



香港學術及職業資歷評審局  
Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of  
Academic & Vocational Qualifications

**Draft**

**Guidelines**

**On**

**Accreditation**

**Of**

**Non-local Learning Programmes**

**(for the Pilot Exercise in 2009)**

**Version 1.0**

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## **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.
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 programmes are conducted under different ordinances and administered by different authorities. For registration purposes, assessment is conducted based on comparability with the home course of the home country system. Accreditation is to benchmark the learning programme against the local system including the HKQF. The voluntary process of accreditation of non-local programmes offered in Hong Kong will not affect the process for registration / exemption.
4. Collaborative provision of a non-local learning programme involves a Hong Kong operator (local operator) delivering 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 learning programme to be accredited.
5. In these Guidelines “partnership” is used to refer to the partnership between the collaborating operators. “Local operator” refers to the operator whose base of operation is in Hong Kong (including the local offices 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 can exercise its professional judgement according to the principles set-out 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 The HKCAAVQ will accredit only non-local courses 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 (learning programmes) accredited for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR) leading to recognition under the Qualifications Framework (QF) 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 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 Non-local courses (learning programmes) 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. Such registration/exemption status does not confer any accreditation status to the partnerships and the learning programmes concerned. Whether the qualification of a registered / exempted course can be recognised as meeting the standard of a particular qualification obtained in Hong Kong is to be determined via an accreditation process. 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.

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

- 5.1 Accreditation of non-local learning programmes is a quality assurance process that underpins the QF. It comprises two stages.
- 5.2 The first stage is Initial Evaluation for collaborative provision which is an upfront quality test to determine whether the collaborating operators are able to achieve their objectives as claimed and to operate the learning programmes (under the collaborative partnership) that meet the claimed QF standards (para. 5.3). Operators must demonstrate that they have the abilities to effectively manage and resource the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of their non-local learning programmes, in the context of collaborative provision. Under collaborative provision, the HKCAAVQ will review the responsibilities of both the local and non-local operators, the way in which responsibilities have been divided, and how the exercise of the responsibilities is integrated so as to provide an effective and seamless service to students.
- 5.3 The second stage is Programme Validation. 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).

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

- 6.1 The guiding principles for the accreditation of non-local learning programmes are as follows.
- Peer review
  - Fitness for purpose
  - Evidence-based
  - Threshold standard
- 6.2 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 will have a cross-sectoral representation covering the full spectrum of the collaborative provision and operation of the non-local learning programmes. The panel members are academic and professional experts with relevant expertise and experience in areas such as institutional management, programme delivery and management, quality assurance and QF matters. The role of the panel is to assess the capability and capacity of the operators 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 operators and the learning programme(s) meet the required accreditation standards.
- 6.3 Under the principle of ‘fitness for purpose’, the operators and the 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.
- 6.4 Accreditation decisions are to be made on the basis of evidence provided by the operators to support their claim that they meet 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).
- 6.5 Accreditation decisions are made by threshold standards. ‘Threshold standards’ refer to the minimum quality requirements stipulated in these Guidelines, drawing reference from prevailing (higher) education system and the learning outcomes requirements laid down in the GLD as well as any other relevant policy intention / regulations / guidelines / common descriptors / specification of competency standards (SCS) promulgated by the Hong Kong SAR Government.

## **7. What is Initial Evaluation for Collaborative Provision of Non-local Learning Programmes?**

- 7.1 Initial Evaluation reviews the collaborative provision made between a local operator and a non-local operator. 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. This is because each collaboration is unique in terms of the quality assurance and/or other arrangements between the local and the non-local operators.
- 7.2 Initial Evaluation addresses the competency and objectives of the operators and the effectiveness of the arrangements made within a single partnership covering one or more discipline areas; it does not signal the granting of accreditation status to the local operator to enter into a range of partnerships with other non-local operators. If a local operator wishes to seek accreditation for more than one partnership, a separate application must be made in respect of each. Similarly, if a non-local operator wishes to have partnerships with other local operators covered by accreditation status, separate applications must be made in respect of each of these.
- 7.3 Initial Evaluation is QF Level specific and is a prerequisite for Programme Validation. Operators applying for Initial Evaluation must specify the corresponding QF Level(s) at which their non-local learning programmes are offered. Any accreditation status granted will apply to specified levels of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. 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. Accreditation status for collaborative provision of non-local learning programmes at lower levels cannot be extended upwards. Within the range of QF Levels 4 – 7, accreditation status can be extended downwards but does not extend to QF Level 3 and below. Similarly, accreditation status can be extended downwards within the range of QF Levels 1 – 3. 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.

- 7.4 Initial Evaluation for collaborative provision has a validity period of two years. Within the two-year validity period, operators must have at least one non-local learning programme at the approved QF Level(s) accredited under Programme Validation. If partnerships continue to have the learning programmes validated their IE status will not expire. Accredited partnerships who have not yet applied for Programme Validation at the approved QF Level(s) within the two-year validity period will have to apply with justification to extend their granted accreditation status. Application for extension has to reach the HKCAAVQ at least three months before the two-year validity period expires. HKCAAVQ will exercise its discretion whether to approve such extension, taking into consideration whether the partnerships can demonstrate their capabilities and operational plan to offer learning programmes in the extended period. An extension will be granted ONCE only. The Initial Evaluation status of the partnerships will lapse when the extended validity period expires.
- 7.5 Initial Evaluation will usually be conducted back to back with Programme Validation of non-local learning programmes covered by the collaboration; subsequent Programme Validations under the same partnership and approved QF Level(s) will be conducted independently.
- 7.6 Where the local operator is a branch campus of the non-local operator (whether or not established as a separate legal entity), the Initial Evaluation criteria will be applied to the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution.

## **8. What are the Accreditation Criteria for Initial Evaluation of Collaborative Provision?**

- 8.1 To complete Initial Evaluation successfully, the partnership must demonstrate that it has attained the threshold standard of Initial Evaluation in the four areas outlined in paragraph 8.3 below. The evaluation will be based on the Accreditation Document and other relevant information gathered throughout the entire accreditation process, according to the guiding principle of ‘fitness for purpose’.
- 8.2 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. There will usually be two key documents which, between them, will cover all agreed matters. The first is the formal contract between the parties, and the second may be, for example, a handbook or similar document dealing with the policy

and operational matters necessary to secure implementation of the collaboration. All matters that need to be agreed between the parties and all relevant matters in respect of the collaboration should be covered in one or both of these documents and other documents and correspondence to be submitted for the Initial Evaluation.

8.3 The four areas to be considered in an Initial Evaluation exercise are as follows.

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

- (a) Resources

3. Staffing and Staff Development

- (a) Staffing
- (b) Staff Development

4. Quality Assurance

- (a) Quality Assurance

Note: for local operator being a branch campus of the non-local partner as outlined in paragraph 7.6, the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution will be reviewed, whether this is covered via a contract or not.

8.4 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 1**. The key issues listed are indicative rather than exhaustive. Other matters may be explored by the panel if they appear relevant to a particular collaborative arrangement. The possible sources of evidence are also indicative of what will be required; it is open to the partnership to offer other evidence that is effective in demonstrating that a criterion has been met.

- 8.5 An Accreditation Document prepared by the partnership should be self-evaluative and address the accreditation criteria for Initial Evaluation. Guidance notes on the Preparation of Accreditation Documents through a Self-evaluation Process are available in **Appendix 3**.

## **9. What is Validation of Non-local Learning Programmes?**

- 9.1 Programme Validation is the second stage of accreditation of non-local learning programmes. The first time a learning programme is validated it will usually follow Initial Evaluation for collaborative provision, if such has not been done. Subsequent re-validation 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 criteria, having regard to the findings of the previous validation exercise as well as follow-up actions taken by the partnerships.
- 9.2 The principles for Programme Validation 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 stated objectives and the standards for the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) before their qualifications can be entered into the Qualifications Register. Programme Validation is a quality assurance process to ensure that:
- Learning outcomes and standards of the non-local learning programmes are appropriate for the qualifications to which they lead;
  - Content and design of the non-local learning programmes and the methods of delivery are likely to achieve their objectives;
  - Content and assessment are based on relevant academic and vocational standards, as appropriate;
  - Delivery arrangements, including management, facilities, staffing and student services are appropriate for the non-local learning programmes and will facilitate successful delivery of the stated objectives and at the proposed QF Level(s); and
  - Partnerships have systems and resources in place to effectively manage, quality assure and improve their non-local learning programmes.
- 9.3 Partnerships are to send in an Accreditation Document(s) for the non-local learning programmes in the exercise. To successfully undergo Programme Validation, the partnership must demonstrate that the non-

local learning programme and the capacity of the partnership to deliver the learning programme have attained the local threshold standards for Programme Validation as expressed in the **ten** areas outlined below. Accreditation decision will be based on the Accreditation Document and other relevant information gathered throughout the entire accreditation process, according to the guiding principle of ‘fitness for purpose’.

Areas to be considered in programme validation are as follows.

1. Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
  2. Programme Content and Structure
  3. Admission Requirements and Student Selection
  4. Teaching and Learning
  5. Student Assessment
  6. Student Support Services
  7. Staffing and Staff Development for Learning Programmes
  8. Financial and Physical Resources for Learning Programmes
  9. Quality Assurance (including Programme Development and Management)
  10. Student Records and Information Management
- 9.4 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**. The key issues listed are indicative rather than exhaustive. Other matters may be explored by the panel if they appear relevant to a particular collaborative arrangement. The possible sources of evidence are also indicative of what will be required; it is open to the partnership to offer other evidence that is effective in showing that a criterion has been met.
- 9.5 An Accreditation Document prepared by the partnership should be self-evaluative and address the accreditation criteria for Programme Validation. Guidance notes on the Preparation of Accreditation Documents through a Self-evaluation Process are available in **Appendix 3**.

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

10.1 Accreditation of non-local learning programmes is to be conducted in a Collective Approach by subject area / discipline. 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 large quantity of accreditation requests in a shorter period without compromising quality.

### Initiating the Process

10.2 The HKCAAVQ will hold a briefing for relevant operators with partnerships in specified subject area(s) / discipline(s) under the scheduled Collective Approach. Partnerships are strongly advised to attend the briefing before making a decision as to participate in the accreditation exercise or not. The briefing will provide an overview of the accreditation of non-local learning programmes, the accreditation standards, the accreditation process, the preparation for accreditation including submission of Accreditation Document. At the end of the briefing, partnerships should be able to assess for themselves their readiness to proceed with accreditation.

10.3 Interested partnerships should return a signed Statement of Intent to the HKCAAVQ indicating that they are 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 in point. 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.

10.4 Upon signing the Service Agreement, the partnerships should proceed to prepare the self-evaluative Accreditation Document for submission to the HKCAAVQ by the stipulated deadline. The partnerships will also be invited to attend an Operator Workshop to make preparation for the self-evaluative Accreditation Document and the on-site visit.

## The Panel

- 10.5 Under the Collective Approach, an accreditation panel will be formed for each subject area / discipline to consider both the Initial Evaluation of collaborative provision and Programme Validation of the non-local learning programmes under the relevant collaborative provisions. 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 to review assigned accreditation cases and conduct on-site visits. The roles of accreditation panel members are outlined in **Appendix 4**.
- 10.6 The HKCAAVQ has full authority in the selection of membership of the panel for a particular exercise, after seeking views from the partnerships on any conflict of interests of the potential panel members. The panel will include a HKCAAVQ professional staff member as the Panel Member-Secretary.

## Initial Examination of the Accreditation Document

- 10.7 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 Operator 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.
- 10.8 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.

## Preparing for Accreditation

- 10.9 A thorough understanding of what is required of the operators in the accreditation process is the first step to successful accreditation. The roles and responsibilities of operators in accreditation are outlined in **Appendix 5**.
- 10.10 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.

- 10.11 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 change 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.
- 10.12 It is important that the process involves personnel from both the local and the non-local operators. There should be involvement of the senior management and senior members of staff and 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, students and other stakeholders such as employers in the self-evaluation.
- 10.13 The Accreditation Document prepared through a self-evaluation process should reflect on the operators' competency to achieve their stated objectives and to deliver non-local learning programmes that meet the accreditation standards stipulated in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Partnerships are required to present evidence to support their claim.
- 10.14 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 site visit or on site.

### The On-site Visit

- 10.15 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.
- 10.16 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 collaboration.

- 10.17 The timeframe for the on-site visit will be agreed with the partnership and included in the Service Agreement.
- 10.18 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. As the interviews are part of the evidence needed 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.
- 10.19 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 provide for:
- Interviews with the senior management of the partnership, teaching staff, students, graduates and external stakeholders.
  - Review of documentary evidence.
  - Review of facilities.
  - Panel's private meetings, during which the representatives of the partnerships are required to withdraw from the panel's meeting room.
- 10.20 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.
- 10.21 The panel will organise an exit meeting with the senior management representatives of the partnership. The exit meeting will however not be an oral feedback session reporting on the panel's recommendations for the accreditation outcomes at the end of the visit as the panel may need to consider all accreditation cases under the same Collective Approach on completion of all on-site visits.

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

- 11.1 On the basis of the findings and observations put forth by the panel of all accreditation cases on completion of the on-site visits, the HKCAAVQ will make accreditation decisions for respective cases, to be presented in accreditation reports in the capacity of the Accreditation Authority as provided for under Cap 592. 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.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 Upon clearance of factual accuracy, the finalised accreditation report for Initial Evaluation and accreditation report for Programme Validation will be released to the partnership.
- 11.4 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 claimed objectives and / or the QF standards in the case of Programme Validation.

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

- 12.1 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 in the delivery of the non-local learning programmes as well as the 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.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 Restrictions such as student numbers 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.
- 12.4 If the qualification of a learning programme being validated is determined to be not 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.
- 12.5 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).
- 12.6 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.

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

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

- 13.1 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

- 13.2 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

- 13.3 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).
- 13.4 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.

13.5 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

13.6 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

13.7 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

13.8 Accredited partnerships in collaborative provision who have not yet applied for Programme Validation at the approved QF Level(s) within the two-year Initial Evaluation validity period will have to apply for extension of their granted accreditation status (para. 7.4) at least three months in advance of the expiry.

13.9 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. The revalidation process is the same for the Programme Validation, taking into account the findings of the previous validation exercise as well as follow-up actions taken by the operators (para. 9.1).

## 14. How is Feedback Collected?

14.1 The HKCAAVQ will seek 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.

## 15. What are the Accreditation Timeline and Fees?

15.1 The schedule for accreditation of non-local learning programmes normally takes 24 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.

Steps	Action	Responsible Parties
Preparation Stage 1	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 - 9	Panel's Initial Comments and Partnerships' Responses	HKCAAVQ, Partnerships
Weeks 10 – 13	On-site Visits	HKCAAVQ, Partnerships
Weeks 14 – 21	Drafting of Accreditation Reports	HKCAAVQ
Weeks 22 – 23	Checking of Factual Accuracy	Partnerships
Week 24	Release of Accreditation Report	HKCAAVQ

15.2 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 collaborative provision. 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. HKCAAVQ does not request a specific format for the submission of the documentary evidence.
2. This appendix attempts to list possible sources of evidence for reference and to support the claims in the accreditation document 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. For a local partner being a branch campus of the non-local partner as outlined in paragraph 7.6 of the Guidelines, the relationship between the branch campus and its parent institution will be reviewed, whether this is covered via a contract or not.

## **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.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- Does each operator have a clear policy and objective of delivering learning programmes through collaborative partnerships?
- Has each operator approved the collaborations through a properly authorised body within its governance and management structure (for example, university senate, board of studies, etc.)?
- Is the collaboration provided for in the strategic, financial and operating plans of each operator?
- Are adequate financial resources in place to support the non-local learning programmes to be offered, bearing in mind that start up costs may take a number of years to recover?
- Have the partners made appropriate due diligence enquiries as to the standing of each other?
- Is the agreement to collaborate made directly between the local operator and the non-local operator which will award the qualification, and not through any third party?

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Policy statements supporting the principle of providing learning programmes through collaborative partnerships, contained in strategic plans, operating documents, minutes of meetings, etc.
- Minutes of meetings approving the collaboration or separate approval documents.
- Copies of strategic, financial and operating plans which cover the collaboration.
- Copies of budgets/financial projections for learning programmes covered by the collaboration.
- Evidence of the outcomes of due diligence enquiries.
- 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.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- Is the non-local operator authorised, recognised or accredited as an institution able to award qualifications, of the type that will be offered in Hong Kong, by the national or regional authority in the country in which it is based?

#### 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.
- 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, and a copy of the most recently available external evaluation of the institution by the relevant national quality assurance agency.
- Where an operator is multi-national, or uses an offshore headquarters, evidence will be required of accreditation in the country in which materials to be used in the partnership learning programme(s) are used by the overseas operator.

### **(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.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

In relation to the overall collaboration, whether the written agreement specifies:

- Termination and arbitration provisions, including specifying the legal jurisdiction in which disputes will be resolved.
- Mission and objectives of the collaboration
- Financial arrangements.
- Award granting arrangements
- Respective responsibilities of the parties for educational standards and quality.
- Approval of the governing bodies of the respective operators in respect of the partnership and the collaboration programmes.
- Provision for the suspension of the arrangement if one party fails to fulfil its obligations.
- Residual obligations to students on termination or suspension of the agreement.
- The duration of the agreement, and review arrangements.
- Responsibilities relating to student discipline, complaints and appeals.
- Responsibilities for the issue and secure control of the certificates of qualification, transcripts and other formal evidence of student achievement.
- Recognition and articulation arrangements, if any.

In relation to specific learning programmes provided through the collaboration, whether the written agreement specifies:

- Responsibilities for the collection and sharing of information about collaborative learning programmes.
- Intellectual property considerations or arrangements.
- Responsibilities for the enrolment and registration of students.
- Responsibilities for publicity and promotional materials.

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Contractual documents concerning the collaboration.

### **(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.

#### Key issues to be considered

- Whether there is a clear statement of the decision making responsibilities of each partner with respect to issues of policy concerning each learning programme, such as adjustments to programme content, alteration to the assessment strategies and techniques employed, etc.?
- Whether there is a clear statement of the decision making responsibilities of each partner with respect to operational matters, such as the allocation of teaching staff, organisation of classes, arrangements for assessment, etc.?
- Whether there is a clear statement of the responsibilities of each partner for the collection and sharing of data relating to each learning programme?
- Whether there is a timetable for the consideration of routine and/or predictable matters, such as reviews of overall student performance at the end of each term or semester, consideration of the reports of external examiners, etc.?

#### 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.

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

There should be a full assessment of risks to the learning programmes offered through the collaboration, with appropriate 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

- Whether steps have been taken by the partnership to identify and manage the particular risks associated with collaborative provision.
- Whether contingency arrangements exist for students to complete their learning programmes, or to transfer to other learning programmes, in the event of the termination or expiry of the collaboration.

#### 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.

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

### **(a) 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

- Adequacy of physical resources in relation to the nature of the learning programmes to be offered and the planned student numbers.
- Availability of funding to support contingency plans to meet residual obligations to students in the event of termination of learning programmes provided through the collaboration.
- Adequacy and effectiveness of resource management.

#### 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, or evidence of the availability of start-up funds.
- Budgets and estimates for the next three to five years.

### **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

- Whether recruitment arrangements are effective in securing staff with the appropriate expertise, experience and competency.
- Whether there are arrangements for all staff, including locally recruited part-time teaching staff, to be fully involved in discussions about the planning and effective delivery of the learning programme(s).
- 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.
- Whether staffs of the non-local operator teaching in Hong Kong are adequately compensated for any teaching duties that are beyond the formal requirements of their contracts of employment.

#### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Details of recruitment policies and practices.
- Details of teaching staff's conditions of service.
- Details of arrangements for staff level liaison between the partners.

### **(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.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- 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 policy agreed between the partners for those teaching the collaborative programme(s).
- Individual staff training records.

## 4. QUALITY ASSURANCE

### (a) 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.

#### Key Issues to be Considered

- Whether there is a clear and appropriate allocation of responsibilities between the partners, for all of the aspects of quality assurance.
- Whether the respective responsibilities of the partners are integrated effectively and there is allocation of responsibility for the planning and monitoring of programmes covered by the collaboration, including external examination/moderation procedures.
- Whether there are arrangements made by the partnership to review the continuing effectiveness of the collaboration.
- Whether the local operator has any authority to adjust the content of the learning programme from that specified by the non-local operator. If so, the nature of that authority and the process of approval required for any changes.

#### 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 to make changes to the learning programme.
- Written statement of the process to be followed for approving such changes.
- Written confirmation (e.g. minutes of a meeting authorised to approve a change) that any change made is properly authorised.

## **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. HKCAAVQ does not request a specific format for the submission of the documentary evidence.
2. This appendix attempts to list possible sources of evidence for reference and to support the claims in the accreditation document 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. 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.

## **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

- Mapping of learning outcomes against (GLD) and relevant documents.

## **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 for Consideration

- Proposed title of the learning programme.
- Proposed title of qualification.
- Rationale and the need for the learning programme
- Programme objectives in terms of educational or occupational outcomes for graduates.
- Duration of the learning programme.
- 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.
- Whether the programme content and structure are coherent and appropriate to the specific objectives of the learning programme.
- Modes of study (full-time or part-time).
- Delivery methods.
- Attendance requirements.
- Planned class or group size for each method of delivery.

### Possible Sources of Evidence

- Definitive programme documents.
- 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 for Consideration

- Whether there are appropriate admission requirements.
- 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

- Brochures, prospectuses or website information showing admission requirements and procedures.
- Student selection and enrolment procedures, including any procedures for the recognition of prior learning.
- Data on student recruitment, entry profiles 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 for Consideration

- 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.
- Whether 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.
- Any 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, if relevant.
- Information provided to students about the availability of teaching staff.
- 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 for Consideration

- Whether assessment methods and criteria are valid, reliable, and appropriate to judge the learning outcomes of a subject/ module, for achieving the required standards.
- Whether 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 for Consideration

- 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.
- Whether 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

- 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.

## **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 accommodation and teaching facilities for the learning programmes.
- A detailed list of the specialist facilities and equipment required to deliver the learning programmes.
- An indication of the type and extent of library collection 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 for Consideration

- How does the partnership know that the non-local learning programme(s) to be accredited achieve their objectives?
- Whether the partnership jointly and effectively monitors and reviews the performance of the learning programmes.
- Whether the partnership identifies areas for improvement, and takes effective action on these.
- 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

- A written description of procedure for developing and approving collaborative learning programmes between the local and non-local operators.
- Discussion 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.
- 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 for Consideration

- 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.

## **Appendix 3**

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

#### **Preamble**

1. These Guidance Notes are for the reference by operators who 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. For new programmes subject to Programme Validation, it is understood that some of the evidence mentioned in these Guidance Notes may not be available (e.g. evaluation of the effectiveness of student assessment and student achievement covered in paragraphs 26 and 27). Under such circumstances, the operators are expected to present the planned student assessment policy, processes and samples and evaluate them against the intended student achievement targets.

#### **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 an operator or a programme of learning is fit for purpose. As such, the process has three main functions.
7. First, it enables the operator 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?’ A good self-evaluation process will include careful self-analysis. This should involve an evaluation of perceived strengths, with reference to the evidence which justifies the statements made; and of weaknesses, where these are recognised.
8. Where weaknesses are acknowledged, these should be discussed, together with the steps being taken to bring about improvements. Acknowledgement of a weakness, so long as effective improvement measures are in hand, should be welcomed. An unacknowledged weakness is more likely to result in an adverse judgement by a review team; it suggests that either the operator is unaware of the weakness, or that nothing has been done about it.
9. Second, the self-evaluation process provides a framework for a process of review. Review is based on the testing and verification of statements made in the self-evaluation document. The document should reflect on current provision in a manner that evaluates both strengths and weaknesses, indicate the changes that have taken place since any earlier review, and consider what changes may be necessary in the future.
10. A self-evaluation process should be constructively self-critical in discussing both strengths and weaknesses of provision, as perceived by the operator. It is an opportunity for the operator to demonstrate how the strengths of the provision identified in previous reviews have been built upon, and how any weaknesses identified have been addressed. Where weaknesses remain, plans for addressing these should be summarised. Credit will usually be given for appropriate remedial plans that address effectively any acknowledged weaknesses.
11. A high quality, reflective process 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.

12. The self-evaluation should indicate where supporting evidence may be found, e.g. within other documentation. 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.
13. Thirdly, the self evaluation process provides the input for the self evaluation document 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 some of the factual material required by HKCAAVQ, and it may be helpful for reviewers to structure the document so as to address each of the accreditation criteria in the order in which they appear in the relevant HKCAAVQ guidelines for accreditation. In particular, the document should reflect on the threshold standards specified in the Guidelines.

### **Preparing An Accreditation Document for Initial Evaluation**

14. A good Accreditation Document will address each of the criteria for accreditation of operators specified in respective accreditation guidelines, which are available in the HKCAAVQ website.
15. Under each heading of the Accreditation Document, it will discuss the matters raised in the Key Issues for Consideration, set out in the Guidelines.
16. 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.
17. A good Accreditation Document will explain how the operators / partnerships of non-local learning programme are effective in delivering a good quality learning programme that meets the local threshold standards in Hong Kong. A not-so-good document would merely describe the

operators / partnerships' policy and systems, without explaining why they work, or discussing strengths and possible areas for enhancement.

18. A good Accreditation Document will explain how the education and training services provided by the operators / 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 wish to provide educational opportunities in the way as claimed / planned.
19. 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 operator in the case of accreditation of non-local learning programmes. An Accreditation Document would address also the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms used for 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 responsibility, without providing any rationale for it, or evaluating its effectiveness.
20. 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.

### **Preparing An Accreditation Document for Programme Validation**

21. A good Accreditation Document should address each of the criteria for Programme Validation.
22. Under each heading of the Accreditation Document, it will discuss the matters raised in the Key Issues for Consideration, set out in respective Guidelines, which are available in the HKCAAVQ website.
22. Some of the information required is largely factual. As with Initial Evaluation, 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 examples of issues that lend themselves to evaluative discussion, and which can make the difference between a good and a not-so-good document.

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. 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.
27. 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.
  28. 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.
  29. 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.
  30. 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.

31. 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.
32. 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?**

33. An Accreditation Document should contain adequate information to address each of the accreditation criteria of an accreditation exercise. However, a document that is too long will lose focus. Not all of the factual information may need to go into the Accreditation Document. The document can refer the reader to other information that is available. As a rule of thumb, the document should be self-contained, include key facts and make cross references to data in supporting documents with clear indication of the reference drawn from relevant parts of the supporting documents. It should be **evaluative**, rather than merely descriptive. It should give the reader a clear picture of what the institution, or the programme, is like in a succinct, precise and concise manner.
34. Within these broad guidelines, succinct, concise, self-contained and evaluative is always better than long and descriptive.

## **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 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 operators and the quality of the non-local learning programme(s) under consideration, evaluate evidence and form a judgement as to whether the operators 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 operators, 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 operator(s) 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 Panel Secretary cum Member's duty 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 operators and their learning programmes. An open mind and a supportive attitude are part of the professional behaviour expected of panel members without compromising quality. Furthermore the panel should work under the "no surprise" principle, by giving the operator adequate opportunity to present its evidence and supplement evidence to bridge any identified gap.

## **Appendix 5**

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

1. Accreditation is voluntary and initiated at the request of the operators. The service agreement signed by both the HKCAAVQ and the operators provides the terms and conditions including the roles and responsibilities of the parties. The operators among others accept to participate in the accreditation exercise thus cooperate 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 operators. It is the responsibility of the operators to provide evidence to demonstrate that they meet the accreditation standards as well as any statutory requirements in Hong Kong. The operators are 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 operators are 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 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 operators are required to ensure that all the requested interviewees in sufficient numbers are available for the panel to meet. The operator(s) will be invited to give an input to the visit programme prior to finalisation.

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

## **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) delivering 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 operators 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 operators to support their claim that they meet the accreditation standards stipulated in these Guidelines.
Fitness for Purpose	It is one of the principles of accreditation which means that the operators 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 and a non-local operator 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 collaboration between a local operator and a 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 a limit set to the accreditation status within which the status will continue to be effective within the validity period as specified 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 operators.
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.