcome-based learning programme(s). They should be evaluated in relation to each other, for the purpose of determining QF level. The five criteria are listed below.

- Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
- Programme Content and Structure
- Admission Requirements and Student Selection
- Teaching and Learning
- Student Assessment

2. The inter-relationship of the key criteria in Programme Validation is addressed and explored through a set of key questions as depicted in the following diagram.



3. The process depicted in the diagram shows the considerations taken when designing a learning programme meeting the QF standards, starting from questions exploring programme design at the conceptual and theoretical level, and then progressing gradually towards actual implementation.

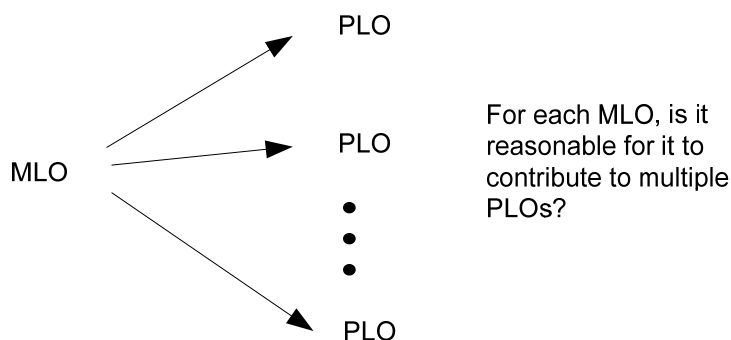
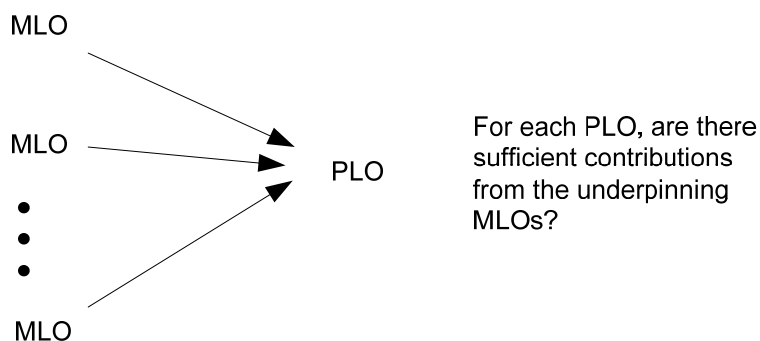
### Key Questions to be addressed

Question 1. Whether the intended programme learning outcomes (PLOs) are commensurate with the claimed QF level in HK (e.g. QF Level 5 for bachelor's degree).

For non-local learning programmes from countries with qualifications framework, this question can be addressed indirectly by considering how the intended PLOs are benchmarked against the QF of the home country. A comparison of the two QFs at the appropriate level is then performed.

Question 2. Whether the intended PLOs are sufficiently and reasonably supported by the module learning outcomes (MLOs).

A mapping of the MLOs to the PLOs can be used to illustrate the contributions from the MLOs to each of the PLOs. The meaning of 'sufficiently' and 'reasonably' are illustrated below.



Question 3. Whether the module learning outcomes are appropriately reflected in the assessments?

This question can be considered at the system level and the implementation level. At the system level, this refers to the design of the assessment tools. A module description typically would contain information such as the assessment weightings and strategies. At the implementation level, assessment paper, marking scheme/criteria and marked assignments/ scripts etc should be reviewed for the purpose of ascertaining the alignment with the design of the assessments. In particular, attention should be paid to the alignment between the expected level of challenges of MLOs and the actual assessment employed. It may also be useful to point out that the MLOs should be considered as the minimum requirements for a student to pass a module. While it is not possible to fully examine all the modules in a programme, it would be useful to take a dissection of some representative module(s) for the above purpose.

Question 4. Whether the assessments suitably correspond to the content of modules?

Again, this question can be considered at the system level and the implementation level. At the system level, the link between individual module topics and the assessments should be reviewed to ensure that the topics are suitably covered by the assessments, and vice versa. At the implementation level, the actual teaching/learning materials should be compared side-by-side with the examination papers to ensure that the nature of questions asked, or the required performance in a practical assessment, is appropriate. It may not be practical to perform such analysis for all modules. Some representative modules should be selected for this purpose.

Question 5. Whether an average target student admitted to the programme would have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to achieve the intended PLOs?

At the system level, this includes a review of the stipulated admission requirements and the process of making admission decision. At the implementation level, the actual admission decisions should be judged using evidence such as admission profile, exemptions granted and non-standard entries. Adherence to the authority of admission decision making process should also be emphasised.

4. As can be seen, determination of QF level required evidence from the stated five PV criteria:

- Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
- Programme Content and Structure
- Admission Requirements and Student Selection
- Teaching and Learning
- Student Assessment

Evidence under each of these criteria should be presented in an integrated manner following the sequence of the five questions with cross-referencing so as to holistically and systematically demonstrate to the accreditation panel the rationale for the programme design pitched at a particular QF Level.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Roles of Accreditation Panel Members**

1. Accreditation is conducted under the “peer review” principle. By peer review, accreditation decisions are made by the HKCAAVQ on the basis of recommendations put forth by peers involved in the exercise as members of an accreditation panel. Therefore panel members are important assets of the HKCAAVQ and play a significant part in the formulation of accreditation decisions.
2. The panel members are academic and professional experts with expertise and experience in areas relevant to the accreditation exercise, such as institutional management, programme delivery and management, quality assurance and QF matters. A professional staff member of the HKCAAVQ performs the role of panel secretary but is also a full member of the panel.
3. The panel is expected to provide expert advice to the HKCAAVQ in an accreditation exercise according to the accreditation guidelines, accreditation standards and procedures as well as the code of conduct stipulated by the HKCAAVQ and the Terms of Reference of the exercise as specified in the Service Agreement.
4. The role of the panel is to assess the institutional capability and capacity of the partnership of collaboration provision and the quality of the non-local learning programme(s) under consideration, evaluate evidence and form a judgement as to whether the partnership and the learning programme(s) meet the required accreditation standards.
5. In order to perform their duties effectively and efficiently, panel members are expected to be able to afford the time to make the necessary preparation for the accreditation exercise, including but not limited to attending relevant training and briefing session(s), making themselves familiar with HKCAAVQ accreditation requirements and processes, reading thoroughly the accreditation documents and materials supplied by the partnership, making initial comments on the accreditation documents and materials against the required evidence, accreditation criteria and standards, participating in the whole on-site visit, sharing views and putting forward recommendations to the HKCAAVQ as an accreditation panel. Panel members are also expected to share their views on the draft accreditation report as well as on fulfilment of pre-condition(s) / requirement(s) by the partnership as and when appropriate.
6. The panel chairman as the leader of the panel is also expected to provide overall guidance in order to achieve a satisfactory completion of the exercise. It is the duty of the Panel Secretary cum Member in consultation

with the panel chair to ensure that all pertinent issues relevant to the accreditation are fully addressed during the visit and that decisions/recommendations made by the panel are consistent within the HKCAAVQ.

7. Accreditation is also conducted under the principle of “fitness for purpose”. It is understood that operators differ in nature, size, operational complexity and scope of expertise. Therefore, there is no one single model that fits all in quality assurance. Accordingly the panel members are expected to respect academic autonomy while making judgement and recommendations on the basis of evidence-based accreditation standards and requirements so as to maintain professional standards in accreditation.
8. Accreditation has a dual purpose. On the one hand an accreditation exercise should ensure that minimum standards are met and on the other hand provide input to the continuous improvement of the partnership and its learning programmes. An open mind and a supportive attitude are part of the professional behaviour expected of panel members without compromising quality.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Partnerships in Accreditation**

1. Accreditation is voluntary and initiated at the request of the partnerships comprising both the local and non-local operators of non-local learning programmes. The service agreement signed by both the HKCAAVQ and the partnership provides the terms and conditions including the roles and responsibilities of the parties. The partnership accepts to participate in the accreditation exercise and thus cooperates with the HKCAAVQ and its panel so as to ensure that the process is as smooth as possible.
2. Accreditation is conducted on a trust basis but is evidence-based with the onus of proof lying with the partnership. It is the responsibility of the partnership to provide evidence to demonstrate that it meets the accreditation standards as well as any statutory requirements in Hong Kong. The partnership is responsible for the full and frank disclosure of all relevant documents as requested for assessment by the HKCAAVQ, throughout the accreditation process. Limited disclosure will therefore be considered by the panel as lack of evidence. The HKCAAVQ understands that some of the information requested may be sensitive and of a confidential nature. All panel members sign a confidentiality statement and any confidential documents will be treated as such by the panel.
3. The partnership is expected to perform the following responsibilities in the exercise:
  - To submit an Accreditation Document of a self-evaluative nature and that addresses the standards promulgated in the accreditation guidelines relevant for the exercise.
  - To provide with the Accreditation Document supporting documents as necessary as well as additional documents at the panel's request before and during the on-site visit.
  - To prepare the on-site visit, in line with the stipulated requirements as contained in these Guidelines as well as under further advice by the HKCAAVQ Secretariat. This responsibility includes making the necessary meeting arrangements for the on-site visit including but not limited to the invitation and briefing of the proposed representatives whom the panel will be meeting. The requirements and arrangements will be stipulated by the accreditation panel, before and during the on-site visit as deemed appropriate. As the discussions during the on-site visit form part of the evidence underpinning the accreditation exercise, the partnership is required to ensure that all the requested interviewees in sufficient numbers are available for the panel to meet according to

schedule. The partnership will be invited to give an input to the visit programme prior to finalisation. The partnership is expected to collaborate with the HKCAAVQ in the prescribed arrangements for the purpose of triangulation of evidence.

- To participate in the meeting sessions and engage in the discussions with the panel during the on-site visit
- To provide the basic protocol and logistical support including making meeting room(s) available which are big enough to accommodate the number of people to be met at any given time, reasonable refreshments (at HKCAAVQ's cost), car parking facilities, if any. Details will be put forth to the partnership by the HKCAAVQ Secretariat before the on-site visit.
- To provide feedback on factual accuracy of the draft accreditation report.

## Accreditation Document Template

### Part 1. IE

#### *Table of Contents*

*Table of Appendices (indicating the additional documentary evidence)  
(appropriate cross-referencing need to be made between the appendices and  
the text of the Accreditation Document)*

1. Executive Summary
  - 1.1 Background on Collaborative Partnership and brief history of the partners
  - 1.2 Purpose on Participating in NLP Accreditation
    - The partnership
    - The intended QF Level for the non-local learning programme (s) under the partnership
    - The operating campus
    - The discipline(s) / programme area(s) that the partnership covers
  - 1.3 Self-Evaluation Process Adopted by the Partnership
2. Introduction
  - 2.1 Home country education, legal and quality assurance system
  - 2.2 The non-local operator's authority to operate learning programmes in HK
  - 2.3 The non-local operator's experience in collaborative provision
  - 2.4 The local operator's legal set-up and experience in education and collaborative provision
  - 2.5 The collaborative model adopted by the partnership
3. Initial Evaluation of Collaborative Partnership (Applicable to Partnership that undertakes IE together with PV)
  - 3.1 Organisational Management
    - 3.1.1 Institutional Strategy and Authority to Establish the Collaboration
    - 3.1.2 Accreditation Status of Non-local Operators
    - 3.1.3 Contractual Considerations
    - 3.1.4 Policy & Operational Framework
    - 3.1.5 Assessment and Management of Risk
  - 3.2 Financial and Physical Resources
  - 3.3 Staffing and Staff Development
  - 3.4 Quality Assurance
4. Conclusion

Appendices (as supporting evidence)

*Glossary*

*List of Abbreviation*

## **Part 2. PV**

*Table of Contents*

*Table of Appendices (indicating the additional documentary evidence)  
(appropriate cross-referencing need to be made between the appendices and  
the text of the Accreditation Document)*

1. Executive Summary
2. Programme Validation
  - 2.1 Outcome-based Learning Programme
    - 2.1.1 Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
    - 2.1.2 Programme Content and Structure
    - 2.1.3 Admission Requirement and Student Selection
    - 2.1.4 Teaching and Learning
    - 2.1.5 Student Assessment
    - 2.1.6 Justification for Claimed QF Level
      - Programme depth and breadth in home education system
      - Contextualisation of learning programme for HK students (as appropriate)
      - Programme learning outcomes mapped GLD of HKQF
      - Validation of QF Level through a holistic demonstration of constructive alignment of 3.1.1 through 3.1.6
  - 2.2 Student Support Services
  - 2.3 Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programme
  - 2.4 Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programme
  - 2.5 Quality Assurance (including programme development and management)
  - 2.6 Student Records and Information Systems
3. System and Arrangement within the Partnership applicable to the learning programme in point, if different from what is presented in the IE
4. Conclusion

Appendices (as supporting evidence)

*Glossary*

*List of Abbreviation*

## **Appendix 7**

### **Guidance Notes on the Preparation of Accreditation Documents through a Self-evaluation Process**

#### **Preamble**

1. These Guidance Notes are for the reference by partnerships that plan to take part in an accreditation exercise of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).
2. These Guidance Notes provide specific reference to the preparation of Accreditation Documents, building on the good practices of a self evaluation process for the purpose of continuous quality enhancement and development.
3. The partnership participating in a NLP accreditation exercise is expected to present information and evidence against the accreditation criteria as outlined in these Guidelines.

#### **Self-evaluation and Quality Assurance**

4. Effective management of any business involves a cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation; evaluation of what has been done is essential in ensuring that activities remain fit for purpose, and that continuous improvement occurs. Evaluation is primarily an internal process; hence it is often referred to as self-evaluation.
5. Self-evaluation lies at the heart of quality assurance processes, whether at the level of institutional systems or individual programmes. The primary context for these Guidance Notes is the preparation of an Accreditation Document as a first step in the process of accreditation by HKCAAVQ. However, such preparation will be a lot easier if it is built on a practice of periodic internal self-evaluation of systems and programmes. These Guidance Notes are primarily intended to assist the preparation of Accreditation Document based on the good practices of internal self-evaluation.

#### **The Purpose of a Self-evaluation Process**

6. A self-evaluation process involves making an assessment of whether a partnership or a programme of learning is fit for purpose. As such, the process has three main functions.

7. First, it enables the partnership to evaluate the quality of its systems, or of the learning opportunities offered to students and the outcomes achieved by them. It provides an opportunity to reflect on ‘what do we do?’, ‘why do we do it’, ‘why do we do it in the way that we do?’ and ‘how do we know if we are succeeding?’
8. A good self-evaluation process will include careful **self-analysis** involving relevant stakeholders. It should be self-critical in discussing its perceived strengths, weaknesses, on the basis of the threats and opportunities that it may face.
9. It is an opportunity for the partnership to demonstrate how its strengths and any weaknesses identified have been addressed and how opportunities identified from the internal and external environments are to be made used of and how challenges are to be met. Where weaknesses and threats remain, plans for addressing these should be summarised. It will facilitate the panel’s assessment if examples are given for appropriate remedial actions and plans which is evidence of the partnership capability to assure the quality of the programmes.
10. The document should indicate the changes that have taken place earlier, and consider what changes may be necessary in the next three to five years.
11. An unacknowledged weakness is more likely to result in an adverse judgement by a review team. It suggests that either the partnership is unaware of the weakness, or that nothing has been done about it.
12. Second, the self-evaluation process should lead to observations, discussions and outcomes which are **evidence-based**. Evidence-based, refers to the testing and verification of statements made in the self-evaluation document based on factual and objective data and information.
13. A high quality, reflective process that draws upon robust evidence is more likely to lead to a positive outcome. An inadequate process that is poorly organised and which is based on description rather than being evaluative, is less likely to produce a successful result.
14. The self-evaluation should indicate where supporting evidence is with appropriate cross-referencing, (e.g. 3-year strategic plan in Appendix 2 of Supporting Document in Volume 2 of Accreditation Document). This

allows such documents to be called for if needed, and avoids the need for merely descriptive material to be included in an evaluative document.

15. Thirdly, the self evaluation process provides the input for the self evaluation in the case of an internal exercise, and or the basis of an Accreditation Document to HKCAAVQ as part of an external exercise. If used as an Accreditation Document, it will usually be necessary to augment the document to include all core factual materials / evidence required by HKCAAVQ, and it is essential for the partnership to structure the document following the document template (**Appendix 6**) so as to address each of the accreditation criteria in the order in which they appear in the relevant HKCAAVQ Guidelines on NLP Accreditation. In particular, the document should reflect on the threshold standards specified in the Guidelines.

### **Preparing an Accreditation Document for NLP Accreditation**

16. A good Accreditation Document will address each of the criteria for NLP accreditation specified in these accreditation Guidelines and discuss the matters raised in the Key Issues to be Considered with reference to the evidence.
17. Some of the information required is largely factual. What differentiates a good Accreditation Document from one that is not so good is the extent to which there is genuinely evaluative commentary, as opposed to mere description. The following are some of the areas where it is possible to include the type of evaluative commentary that will make the difference between a good and a not-so-good document.

#### *In respect of Initial Evaluation*

18. A good Accreditation Document will explain how the partnerships of non-local learning programme are **effective** in its collaborative provision that meets the local education standards in Hong Kong, with particular reference to the HKQF standards. A not-so-good document would merely describe the partnerships' policy and systems, without explaining why they work, or discussing strengths and possible areas for enhancement.
19. A good Accreditation Document will explain how the education and training services provided by the partnerships of non-local learning programmes are consistent with the wider mission of the operator(s). A not-so-good document would not explain why the operators / partnerships

lay out their strategies / actions and wish to provide educational opportunities in the way as claimed / planned.

20. A good Accreditation Document will discuss the **decision-making process** within the operators / between the partners, explaining how decision making takes account of such factors as **internal control and external accountability**, including but not limited to the awarding powers of the non-local operator, and the local knowledge of the local. An Accreditation Document would address also the **effectiveness and efficiency** of the mechanisms used for selecting, entering into and monitoring collaborative partnership, programme approval and review, including the extent to which there is a scope for contextualisation of the programme, or of learning materials, to the circumstances of Hong Kong. A not-so-good document would merely describe the decision-making powers, process and division of responsibilities, without providing any rationale for it, or evaluating its effectiveness.
  
21. A good Accreditation Document will identify the **measures used to assess the success of the operation**, explaining why each measure is important, before presenting **relevant figures**. A not-so-good document would offer statistics alone, without adequate explanation of the significance of them.

*In respect of Programme Validation*

22. A good Accreditation Document would place the **objectives of the programme** in a context that reflects the distinctive mission of the operators. A programme might be placed in a context such as preparing learners for particular careers, or for employment generally; addressing regional or local economic development needs; fostering research and development; or widening access to, and participation in education. A not-so-good document would merely state the objectives of the programme, without providing any context or rationale for them.
  
23. A good Accreditation Document should demonstrate how the **learning outcomes** of the programme have been developed to meet the Generic Level Descriptors of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, and government regulations and guidelines (such as the Common Descriptors on Associate Degree, the Common Descriptors on Higher Diploma), any relevant industry employment standards (such as Specifications of Competency Standards developed by industries with Industry Training Advisory Committees) or professional requirements. The evaluation should explain why the outcomes set are considered to be appropriate, and should discuss the effectiveness of measures to ensure that staff and

- students have a clear understanding of the objectives and intended learning outcomes of the learning programmes. A not-so-good document would merely state the learning outcomes, without explaining why they are appropriate.
24. A good Accreditation Document should review the effectiveness of the **content and design of the curriculum** in enabling the intended learning outcomes of programmes to be achieved. It would consider how the issues of level, coherence, balance and progression are addressed in the design of the curriculum. It would show how new subject knowledge, or current developments in occupational or professional practice are taken into account, and how best practice in pedagogy is reflected. A not-so-good document would merely describe the curriculum, without addressing issues of effectiveness, or discussing how it is kept up to date.
  25. A good Accreditation Document should review the effectiveness of **student assessment** in measuring achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the learning programmes. It would demonstrate that assessment is valid, reliable, sufficient and secure. It would show how assessment is effective in enabling students to demonstrate achievement; in discriminating between different categories and levels of performance; and in promoting student learning (especially through formative assessment). A not-so-good document would merely describe the assessment methods used, without addressing the appropriateness and effectiveness of those methods.
  26. A good Accreditation Document should review **student achievement**, considering in particular action taken to address under-achievement, and action in response to comments by external verifiers or examiners, or from employers. A not-so-good document would merely record results, without showing how feedback loops were used to enhance performance.
  27. A good Accreditation Document should review the effectiveness of **teaching and learning**, in relation to the intended learning outcomes and curriculum content, taking into account the learning style and competency of the **target students**. It would be likely to discuss issues such as the range and appropriateness of teaching methods employed; the ways in which participation by students is encouraged; the quality of learning materials provided; strategies for staff development to enhance teaching performance; effectiveness of team teaching; and student workloads. A not-so-good document might limit itself to a description of the teaching and learning methods used, with little evaluation of their effectiveness.

28. A good Accreditation Document should review **student progression** in the light of the strategies of the operators for supporting learners, and the extent to which these take account of the **ability profile of the student intake**. Consideration might be given to the ways in which students are recruited and inducted; identification of and action on any special learning needs; feedback to students on their progress; overall learning guidance and supervision; pastoral support. A not-so-good document would report on numbers completing each stage of the programme, but would offer no analysis of the effectiveness of the measures taken to ensure that students progressed to satisfactory completion of the programme.
29. A good Accreditation Document should review the adequacy of **learning resources** and the effectiveness of their utilisation. It would demonstrate a planned strategic approach to linking physical and human resources to intended programme outcomes. A not-so-good document would list the available resources, but would not demonstrate how the planning process ensures the right resources are available, or that the resources are being used to the greatest effect.
30. A good self-evaluation document should identify **supporting information** that can be made available if required. This can include both quantitative data and qualitative feedback.
31. Quantitative data might include:
- statistics on student achievement in all forms of summative assessment;
  - profile of students' entry qualifications;
  - progression and completion rates;
  - first employment destinations.

Qualitative feedback might include:

- student feedback;
- staff feedback;
- external verifiers' and examiners' reports;
- employers' views on the competency of the graduates whom they have recruited;
- accreditation and monitoring reports by any professional body with an interest in all or part of the programme;
- internal reports on the approval of the programme.

### **What is a Quality Accreditation Document?**

32. An Accreditation Document should contain adequate and up-to-date information to address each of the accreditation criteria of an accreditation exercise. However, a document that is too long will lose focus. As a rule of thumb, the document should be **self-contained**, include **key** facts and documentary **evidence** with appropriate cross-referencing to other supporting documents. It should be **evaluative**, rather than merely descriptive. It should give the reader a clear picture of what the partnership and / or non-local learning programme(s) is like in a **succinct, precise and concise** manner.

## **Glossary**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Accreditation Document	A self-evaluative document, with supporting evidence, prepared by a partnership to address the accreditation criteria.
Accreditation Panel	A panel consisting of experts with the requisite profiles and expertise formed for the purpose of the Initial Evaluation of collaborative provision and Programme Validation of the non-local learning programmes under the relevant collaborative provisions. A HKCAAVQ staff member will play the role of the Panel Member cum Secretary.
Collective Approach	A methodology for a streamlined accreditation service in which a number of accreditation requests will be processed concurrently by a single accreditation panel.
Collaborative Provision	It involves a Hong Kong operator (local operator) and a non-local operator jointly operating a programme of learning in Hong Kong, which leads to a qualification awarded by a non-local operator. The local operator and the non-local operator are regarded as acting jointly as the partnership of the learning programme to be accredited.
Condition	A condition is part of the accreditation decisions to be fulfilled by the partnership in Initial Evaluation and / or Programme Validation prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status (pre-condition) or by specified deadline(s) during the validity period (requirement).
Criteria	The elements for consideration during an accreditation exercise. These elements are related to the “input”, “process”, “output”, “context” and “outcome” of the subject of accreditation (i.e. the partnerships / learning programmes) and are expressed as the four areas for accreditation assessment under IE and ten areas for accreditation assessment under PV in Appendices 1 & 2 respectively.

Evidence-based	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means that accreditation decisions are to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the partnership to support its claim that it meets the accreditation standards stipulated in these Guidelines.
Fitness for Purpose	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means that the partnership and the learning programme(s) are accredited on the basis of their stated objectives, in view that partnerships are different in nature, size, operational complexity and scope of expertise.
Granting Body	In relation to a qualification, means the person, school, institution, organisation or other body which grants the qualification.
Initial Evaluation (IE)	It is an upfront quality test to determine whether the collaborative provision between a local operator and a non-local operator (the partnership) is able to achieve its objectives as claimed and to operate the learning programmes (under the collaborative partnership) that meet the claimed QF standards. It is separate from, and additional to, any Initial Evaluation/ Institutional Review which the local operator may have undergone in respect of its local learning programmes or in connection with another non-local partner in another partnership.
Learning Programme	A programme of studies or training defined by a curriculum (which may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements) and includes, where the context permits, any proposed programme of such studies or training.
Learning Outcome	A student's attained knowledge, skills and application ability as a result of completing the learning programme.
Local Operator	An operator whose base of operation is in Hong Kong (including the local office of a non-local educational institution).

Non-local Courses (learning programmes)	Learning programmes that are registered / exempted under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap 493) on the basis of comparability with the home courses delivered in the home countries of the non-local operators
Non-local Operator	A local operator's partner whose base of operation is outside Hong Kong.
On-site Visit	A visit to the partnership's premises in Hong Kong which is an integral part of an accreditation exercise conducted primarily to collect evidence for evaluating whether the accreditation criteria are met.
Operator	A person, school, institution, or organisation or other body, the whole or part of the business of which includes the operation of any learning programmes or any part of a learning programme.
Partnership	It refers to the collaborating operators (local and non-local) responsible for the collaborative provision of a non-local learning programme of the non-local operator.
Peer Review	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means involving academic and professional experts with relevant expertise and experience as panel members in the accreditation.
Pre-condition	A pre-condition is part of the accreditation decisions to be fulfilled by the partnership prior to the start of the validity period of the accreditation status.
Programme Validation (PV)	It is an overall evaluation of the non-local learning programme to determine whether the learning programme meets the required standards to achieve its claimed objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes commensurate with the competency standards prescribed in the GLD (QF standards).
QF Level	The level of the learning programme pitched against the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) published by the Government at <a href="http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_GLD.asp">http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_GLD.asp</a> .

QF Standards	In respect of a learning programme, the skills, knowledge or experience acquired on the completion of the learning programme that commensurate with the requirements under the specified level of the QF.
Qualification	A formal award in recognition of the skills, knowledge and experience acquired by an individual on satisfactory completion of a learning programme which meets specified QF standard and which is granted on the basis of formal assessment. It does not include Statement of Attendance.
Requirement	A requirement is part of the accreditation decisions to be fulfilled by the partnership by specified deadline(s) during the validity period of the approved accreditation status.
Restriction	A restriction is any limitation which may be attached to the HKCAAVQ's determination as stated in the accreditation report.
Revalidation	It is the same as the Programme Validation to be conducted prior to the expiry of the validity period of the former programme validation / revalidation. The revalidation exercise will take into account the findings of the previous validation / revalidation exercise as well as follow-up actions taken by the partnership.
Standards	The qualitative or quantitative benchmarks under individual accreditation criteria for the panel's assessment as to whether the accreditation subject (i.e. the partnerships / learning programmes) meets the quality requirements. They are expressed in greater details under each accreditation criterion in the boxes in Appendices 1 & 2.
Statement of Accreditation	It confirms the granting of the accreditation status to the partnership and the non-local learning programme(s) concerned. It will be issued together with the Accreditation Reports for approval cases, or upon satisfactory fulfilment of all of the pre-condition(s) for relevant cases with pre-condition(s).

Sub-panel	A sub-group of the accreditation panel commissioned to collect evidence. The sub-panel will share its findings and observations with and make recommendation to the accreditation panel on specific cases in the Collective Approach.
Substantial Change	Any changes which may have an impact on meeting the criteria for accreditation. For details, please refer to <i>Guidelines on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status</i> available at the HKCAAVQ website.
Threshold Standard	It refers to the minimum quality requirements stipulated in these Guidelines and to local prevailing requirements for higher education providers operating in Hong Kong such as the Generic Level Descriptor in the QF as well as any other relevant policy intention / regulations / guidelines / common descriptors / specification of competency standards (SCS) promulgated by the Hong Kong SAR Government.
Validity Period	The period of time in which an approved accreditation status is effective as stipulated in the accreditation report.

*List of Abbreviation*

Cap 493	Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance
Cap 592	Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO)
EDB	Education Bureau
FASP	Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students
GLD	Generic Level Descriptors
HK	Hong Kong
HKCAA	Hong Kong Council of Academic Accreditation
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
IE	Initial Evaluation
IR	Institutional Review
MLO	Modules Learning Outcome
NLP	Non-local Learning Programme
NLSPS	Non-means Tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students
PLO	Programme Learning Outcome
PV	Programme Validation
SCS	Specification of Competency Standards
QF	Qualifications Framework
QR	Qualifications Register
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning