

# **Comparing the New Zealand Qualifications Framework and the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework**

**Draft referencing report for consultation**

**June 2017**

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## Acronyms

AQA	Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ATS	Award Titles Scheme (Hong Kong)
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer (Hong Kong)
CRT	Credit Recognition and Transfer
CUAP	Committee on University Academic Programmes (New Zealand)
EER	External Evaluation and Review (New Zealand)
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EQAF	Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework (New Zealand)
EU	European Union
GLD	Generic Level Descriptors (Hong Kong)
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKEDB	Hong Kong Education Bureau
HKQF	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ITACs	Industry Training Advisory Committees (Hong Kong)
ITO	Industry Training Organisation (New Zealand)
ITP	Institute of Technology and Polytechnic (New Zealand)
LPA	Learning Programme Accreditation (Hong Kong)
LCQA	Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance (Hong Kong)
MILOs	Module intended learning outcomes (Hong Kong)
MOE	Ministry of Education (New Zealand)
MNA	Management of National Assessment (New Zealand)
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement (New Zealand)
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (now replaced by QQI)
NLP	Non-local learning programme (Hong Kong)
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
OSTA	Occupational Skills Testing Authority (China)
PILOs	Programme intended learning outcomes (Hong Kong)
PTE	Private Training Establishment (New Zealand)
QAC	Quality Assurance Council (Hong Kong)
QF	Qualifications Framework (Hong Kong)
QFS	Qualifications Framework Secretariat (Hong Kong)

QR	Qualifications Register (Hong Kong)
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SCQFP	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
SCS	Specification of Competency Standard (Hong Kong)
SGC	Specification of Generic Competencies (Hong Kong)
TEO	Tertiary Education Organisation (New Zealand)
UGC	University Grants Committee (Hong Kong)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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## Revision History

Version	Date	Remarks
Draft 1.1	20.4.2016	First draft outline prepared by NZQA and commented by Hong Kong
Draft 1.2	13.5.2016	Version with Hong Kong content added and principle 6 added
Draft 1.3	7.6.2016	Changes accepted. Clean copy for International Experts to use
Draft 2	27.10.2016	Second draft prepared by Hong Kong
Draft 2.1	12.12.2016	Changes made by NZQA following the Joint Working Group meeting on 4 October
Draft 3	March 2017	Edits made by NZQA following NZQA visit to Hong Kong in December 2016
Draft 4	March 2017	Edits made by NZQA and EDB following 7 <sup>th</sup> JWG and video conference

## Executive Summary

{To be inserted}

## Key findings

{To be inserted}

## Introduction: context, purpose and scope

### *Context*

This comparative analysis of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) and the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) is the result of a joint project between the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong) (EDB).

The comparative analysis explores the characteristics of each framework to identify similarities and differences, enabling New Zealand and Hong Kong to reach agreement on the comparability between the levels of the two frameworks through a process called referencing.

New Zealand and Hong Kong have long had strong bilateral relations and cooperate on a range of economic, social and political issues. The Hong Kong, China - New Zealand Closer Economic Partnership, signed in 2010, was one of the first Free Trade Agreements (FTA) Hong Kong signed with a foreign economy, which reinforces the significance of the Hong Kong New Zealand relationship. The HKQF - NZQF referencing project contributes to the achievement of Annex IV, Chapter 13, Education Cooperation 4 (a) of the Closer Economic Partnership. The Education Cooperation Arrangement under the Closer Economic Partnership encourages exchanges with the purpose of developing greater understanding of, and confidence in, each other's quality assurance and qualifications recognition processes.

### *Purpose of the project*

The purpose of this project is to improve the understanding of Hong Kong qualifications in New Zealand and the understanding of New Zealand qualifications in Hong Kong. The mutual understanding, transparency and trust generated by the process has created a 'zone of trust' between NZQA and HKEDB which will help facilitate future qualification recognition discussions, support the mobility of learners and skilled workers, and enhance opportunities for future cooperation between Hong Kong and New Zealand.

The zone of trust created through this project provides local stakeholders and the international community with confidence in the robustness and transparency of the process and overall judgements of comparability. International experts play an important role through the provision of their independent judgements. The final step in this process is the public consultation process carried out with the education sectors and other key stakeholders, which gives legitimacy to the findings and is essential for reporting the overall judgements of the project.

This report will be useful for people in New Zealand seeking to understand Hong Kong qualifications, their position in the Hong Kong education system and the quality assurance system that underpins the HKQF; and vice versa for Hong Kong people in the context of New Zealand. This includes people responsible for making decisions in relation to the admission of international students, and for the employment of personnel holding qualifications from either Hong Kong or New Zealand, as well as the students and job applicants themselves.

The intended audiences for this report also include researchers and policy makers who wish to gain further understanding of the commonality and differences between the HKQF and the NZQF, or are developing qualifications frameworks. This report may be used in this context as a resource to inform policy decision-making for future education and training cooperation and engagement, particularly in key policy areas of strategic importance to Hong Kong and New Zealand.

### *Project scope*

The project consists of a detailed comparative analysis to determine the relationship between the HKQF and the NZQF in terms of their purpose, structure, levels, and underpinning quality assurance mechanisms. It does not intend to introduce changes to either of the qualifications frameworks.

The project focuses on the comparability of the levels in the two qualifications frameworks, but makes no judgement about the recognition of individual qualifications within those frameworks. The project seeks to support the ability of employers, educational institutions, government agencies and other stakeholders to make judgements about the value and comparability of qualification types in practice. The project does not guarantee automatic recognition of any New Zealand or Hong Kong qualification. It is not intended to replace processes for assessing an individual's qualification for study, migration, or employment.

# Background

## The growth of qualifications frameworks

Qualifications frameworks are mostly designed to clarify and map the qualifications in a country or territory for its citizens: the hierarchy, the links between them and pathways for learners. These powerful descriptions of qualifications systems are also outward looking, and are useful to people in other countries and territories because they can be used as quick reference guides to compare qualifications in countries and territories with qualifications frameworks. They act as translation devices and enable people to draw some initial conclusions when comparing qualifications across borders.

Qualifications frameworks are rapidly emerging around the world. Research conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation shows that more than 150 countries and territories have been involved in the development and implementation of qualifications frameworks since 2015.<sup>1</sup> It is becoming increasingly popular to use qualifications frameworks, by referencing to transnational frameworks, for international cooperation and recognition purposes. The UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region also has supplementary text on the use of qualifications frameworks in recognition procedures.

## The role and development of the NZQF

New Zealand developed one of the first qualifications frameworks in the world in 1991. Changes and improvements were made over time, including the addition of levels 8-10. The NZQF was brought in as a single unified framework on 1 July 2010 under the former section 253 (1) (c) of the Education Act and was fully introduced into the Act in the August 2011 legislative amendment (the new section 248). The NZQF replaced the National Qualifications Framework and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.

The NZQF is administered by NZQA. It is the definitive source for accurate and current information on quality assured qualifications in New Zealand. It is designed to optimise recognition of educational achievement and its contribution to New Zealand's economic, social and cultural success. The NZQF has a clear scope and purpose, is outcomes-based, and has clear level descriptors and learning domains.

All qualifications on the NZQF contain an outcome statement which describes the knowledge, skills and attributes of a graduate. Different learners will achieve the outcomes in different ways, so outcome statements are an indicator of the minimum achievement expected from a qualification.

Two quality assurance bodies are responsible for approving qualifications in New Zealand and for the quality that underpins the delivery of those qualifications. The quality assurance bodies are NZQA and Universities New Zealand. Only tertiary qualifications and providers that are quality assured by a quality assurance body can receive government financial assistance.

The NZQF contributes to the strengthening of Māori as a people by enhancing and advancing mātauranga Māori.<sup>2</sup>

## The role and development of the HKQF

In 2000, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government announced its intention to co-operate with the education, industrial and commercial sectors to develop a platform to support lifelong learning. The HKSAR Government commissioned a study on the implications of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/2213>. (Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks)

establishing a qualifications framework for Hong Kong. The study was in response to the advent of globalisation, rapid advances in technology and Hong Kong's further transformation into a knowledge-based economy.

The HKSAR Government endorsed the establishment of the HKQF and its underpinning quality assurance mechanism in February 2004, after a detailed study and extensive consultation with stakeholders. The aim of establishing the HKQF is to provide a platform for lifelong learning with a view to enhancing the capability and competitiveness of the workforce. The HKQF helps to define the standards of qualifications, assure their quality, and develop articulation ladders between different levels of qualifications across the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors.

The HKQF was formally launched in 2008. The Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592) (AAVQ Ordinance), which provides a legal framework for the quality assurance mechanism underpinning the HKQF, also came into force in 2008. The HKQF has made steady progress since then. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism; the Award Titles Scheme; the use of QF credit; a set of policy and principles for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT); and a set of operational guidelines for CAT are now in place.

The Chief Executive of the HKSAR Government announced the establishment of a QF Fund of HK\$1 billion (129 million USD) in 2014, to provide steady financial resources to sustain the development and implementation of the HKQF. The Fund was established on 1 September 2014 and has been used to provide funding for various support schemes, projects, and promotional initiatives related to the HKQF.

## **International recognition arrangements**

International comparability of qualifications is important to Hong Kong and New Zealand, and it is articulated through the objectives and policies of their respective qualifications frameworks. One of the objectives of developing qualifications frameworks is to facilitate the recognition of qualifications to enhance the mobility of learners and skilled workers both within and between countries and territories.

### **New Zealand**

NZQA ensures New Zealand qualifications are regarded as credible and robust, nationally, and internationally. This means New Zealand qualifications are quality assured, of a high standard, and valued and accepted overseas.

NZQA's international work includes implementing qualifications recognition commitments in signed free trade agreements, and providing advice and support to other countries developing qualifications frameworks and quality assurance processes. NZQA works to make it easier for people to have their qualifications accepted for work and study overseas by removing the technical barriers to qualifications recognition.

New Zealand has two mechanisms to support recognition: recognition conventions, and projects with partner countries.

### *Recognition conventions*

New Zealand has acceded to three Conventions. These Conventions require all signatory countries to recognise each other's qualifications so that students and skilled workers can move between countries that have joined the Convention. The Conventions are:

- The Lisbon Recognition Convention, which covers tertiary (higher education) qualifications. New Zealand formally joined the Lisbon Recognition Convention in February 2008. The Convention is an agreement to improve the recognition of secondary and tertiary (higher education) qualifications.
- The European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities 1953, which covers university entrance qualifications
- The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Convention 2011, which New Zealand officially acceded to on 12 February 2016. The aim of the Convention is to facilitate greater mobility of students, academic staff and workers from the Asia-Pacific region. In acceding to the Convention, New Zealand aims to improve the understanding and recognition of its qualifications internationally, and make it easier for skilled migrants from the region to work and study in New Zealand. Two more countries must accede before the Convention can come into force.

### *Projects with partner countries*

The NZQF provides a basis for comparing New Zealand qualifications with overseas qualifications. Projects with partner countries can be undertaken in several ways. This includes referencing, but may also involve other bilateral or unilateral projects.

### *Referencing projects*

In order for a referencing arrangement to happen, NZQA first undertakes a process of comparing the NZQF to a national qualifications framework, a regional framework, a qualifications system, or specific qualifications.

Referencing results in the establishment of a relationship between the levels of frameworks. The process promotes a shared understanding between New Zealand and other countries' education systems and qualifications. This builds trust and confidence between systems and opens other avenues for dialogue.

NZQA's has conducted referencing projects with:

- *Australia*  
NZQA and the Australian Government Department of Education and Training completed a project to reference the levels of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). The project determined that the levels of the NZQF and the AQF are broadly comparable. The outcomes of the project have been published as a joint report: *Enhancing Mobility – Referencing of the Australian and New Zealand Qualifications Frameworks*
- *European Union*  
NZQA and the European Commission have completed work to compare the NZQF to the EQF. The project compared the levels of NZQF to the levels on the EQF. The project report is due to be published soon
- *Republic of Ireland*  
New Zealand and Ireland collaborated on a qualifications recognition project from 2008-2010. The results of the project between NZQA and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) are no longer current because the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register) which was used as the basis for the comparison was replaced

by the NZQF in 2010, and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Ireland's amalgamated qualifications and quality assurance authority, replaced NQAI in 2012. This work is currently being reviewed

#### *Other recognition projects*

Some of NZQA's projects do not have such a focus on the levels of the framework and are based on individual qualifications. These projects may be bilateral or unilateral, and often compare New Zealand's secondary school qualifications, the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA), with other school leaving qualifications. Examples of these qualification recognition arrangements include:

- *Malaysia*  
NZQA and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency completed two projects comparing Bachelor's Degrees, and Masters and Doctoral Degrees from 2011-2015 under the New Zealand-Malaysia Free Trade Agreement. These projects have helped support the portability and recognition of qualifications between New Zealand and Malaysia
- *Thailand*  
NZQA has a National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) equivalency arrangement with Thai education authorities to enable students returning to Thailand to use their New Zealand senior secondary school results to apply for admission to Thai universities. This arrangement has been in place since 2011
- *Germany*  
The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German states has recommended to German universities that they accept NCEA results for entry to German universities, provided students fulfil some additional requirements. NZQA has an arrangement with German authorities to convert NCEA results to an Abitur score for students intending to apply for admission to German universities, starting in 2012. Abitur is the German school leaving qualification for students intending to apply for admission to German universities
- *Republic of Korea*  
NZQA and the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) have completed a joint research report on the Comparison of Senior Secondary School Qualifications between the Republic of Korea and New Zealand. The report compares the two education systems and provides a curriculum-to-curriculum analysis of Mathematics and Science subjects. A recognition statement was signed on 23 February 2017.
- *China*  
NZQA is working with government agencies in China to facilitate the recognition of higher education qualifications between New Zealand and China

### **Hong Kong**

#### *International Projects*

The HKEDB and the Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS) have been active both regionally and internationally to collaborate with other authorities in the field of qualifications framework development and referencing. This includes:

- In May 2011, the QFS and the Guangdong Occupational Skill Testing Authority (OSTA) of China signed a "Letter of Intent on Enhancing the Exchange on and Transferability of Vocational Standards and Qualifications Recognition between Hong Kong and Guangdong"

- In March 2012, the HKEDB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) to enhance collaboration and facilitate exchange and experience sharing on qualifications frameworks. Subsequently, HKEDB has engaged SCQFP to conduct a project on the development of an evaluation strategy and toolkits for the HKQF which was completed in 2015. A project to reference the HKQF and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework was completed in the first quarter of 2017
- In March 2014, the HKEDB signed a Cooperation Arrangement with NZQA. This referencing project falls under the Cooperation Arrangement.
- In November 2014, the HKEDB commenced collaboration with the European Commission on the Comparability Study between HKQF and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In December 2015, HKEDB presented the joint report on the Comparability Study to the EQF Advisory Group in Berlin, Germany. The joint report was well received, leading to the completion of the Comparability Study. The Report was published on the HKQF web-site in March 2016 and updated in August 2016.
- In July 2015, the QFS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Thailand Professional Qualifications Institute to explore mutual benefits in the comparison of competency standards between Hong Kong and Thailand and to plan for the possible collaboration with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework in future
- In September 2016, the HKEDB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Quality and Qualifications Ireland on the development of qualification frameworks. Following this, a simple referencing of the HKQF and the Irish National Qualifications Framework was completed in the first quarter of 2017.

# Methodology

## NZQA-EDB working group

NZQA and EDB established a working group in 2014 to progress the joint project. Members of the working group comprised officials from NZQA, EDB, HKCAAVQ and QFS, and was co-chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, Quality Assurance Division (originally Deputy Chief Executive, Strategic and Corporate) from NZQA and the Principal Assistant Secretary for Education (Further Education) from EDB.

## Methodology

For people to trust the comparison of levels in the frameworks, the process of referencing must be transparent and robust.. To determine the links between the levels of the HKQF and NZQF, the following methods have been applied:

- selection of Principles
- compiling the responses to the Principles
- comparing the levels on the Frameworks
- Joint Working Group meetings and meetings of each side's domestic advisory groups
- seeking international expert advice
- writing summary statements for each of the Principles
- consultation and agreement by key stakeholders.

## Principles

NZQA and the HKEDB have agreed that six Principles, adapted from the *Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF* be used in the referencing the HKQF and the NZQF. The EQF referencing process provides a well-tested, credible and rigorous approach that is recognized internationally and considered good practice.

The Principles are listed below:

### Principle 1

The roles and responsibilities of NZQA and the corresponding authorities for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region are clear and transparent.

### Principle 2

Comparison between the HKQF and the NZQF demonstrates clear links in the levels between the qualifications frameworks.

### Principle 3

The HKQF and the NZQF are based on learning outcomes and, where these exist, credit systems and the recognition of credit.

#### Principle 4

There are clear and transparent policies and processes for the inclusion of qualifications on the HKQF and NZQF.

#### Principle 5

Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

#### Principle 6

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

The findings under each Principle are presented in detail in the sections of the Report which follow. The process and results of the technical comparison of the levels of the two frameworks are described in Principle 2.

### **International experts**

The involvement of independent international experts helps to increase the level of trust and confidence the international community has in the outcome of the project. International experts appointed by NZQA and by HKEDB have provided the working group with insightful feedback throughout the course of the project. Their advice contributed to the application of the methodology, the robustness of overall judgements, and ensuring the content of the report is user-friendly and applicable to a broad audience.

The international experts for this project are:

- Dr Michael Coles, International consultant in qualifications systems is New Zealand's international expert. Dr Coles has extensive experience working with many national and international qualifications frameworks and systems, including projects for the European Union, UNESCO, Cedefop and the ASEAN Secretariat
- Aileen Ponton, Chief Executive of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership, Hong Kong's international expert. Ms Ponton chairs the United Kingdom (UK) Coordinating Group for European Vocational Education and Training (VET) Initiatives, and has worked with the Scottish Qualifications Agency and the Sector Skills Development Agency. Ms Ponton has also provided advice and consultancy to several European countries and Bahrain.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

#### **New Zealand**

##### *Formal consultation*

NZQA conducts a public consultation at the end of each referencing project. After the initial draft copy of the HKQF-NZQF joint report was agreed between HKEDB and NZQA, it was placed on NZQA's website, with a request for public feedback. This enabled interested parties to provide feedback and comment on the outcomes of the project. NZQA considered public feedback and comments, and consulted with sector experts before the report was finalized and published.

##### *New Zealand Advisory Group*

NZQA engages with the wider sector on all its referencing projects through a New Zealand Advisory Group which includes representatives from the education sector including Universities New Zealand, tertiary providers and schools, key government agencies and industry. The New Zealand Advisory Group meets several times annually to provide a considered national opinion on NZQA's referencing projects. It considered the NZQF-HKQF referencing project eight times between February 2014 and May 2017.

##### *Focus group*

NZQA established a special focus group comprising representatives from the education sector, with either expertise in qualifications development or Hong Kong-specific knowledge, for this project. The focus group provided expert advice on the matching of NZQF level 6 and 8 with the HKQF.

## **Hong Kong**

### *Local Expert Group*

A Local Expert Group chaired by the Deputy Secretary for Education was set up in Hong Kong to assist EDB in steering and overseeing the process of the project. In addition to representatives of EDB and QFS, the Local Expert Group comprises representatives from quality assurance bodies, education and training institutions, professional bodies, and industries, namely:

- representative of HKCAAVQ
- representative of University Grants Committee (UGC)
- representatives from academic and vocational institutions
- representative from professional bodies
- representatives from industries.

The Local Expert Group met twice during the project to consider progress reports from the project consultant and successive drafts of the joint referencing report. This process ensured that representatives of key HKQF stakeholders were involved throughout the project, and were able to provide feedback and to suggest possible improvements.

### *Consultation*

Consultation with key Hong Kong stakeholders is fundamental to the success of the HKQF - NZQF referencing process. Stakeholders include:

- Education Bureau (EDB) and the Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS) as owners of the Framework
- Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), as the Accreditation Authority and Qualifications Register authority in Hong Kong, and the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of the UGC as bodies with responsibilities for assuring the quality of post-secondary and higher education
- institutions in the Higher Education and Further Education sectors awarding qualifications listed on the Qualifications Register

representatives of training organisations, employers, Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), professional bodies, workers' organisations, learners

Two targeted focus groups at the beginning of the project and an open consultation session on the final draft report were convened to obtain wider consensus on the outcomes of the project. This method of consultation was successfully employed to achieve cross-sector buy-in to the HKQF-EQF Comparability Study in 2015.

### *Focus Groups*

The Focus Group sessions were held on 29th April and 5th May 2016 to seek local stakeholder views on the interim findings of the project and the proposed methodology. The first session involved representatives of various industry groups, Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) under HKQF and trade associations. The second session involved professional associations, chambers of commerce/trade commissions, and tertiary education institutions. Representatives of EDB, QFS and HKCAAVQ attended both sessions.

The Focus Groups were well-received and participants unanimously supported the project and the proposed methodology. Participants demonstrated greater knowledge about HKQF and the concept and potential benefits and limitations of referencing to other qualifications frameworks internationally than at the same stage of the HKQF – EQF Comparability Study. The improved knowledge and engagement of stakeholders demonstrates that such projects have the capacity to raise the profile of the HKQF in the community and broaden cross-sector understanding about Hong Kong qualifications and the potential benefits of international recognition.

*Open consultation*

An open consultation session took place after initial agreement between the EDB and the NZQA on the draft final report. Representatives of all key Hong Kong stakeholders were invited to respond. The open consultation session offered an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft, either at the meeting or via a structured evaluation instrument placed on the HKQF web-site. The feedback is summarised or quoted in the final report.

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## Referencing Principles

### **Principle 1: The roles and responsibilities of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the corresponding authorities for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region are clear and transparent**

Responses to this principle clearly identify the organisations and agencies responsible for, and their authority for, the development and implementation of the qualifications framework.

#### Summary

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the corresponding authorities for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region have clear and transparent roles and responsibilities in relation to their qualification framework. NZQA and EDB are the bodies with responsibility for the respective frameworks and are competent to make a proposal for fair comparison with qualifications frameworks from other countries or regions.

NZQA and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) were established by legislation or statute. The NZQA, Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (EDB) and HKCAAVQ have responsibility for the qualifications frameworks in their jurisdictions. NZQA and HKCAAVQ are mandated as the competent authorities to decide on the comparability of qualifications from other countries and systems to qualifications on their own frameworks.

There are several differences in the roles of the relevant organisations that stem from the differences between the two frameworks. NZQA is the only agency with responsibility for the framework, providing the policy function for the NZQF. The policy function is then operationalised by NZQA alongside Universities New Zealand in the university sector. The NZQF defines qualification types and assigns them to specific levels as well as acting as a register of all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand

In Hong Kong, EDB has the overall responsibility for policy development and implementation of the HKQF. In this role it is assisted by an executive arm, the Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS). HKCAAVQ is the legal authority to accredit programmes/qualifications for operators without self-accrediting status and is legally responsible for maintaining the Qualifications Register (QR).

#### New Zealand

##### **The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)**

A key function of NZQA is to set the overarching statutory rules for the quality assurance of qualifications and the tertiary education organisations that provide them (section 253 of the Education Act 1989). Two quality assurance agencies implement these rules with responsibilities for separate parts of the tertiary education sector (section 159AD of the Education Act 1989). NZQA maintains and quality assures New Zealand's qualifications system for the non-university tertiary education sector. Universities New Zealand fulfils this function for the university sector.

Universities New Zealand has delegated authority for university programme approval, accreditation, listing of university qualifications on the NZQF, training scheme approval, and ancillary powers under section 253A of the Education Act 1989.

## **NZQA and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework**

NZQA is the body responsible for the development and maintenance of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards.

The Education Amendment Act 2011 established the NZQF and the Directory of Assessment Standards in law, replacing general references to a 'qualifications framework'.

The effectiveness and quality of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards are supported by a multi-layered and integrated quality assurance system. There are quality checks at each level and for each component of the system as well as aspects of the health of the system overall. NZQA applies rules and quality criteria to ensure a high and consistent standard.

### **NZQA's other responsibilities**

NZQA is designated as New Zealand's National Education Information Centre under the Lisbon Recognition Convention. National Education Information Centre provides information and advice on the recognition of foreign diplomas, degrees and other academic or professional qualifications in the New Zealand education system and education systems in other countries.

NZQA is also responsible for maintaining effective relationships with overseas certifying and validating bodies. This work allows NZQA to recognise overseas educational and vocational qualifications in New Zealand and have New Zealand educational and vocational qualifications recognised by other countries (see section 246A(h) of the Education Act 1989).

NZQA has responsibility for the regulation of international education. It administers the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016*.

NZQA has responsibility for assessment in senior secondary schools, while the Education Review Office evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in early childhood services, and primary and secondary schools.

### **NZQA's governance structure**

NZQA has an independent Board of Directors. The directors are appointed by the relevant Minister of the Crown. The directors are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. They all bring diverse and valuable experience to the role.

The NZQA Board ensures that NZQA carries out its legislative functions effectively and efficiently, fulfilling NZQA's mandate to create, and run a robust and world-class qualifications system in New Zealand.

### **NZQA honours the Treaty of Waitangi**

As a Crown entity, NZQA actively upholds the principles and spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of New Zealand which establishes the relationship between the Crown and Māori and recognises Māori as tangata whenua (indigenous peoples) of New Zealand. The Treaty protects Māori knowledge and skills (mātauranga Māori)<sup>3</sup> as a national taonga (treasure) and ensures that Māori have full and equal participation in society as Māori, including education.

NZQA has an Office of the Deputy Chief Executive Māori, which provides cultural advice and services to NZQA, and has a strategy for raising the achievement of Māori learners as Māori. This strategy is called *Te Rautaki Māori 2012-2017*. The NZQF contributes to the strengthening of Māori as a people by enhancing and advancing mātauranga Māori.

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<sup>3</sup> Mātauranga Māori can be defined as 'the knowledge, comprehension, or understanding of everything visible and invisible existing in the universe', and is often used synonymously with wisdom. In the contemporary world, the definition is usually extended to include present-day, historic, local, and traditional knowledge; systems of knowledge transfer and storage; and the goals, aspirations and issues from an indigenous perspective.

## Hong Kong

### **Education Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR Government and Qualifications Framework Secretariat**

The Education Bureau, (EDB) is responsible for formulating, developing and implementing the policies in respect of education from pre-primary to tertiary level in Hong Kong including the HKQF. EDB also oversees the effective implementation of educational programmes.

### **The Qualifications Framework Secretariat**

The Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS) is the executive arm of EDB and is responsible for assisting EDB in developing and implementing the HKQF. It serves the Industry Training Advisory Committees that have been established to promote and implement the HKQF in the respective industries; encourages the education and training market to offer HKQF-recognised qualifications and learning programmes and to adopt QF credits in admission and credit transfer; and liaises with overseas and Mainland QF authorities for possible collaboration in relation to qualifications framework development.

The Steering Committee on the QF Fund was established in 2014 to advise the Secretary for Education on:

- the overall strategy for making use of the QF Fund as a vehicle to support the sustainable development and implementation of the HKQF
- the scope and parameters of the schemes, initiatives and activities to be covered by the Fund
- any other matters that may be referred to the Steering Committee by EDB concerning the policy and administration of the Fund.

Where necessary, the Steering Committee also advises the Trustee of the Fund (i.e. the Permanent Secretary for Education) on the formulation of policies for and monitoring of the investment of the Fund. The Steering Committee may set up sub-committees, conduct studies, engage professional services, and co-opt members as and when necessary.

### **Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)**

HKCAAVQ is an independent statutory body set up under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 1150) to provide accreditation services to education and training institutions and course providers across the academic and vocational sectors. It also provides assessment services for the general public, organisations, and government bureaux/departments on qualifications awarded by granting bodies outside Hong Kong, offering a professional opinion on whether the totality of the educational qualifications of an individual meets the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong. In addition to these functions, HKCAAVQ also provides advisory and consultancy services on education, qualifications and standards to government bureaux and private organisations in Hong Kong.

In 2008 when the HKQF was formally launched, HKCAAVQ was designated as the Accreditation Authority and Qualifications Register Authority of the HKQF under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQ Ordinance) (Cap. 592).<sup>4</sup> The functions of the Accreditation Authority are to develop and implement a mechanism for the accreditation of academic and vocational qualifications to underpin the HKQF including conducting accreditation tests to assure the quality of qualifications and their associated learning programmes.

In its role as the Qualifications Register Authority, HKCAAVQ's functions include:

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.legislation.gov.hk/blis\\_pdf.nsf/6799165D2FEE3FA94825755E0033E532/08A299C8E01C2F21482575EF001FFE6F?OpenDocument&bt=0](http://www.legislation.gov.hk/blis_pdf.nsf/6799165D2FEE3FA94825755E0033E532/08A299C8E01C2F21482575EF001FFE6F?OpenDocument&bt=0) (AAVQ Ordinance (Cap. 592 ))

- determining the entry of a qualification onto, and removal of such qualification from, the Qualifications Register
- ensuring and enhancing the credibility of the Qualifications Register structure
- monitoring advertisements relating to the HKQF to prevent misrepresentation.

### **HKCAAVQ Governance Structure**

The governing body of HKCAAVQ is the Council. Its Chairman, Vice-chairman and members are appointed, in their personal capacity, by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR Government. The composition of the Council's membership includes local and international members who have expertise and experience in HKQF development and implementation, quality assurance or accreditation; or good standing in the field of education and training or in any industry. The Permanent Secretary for Education or her representative is an ex-officio member of the Council.

### **Qualifications Assessment**

HKCAAVQ provides a Qualifications Assessment service to individuals. The service aims to assess non-local qualifications possessed by an individual and determine whether the totality of the educational qualification(s) obtained by the individual meets the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong. The key attributes of the qualification(s), such as learning outcomes, volume of study and exemption arrangements, are assessed against guidelines that make reference to key features of the HKQF, including the Generic Level Descriptors and QF Credits. The assessment may also include a comparison of the qualification against the HKQF and the National Qualifications Framework of the country where the qualification is awarded. The outcome of the assessment is a determination on whether the totality of the educational qualification of the individual is comparable in standard to a particular local qualification.

## Principle 2: Comparison between the NZQF and the HKQF demonstrates clear links in the levels between the qualifications frameworks

Responses to this principle outline the technical work which has occurred to demonstrate the referencing of the levels between the NZQF and the HKQF.

### Summary

A comparison of the NZQF and the HKQF demonstrates that there are clear links in the levels between the qualifications frameworks (except for NZQF level 8), as illustrated in the diagram below.

The underlying principle of referencing is that the processes and outcomes of the comparison must be transparent and relevant in order to generate trust in the findings. The methodology for referencing the levels of the NZQF and the HKQF included a broad structural comparison, a technical comparison, contextual matching and social effects matching. The structural and technical comparison provided an initial view, but for some levels, further research was required to make a more robust and comprehensive comparison.

Each framework has a hierarchical structure; both are comprehensive and cover all quality assured learning. The HKQF and the NZQF are based on learning outcomes. The outcome statements that define levels in each framework do not prescribe the learning environment in which the qualification is obtained. The concepts inherent in the level descriptors are similar, although they may be expressed in different domains.

NZQA and HKEDB have agreed to leave NZQF level 8 unmatched, after considerable effort on both sides to accurately compare the levels. Discussion with Hong Kong and the comments of the international experts have demonstrated that the current NZQF descriptors do not fully capture the distinct nature of qualifications at NZQF level 8. NZQA and HKEDB plan to revisit the levelling of NZQF level 8 once NZQA has completed a review of the NZQF in 2018.

Robust engagement and consultation processes ensured that the results of the detailed comparison between the NZQF and the HKQF are endorsed by the relevant stakeholders in New Zealand and Hong Kong, and by international experts.

NZQF	HKQF
10	7
9	6
8	No agreement on a comparable level
7	5
6	4
5	
4	3
3	
2	2
1	1

## Methodology

For people to trust the comparison of levels in the frameworks, the process of referencing must be transparent and robust.

To determine the comparability of the levels between frameworks, the following process was followed:

- broad structural comparison of the two frameworks (comparing the architecture of the two frameworks, the concepts of learning outcomes on which they are based, a vertical analysis of the level descriptors and the way the levels are described)
- technical comparison of the two frameworks including a linguistic/textual analysis of the learning outcomes statements of the level descriptors in the two frameworks
- contextual matching involving an examination of typical examples of qualification types linked to matching levels to enrich context
- social effects matching to establish whether qualifications at matching levels give access to similar learning or employment pathways.

The structural and technical comparison provided an initial view. For some levels, further research was required to make more robust and comprehensive comparisons.

## Best-fit

Best-fit is a long-standing mathematical and engineering idea for finding harmony between two sets of data or two or more devices. It accepts that perfect fit is probably not possible and some judgement or approximation is necessary to make a link and solve a problem.

In the case of matching level descriptors, best-fit requires a common judgement from a range of stakeholders so that there can be confidence in the outcome of the approximation. Best-fit can be seen as a decision that is based on the collective professional judgements of stakeholders.

## Substantial difference

The concept of substantial difference is one of the key features of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Convention). Whereas best-fit requires 'proof of fit', the use of substantial difference requires a test to find if the link from level to level is beyond what can be justified or proved, otherwise the link is accepted.

The main principle of the Convention is that *“foreign qualifications shall be recognised unless there is a substantial difference between the foreign qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification of the host country.”*<sup>5</sup>

Substantial differences are differences between the foreign qualification and the national qualification that are so significant that they would most likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in the desired activity such as further study, research activities or employment.

## New Zealand

### NZQF

The NZQF is a unified framework, listing all quality assured qualifications on the NZQF in relation to each other and the NZQF levels. All approved qualifications, from senior secondary school

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.eurorecognition.eu/emanual/Chapter%2010/introduction.aspx>

through to doctoral degrees, are listed on the NZQF.<sup>6</sup>The framework includes academic and vocational qualifications. The NZQF also acts as the definitive register of quality assured qualifications in New Zealand.

All qualifications on the NZQF are assigned to one of the 10 levels.<sup>7</sup> Each level is based on the complexity of outcomes, with level 1 the least complex and level 10 the most complex.

All quality assured qualifications listed on the NZQF fit into a qualification type. There are 10 qualification types, distributed across 10 levels, some being present at more than one level. Each qualification type is defined by an agreed set of criteria which includes the expected generic outcomes, the level at which the qualifications are listed and the number of credits required at each level.

### New Zealand Qualifications Framework Structure

Level	Qualification Types
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degree
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	Certificates
3	
2	
1	

### Hong Kong

#### HKQF

The HKQF is a seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic,<sup>8</sup> vocational, professional and continuing education sectors. Qualifications recognised under the HKQF are quality assured and level-rated in accordance with objective and well-defined standards. They are characterised and distinguished from one another by their levels, credit values and titles. All qualifications recognised under the HKQF are listed on the Qualifications Register (QR).

Under the HKQF, each qualification is assigned a level to indicate its position in the hierarchy relative to others. The level of a qualification is determined in accordance with a set of Generic Level Descriptors<sup>9</sup> which specify, in four domains, the learning outcome standards expected of the qualifications located at each level. The four domains are:

- Knowledge and Intellectual Skills
- Processes

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/listing-qualifications-on-the-nzqf/>

<sup>7</sup> See NZQF Qualifications Listing and Operational Rules 2012

<sup>8</sup> Academic qualifications listed on the HKQF are mainly at post-secondary education level (HKQF Level 4 and above).

<sup>9</sup> The HKQF level descriptors can be found at [https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content\\_13/HKQF\\_GLD\\_e.pdf](https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content_13/HKQF_GLD_e.pdf)

- Application, Autonomy and Accountability
- Communication, IT and Numeracy.

The learning outcomes reflect the relative depth and complexity of learning to be attained from a qualification, and cover the academic, vocational and professional aspects of the learning.

The Generic Level Descriptors are designed as a developmental continuum. A qualification at a higher level of the qualifications framework places a higher demand on the learners in respect of knowledge, cognitive abilities and applied skills. The Generic Level Descriptors are used to locate a qualification comparatively in the HKQF. The learning outcomes specified in the Generic Level Descriptors provide benchmarks for the design of learning programmes at a given level.

### **Qualification titles**

The Award Titles Scheme (ATS)<sup>10</sup> was introduced in 2013 with the aim of standardising and simplifying the use of titles for qualifications recognised under the HKQF. The ATS also aims to prevent inflation of titles and the provision of misleading information to learners.

The ATS standardises the use of titles and distinguishes learning programmes according to their level and credit size. It also specifies the award titles which providers are permitted to use for the qualifications and their associated learning programmes that they offer under the HKQF. It covers qualifications at all HKQF levels in the academic, vocational and professional and continuing education sectors. Since 1 January 2016, all programmes listed on the Qualifications Register must conform to the requirements of the ATS unless the Review Panel on Award Titles has given special permission for a variation. The Review Panel was set up by EDB to consider applications for the use of award titles outside the ATS.

Under the ATS there is no restriction on the number of credits for a Certificate, but a Diploma must consist of at least 60 QF credits. Certificate may be used as the title of qualifications at HKQF levels 1 to 6, whereas Diploma can only be used for qualifications at HKQF levels 3 to 6. The only award titles permitted for qualifications at HKQF level 2 or below are Certificate or Foundation Certificate. The ATS specifies which qualifiers may be used by providers for their qualifications at different levels (i.e. Foundation, Higher, Advanced, Professional, and Postgraduate). No qualifier is allowed for qualifications at HKQF level 3 (i.e. Certificate and Diploma).

### **The Qualifications Register**

The Qualifications Register is a web-based database that provides information of qualifications and related learning programmes that are accessible to Hong Kong learners and recognised under the HKQF. This means a registered programme should primarily be delivered and the assessment conducted in Hong Kong. Qualifications awarded by a non-local institution (non-local qualifications) and delivered in Hong Kong may also be registered in the Qualifications Register after going through local accreditation.

Levels 1-3 of the HKQF are benchmarked against key general education qualifications at secondary level by design. However, the general education qualifications themselves do not appear in the Qualifications Register. Besides, only those professional qualifications that are associated with completion of an accredited learning programme may be recognised under the HKQF and listed in the Qualifications Register.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/KeyFeatures/ats/index.html>

**Table X: HKQF Award Titles Scheme**

Level							
7	Doctor						
6	Master	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	Professional Diploma Professional Certificate	Advanced Diploma Advanced Certificate	Diploma	Certificate	
5	Bachelor <sup>11</sup>						
4	Associate	Higher Diploma Higher Certificate					
3						Foundation Certificate	
2							
1							

### Comparison of the NZQF and HKQF level descriptors

The NZQF level descriptors are broadly defined in terms of what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

The HKQF levels are defined by Generic Level Descriptors which specify the learning outcomes that must be achieved by learners in four domains: Knowledge and Intellectual Skills; Processes; Application, Autonomy and Accountability; and Communication, IT and Numeracy.

Each framework has a hierarchical structure; both are comprehensive and cover all kinds of learning experience. In terms of similarities, both the HKQF and the NZQF are based on learning outcomes and the outcome statements that define levels are neutral in terms of the learning environment in which the qualification is obtained. In both frameworks, level 1 is the starting point and each subsequent level builds on the outcomes of the level below.

The differences between the two frameworks mostly stem from their structure. The NZQF has ten levels and three descriptor domains. The HKQF has seven levels and four descriptor domains. The NZQF includes school qualifications at secondary level while the HKQF does not, although specific levels of the HKQF are benchmarked against general education attainments at secondary levels by design.

Overall, similar information is contained in the two frameworks, although it is located within different domains and the focus of the two frameworks is slightly different.

<sup>11</sup> This includes Bachelor and Bachelor with Honours degrees

### **NZQF Knowledge and HKQF Knowledge and Intellectual Skills**

NZQF Knowledge is what a graduate knows and understands. It is described as a progression from “basic general knowledge” through to knowledge that is “factual”, “operational”, “theoretical”, “technical”, “specialised” and “frontier”. Complexity of knowledge is described together with breadth and/or depth in the field of study or work.

HKQF Knowledge and Intellectual Skills covers the analytical and evaluation skills used to solve problems, and the ability to reflect on, practice and plan and manage learning.

Both frameworks describe a progression that builds on previous knowledge; however, the way knowledge is described differs between the two frameworks. The HKQF makes few clear references to knowledge per se, although references are made to basic, theoretical and specialist knowledge. Rather, the HKQF focuses on the intellectual skills expected at each level to learn and solve problems while the NZQF focuses on the complexity, depth and breadth of a body of knowledge.

### **NZQF Skills and HKQF Processes**

In the NZQF, skills are what a graduate can do, and cover the dimensions of integration, independence and creativity that are important to describe skills progression and reflect the degree of familiarity of the task/problem. The dimensions covered in the NZQF skills domain are all contained in the HKQF. However, rather than being contained in a single domain in the HKQF, they may be found across all four domains.

For example:

- the predictability of the task, and whether the processes are standard or require adaptation, can be found in HKQF Knowledge and Intellectual Skills, Processes, and Application, Autonomy and Accountability
- analysis is found in the Knowledge and Intellectual Skills domain of the HKQF
- judgement is most commonly found in the Processes domain
- the complexity of processes, problems and solutions is found in Knowledge and Intellectual Skills, Processes and Applications, Autonomy and Accountability on the HKQF.

HKQF Processes cover the application of judgement, communication skills and the ability to work with others interactively. The descriptors in the Processes domain of the HKQF can be found in various domains in the NZQF, depending on the level.

For example:

- both the Processes domain of the HKQF and the Skills domain of the NZQF contain the concept of judgement
- communications skills are not explicit in the NZQF. At some levels, communication skills are mentioned in the Purpose Statement of qualification types. Communications skills are embedded in qualifications at the programme level
- working with others can be found in the Application domain of the NZQF. There is a progression from interacting with others to leadership.

Both the HKQF Processes domain and the NZQF Skills domain refer to the application of judgement. The NZQF Skills domain refers to the extent to which processes are standardised or require adaptation and innovation, which compares to the differentiation between routine and non-routine activities, in the Processes and Application domains in the HKQF. In both frameworks the range and complexity of processes and problems increase through the levels.

## **NZQF Application and HKQF Application, Autonomy and Accountability**

In the NZQF, Application is described as the context in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills. In the HKQF, Application, Autonomy and Accountability is the degree of application, autonomy and accountability assumed while practicing the skills described in other domains.

The progression of Application, Autonomy and Accountability in the HKQF is described as performing tasks and taking responsibility for the output of oneself and others. The NZQF progression for Application is similar. Both frameworks include concepts of independence, supervision, leadership and responsibility in the Application domain although the HKQF also includes working with others in the Processes domain. The concepts of autonomy and accountability in the HKQF are similar to those of self-management and leadership in the NZQF Application domain. In both frameworks, learners increasingly take responsibility for their own performance and the performance of others.

The NZQF describes the context in which the application is performed in this domain. In the HKQF, the context may be mentioned in any of the domains.

## **HKQF Communication, IT and Numeracy (CITN)**

The HKQF Communication, IT and Numeracy domain is very specific to the education and training context in Hong Kong. CITN largely consists of specific examples of skills that become more sophisticated as the learning progresses through the levels. Generic competencies in English, Chinese, IT and Numeracy at HKQF level 1 – 4 are defined across all industries and are subsumed under this domain. There is no domain in the NZQF for CITN, although where possible the descriptors in the CITN domain have been compared with NZQF descriptors from other domains. The skills that are described in detail in the HKQF CITN domain are inherent at the programme level (and quality assurance processes) in the NZQF, and can be found in the programme approval and accreditation requirements where appropriate.

## **Technical Comparison of the HKQF and NZQF**

### **Level-to-level Comparison**

#### **NZQF level 1 to HKQF level 1**

The purpose of qualifications at level 1 on the NZQF and HKQF is to equip individuals with basic knowledge and skills for further learning and work. Qualifications at this level in New Zealand and Hong Kong are pathways into level 2 qualifications that build on the learning gained from level 1.

The main qualification on the NZQF at level 1 is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement level 1 which is the first of three levels of senior secondary school qualifications. In Hong Kong, learners who have completed Secondary 3 are notionally deemed to have obtained a standard at HKQF level 1. In New Zealand and Hong Kong, there are also ranges of vocational, education and training (VET) foundation certificates that offer basic skills training at this level.

The language and intent of the two frameworks at this level is similar throughout the domains. Level descriptors in both frameworks are described in terms of basic knowledge and skills, and structured contexts. Knowledge is described as **elementary** and **narrow** in the HKQF and as **basic** and **foundational** in the NZQF, showing similar levels of knowledge in the two frameworks. Skills are **basic** or **simple**, for example HKQF **exercise basic skills** and **carry out a limited range of simple tasks** is similar to the NZQF **apply basic skills required to carry out simple tasks**. In both frameworks, learners are expected to have some interaction or discussion with other learners.

Both frameworks refer to **highly structured contexts** at this level and both frameworks indicate that supervision is required, although the two frameworks express the level of independence differently. The HKQF expresses this explicitly, as **carry out directed activity under close supervision** and **rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality**. The NZQF states **requiring some responsibility for own learning**, indicating a small amount of independence.

NZQF level 1 was also compared to HKQF level 2 because there were linguistic similarities. However, when the substantial difference test was applied, it showed that NZQF level 1 did not compare to HKQF level 2.

The overall learning outcomes and pathways of graduates at this level are sufficiently similar for HKQF level 1 and NZQF level 1 to be comparable.

### **NZQF level 2 to HKQF level 2**

The purpose of qualifications at level 2 on the HKQF and NZQF is to prepare individuals for further education and employment. Employment outcomes for graduates in both places are occupations that are mainly routine using limited practical skills and basic industry/operational knowledge in a defined context, working under general supervision. Educational outcomes are pathways into level 3 qualifications.

In both frameworks at this level, knowledge is limited to one or more particular areas. The NZQF basic factual and/or operational knowledge of a field of work or study compares with the HKQF apply knowledge based on an underpinning comprehension in a selected number of areas. The NZQF is broader in its application of knowledge in a field of work or study, in comparison to the HKQF which notes that knowledge and comprehension is in a selected number of areas.

Familiarity of problems and contexts is a common theme in both frameworks at this level. The NZQF requires that learners should be able to [apply known skills to familiar problems](#) at level 2. In the HKQF, learners are able to [use rehearsed stages for solving problems](#). Familiarity in the HKQF is also described as [familiar, personal and/or everyday contexts](#). The HKQF introduces the concepts of choice and non-standard procedures at this level, by stating [choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, a few of which may be non-routine](#). The aspect of choice is not specified in the NZQF descriptors, which state [apply known solutions to familiar problems](#) and [apply standard processes](#).

Both frameworks emphasize the need for supervision with some autonomy. The NZQF concept of [general supervision](#) compares to the HKQF descriptor [undertake directed activity with a degree of autonomy](#). The HKQF descriptor [accept defined responsibility for quantity and quality of output subject to external quality checking](#) compares to the NZQF descriptor [requiring some responsibility for own learning and performance](#).

NZQF level 3 was also compared to HKQF level 2. Similarities were identified between HKQF level 2 and both NZQF level 2 and level 3. A comparison of these levels shows that there are some overlaps between HKQF level 2 and NZQF level 3, particularly in the area of choice, autonomy and decision-making. However, NZQF level 2 and HKQF level 2 are a closer match.

The overall learning outcomes and pathways of graduates at this level are sufficiently similar for HKQF level 2 and NZQF level 2 to be a best fit.

### **NZQF level 3 to HKQF level 3**

The school-leaving qualifications used for entry to tertiary education, as well as vocational qualifications are at level 3 on both frameworks. In New Zealand, the highest school qualification sits at level 3 (NCEA level 3). The results from NCEA level 3 are used for the purpose of university entrance. The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) is benchmarked to the outcome standards at HKQF level 3. HKDSE is the highest school qualification in Hong Kong and is accepted as the entry qualification to post-secondary education including universities.

Theoretical knowledge is introduced at this level in both the NZQF and HKQF. The NZQF refers to [theoretical knowledge](#) and the HKQF refers to [comprehension of relevant theories](#).

Both frameworks expect learners to be able to use a range of processes/responses to solve problems. The NZQF states [select and apply from a range of known solutions to familiar problems](#)

and **apply a range of standard processes** which has a similar meaning to HKQF **select from a considerable choice of predetermined procedures**.

The descriptors at this level show some differences in the predictability of activities and contexts. The HKQF introduces **sometimes unfamiliar contexts** or **unpredictable problems**, and **some non-routine activities** at level 3. This concept is introduced at NZQF level 4.

The language in both frameworks relating to autonomy is similar. The NZQF describes **major responsibility for own learning and performance**, while the HKQF states **accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output** from HKQF Application, Autonomy & Accountability. The NZQF at level 3 indicates an expectation of **limited supervision which has some elements of the HKQF engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation**.

The HKQF introduces some responsibility for others at this level. This is described as **accept well defined but limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others**. Responsibility for others is introduced at NZQF level 4.

Both frameworks expect learners to be able to employ a range of responses or solutions to familiar problems at this level. However, at level 3 the HKQF introduces the additional requirement of being able to deal with **unfamiliar or unpredictable problems**. This requirement is more advanced than NZQF level 3, as unfamiliar problems are not introduced until NZQF level 4.

Technical matching shows a step up in both frameworks in the type of knowledge expected at this level, with the introduction of theoretical concepts. There are differences in the Processes/Skills and Application descriptors but these do not amount to a substantial difference. Graduates of this level of both frameworks meet the requirements for entry into tertiary education.

Overall, NZQF level 3 and HKQF level 3 are a best fit.

The HKQF descriptors include the unpredictability of activities and contexts and the assumption of responsibility for the work of others which also compare with the descriptors of NZQF level 4. For this reason, a comparison of HKQF level 3 and NZQF level 4 has also been undertaken. The results of this are as follows.

### **NZQF level 4 to HKQF level 3**

NZQF level 4 holds the New Zealand trade qualifications that recognise the knowledge, skills and attributes required to be a registered tradesperson. HKQF level 3 encompasses a wide range of qualifications including school-leaving qualifications and significant vocational qualifications. In New Zealand, school-leaving qualifications are at NZQF level 3.

Both NZQF level 4 and HKQF level 3 contain theoretical knowledge at this level, although the explanation is more detailed in the HKQF. At NZQF level 4 learners are expected to have **broad operational and theoretical knowledge in a field of work or study**. HKQF learners are required to **apply knowledge and skills in a range of activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories and access, organise and evaluate information independently and make reasoned judgements in relation to a subject or discipline**. While the language is slightly different, the intent is the same.

The NZQF and HKQF both introduce **unfamiliar problems** at this level. NZQF level 4 requires learners to **select and apply solutions to familiar and sometimes unfamiliar problems** while HKQF level 3 requires learners to **employ a range of responses to well defined, but sometimes unfamiliar or unpredictable, problems**.

A graduate at NZQF level 4 is expected to be able to apply a range of communication skills relevant to the field of work or study. This corresponds to produce and respond to detailed and complex written and oral communication in familiar contexts, and use a suitable structure and style when writing extended documents at HKQF level 3.

With regard to autonomy, both frameworks indicate an expectation for self-management in either study or work, under some external guidance. The NZQF at level 4 expects **self-management of learning and performance under broad guidance**. This compares to the HKQF level 3 requirements to **engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation** and **accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output**.

Both frameworks introduce a requirement for supervisory skills at this level. The NZQF at level 4 prepares learners to **take some responsibility for performance of others** while holders of HKQF level 3 qualifications **accept well defined but limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others**.

Overall, NZQF level 4 and HKQF level 3 are comparable, with clear similarities in the learning outcomes between NZQF level 4 and HKQF level 3. The HKQF has broader corridors as it has 7 levels, and this is one of the levels at which two NZQF levels match to one HKQF level. HKQF level 3 is comparable to NZQF level 4, and is a best fit with NZQF level 3.

#### **NZQF level 5 to HKQF level 4**

Level 5 of the NZQF contains Certificate and Diploma programmes which require sound knowledge of industry operations and a broad range of managerial skills to coordinate job operations. In New Zealand level 5 is considered the first year of a three year Bachelor's Degree. HKQF level 4 contains Associate Degrees and Higher Diplomas. In Hong Kong, the Associate Degree is a two year programme considered as the equivalent of the first two years of a four year Bachelor's Degree with Honours.

The language and intent of the two frameworks at this level is similar throughout the domains. In both frameworks these are described in terms of broad knowledge. The HKQF refers to a **broad knowledge base** and in the NZQF knowledge is described as **broad, operational and theoretical**.

In the area of skills, both frameworks expect graduates to be able to operate in widely defined areas and to be able to think about alternative solutions and responses. Both frameworks introduce the concept of range and selection of responses, with the NZQF referring to **select and apply a range of solutions** and the HKQF expressing this as **employ a range of specialised skills and approaches to generate a range of responses** and **exercise appropriate judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, methods or resources**.

Both frameworks refer to a requirement for self-management although the wording used is slightly different. The NZQF refers to **complete self-management of learning and performance within defined contexts** and the HKQF describes this as **take responsibility for the nature and quantity of own outputs**. In addition, both frameworks require graduates to be able to exercise supervisory skills, expressed as **some responsibility for the management of learning and performance of others** in the NZQF and **accept some responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others** in the HKQF.

The overall learning outcomes and pathways of graduates at this level are sufficiently similar for HKQF level 4 and NZQF level 5 to be comparable.

#### **NZQF level 6 to HKQF level 4**

Qualifications at NZQF level 6 and HKQF level 4 typically prepare students for a para-professional occupation and/or pathway programme leading to a Bachelor's Degree. The NZQF contains specialised technical qualifications at level 6 while HKQF level 4 contains Higher Diplomas and Associate Degrees.

Both frameworks refer to specialised or specialist knowledge. NZQF level 6 requires learners to have **specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in a field of work or study**, whereas HKQF level 4 describes knowledge as **broad knowledge base, with some specialist knowledge in selected areas**.

Learners at HKQF level 4 are operating in more familiar situations compared to learners at NZQF level 6. At NZQF level 6 learners are responding to both **familiar and unfamiliar problems** and in **dynamic contexts**. Learners at HKQF level 4 are applying skills to **largely familiar contexts, but extend this to some unfamiliar problems**.

NZQF level 6 introduces the expectation that learners should be able to **analyse and generate solutions**. HKQF level 4 refers to the ability to **develop investigative strategies** and **generate a range of responses**. The intentions are similar even though the wording is slightly different. Both frameworks require learners to investigate and analyse problems before producing a range of possible solutions.

The HKQF level 4 descriptors also require learners to **perform skilled tasks requiring some discretion and judgement**. **Discretion and judgement** are required in **dynamic contexts** i.e. those which are non-routine and changing, making these descriptors similar.

**Complete self-management** is required at NZQF level 6, whereas at HKQF level 4, learners are expected to be **self-directed and to undertake some directive activity**. NZQF level 6 requires learners to make independent decisions about their work. This is not apparent at HKQF level 4.

Both frameworks have requirements for leadership or supervision although the NZQF level 6 requirements appear to be more advanced as it is placed in a dynamic context. **Responsibility for leadership** at NZQF level 6 does not have any constraints, which is different from HKQF level 4. Leadership is assumed at HKQF level 4, however, learners are only required to have only **some responsibility**.

Some of the descriptors at NZQF level 6 are more advanced than HKQF level 4. At NZQF level 6, learners are required to acquire specialised and in depth knowledge, generate solutions in a dynamic context, self-manage and have responsibility for leadership. At HKQF level 4, learners have acquired a broad knowledge base with some specialist knowledge in selected areas and operate in largely familiar contexts with only some responsibility for leadership.

There are sufficient similarities in some of the level descriptors between NZQF level 6 and HKQF level 4 for the levels to be considered comparable. However, when selected qualifications at both the levels were compared, the HKQF level 4 qualifications were better matched at NZQF level 5 than at NZQF level 6.

NZQF level 6 was also compared to HKQF level 5 (Bachelor's Degree). The HKQF level 5 learning descriptors and pathways were considered to be more advanced than NZQF level 6.

Overall, NZQF level 6 and HKQF level 4 are comparable, with clear similarities in the learning outcomes between NZQF level 6 and HKQF level 4. The HKQF has fewer levels than the NZQF, and this is one of the levels at which two NZQF levels match to one HKQF level.

HKQF level 4 is a best fit with NZQF level 6.

### **NZQF level 7 to HKQF level 5**

The purpose of qualifications at level 5 on the HKQF and level 7 on the NZQF is to prepare individuals for employment, mainly at the entry level for professional practice, and entry into postgraduate studies.

Both levels contain Bachelor Degrees. HKQF level 5 also contains Bachelor with Honours Degrees. Additionally, NZQF level 7 contains Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma qualifications and HKQF level 5 contains Professional and Advanced Certificates and Diplomas.

In the area of Knowledge, specialisation is apparent in both frameworks with a step up in the level of specialisation from previous levels. Specialisation at this level of the NZQF is described as

specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of work or study while in the HKQF it is command wide ranging, specialised, technical, creative and/or conceptual skills. Technical knowledge is also a requirement of both frameworks.

The unfamiliarity and complexity of problems has increased from the previous level in both frameworks. Problems are described differently in the two frameworks, in the NZQF, problems are unfamiliar and sometimes complex, whereas in the HKQF problems are described as both routine and abstract professional problems. Both frameworks require the use of judgement in selecting processes. In the HKQF this is described as exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes while in the NZQF this is described as select, adapt and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study.

The HKQF introduces the concept of creativity at this level which is not stated in the NZQF.

HKQF level 5 further develops the concepts of leadership and autonomy which have been introduced at HKQF level 4 by reference in terms of responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes and work under the mentoring of senior qualified practitioners. In the NZQF, responsibility for leadership was introduced at level 6.

Both frameworks expect graduates at this level to be able to operate in a professional context. The Application domain of the NZQF requires graduates to apply advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills in a professional context or field of study. In the HKQF CITN domain this is expressed as use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialized skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline.

NZQF and HKQF graduates at this level are capable of operating with a degree of independence. However, the concepts are framed differently in each framework. The NZQF relates more closely to knowledge while the HKQF concept relates more closely to application. In the NZQF this is described in the Bachelor's Degree outcomes as demonstrate intellectual independence and self-directed learning. In the HKQF it is described as accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

The NZQF at level 7 and the HKQF at level 5 have similar requirements with regard to the learning outcomes and are sufficiently similar for the levels to be comparable.

### **NZQF level 8**

NZQA and EDB have left NZQF level 8 unmatched.

NZQF level 8 contains Bachelor Honours Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates which are post-graduate qualifications in New Zealand.

NZQA and HKEDB have independently analysed the comparability of NZQF level 8 to the HKQF in detail. It has not been possible for NZQA and HKEDB to reach agreement on the comparability of NZQF level 8 with a single level on the HKQF.

One of the benefits of referencing is that it encourages each party to examine their own system in greater detail. Discussions with HKEDB and the comments of the international experts on this project have demonstrated to NZQA that the current level descriptors for level 8 of the NZQF do not fully capture the distinct nature of the different qualifications listed at that level.

NZQA will review the NZQF in 2018, with a particular focus on NZQF level 8. NZQA will ensure that the postgraduate status and research focus of the qualifications listed on NZQF level 8 are clearly encapsulated in the new level descriptors that will be developed as part of the review process. NZQA has taken note of the many specific suggestions and comments received from

HKEDB and the international experts on NZQF level 8, and will take these into consideration when it undertakes the NZQF review.

NZQA and EDB have agreed to leave NZQF level 8 unmatched to the HKQF until the review of the NZQF is complete.

### **NZQF level 9 to HKQF level 6**

Level 9 of the NZQF and level 6 of the HKQF both contain Master's Degrees. In both cases graduates are prepared for professional employment, further study or scholarship.

At this level there is an expectation that graduates will possess comprehensive knowledge of an area of study or practice and also that they will be able to make a contribution to the development of knowledge in the field. The NZQF refers to this as **highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge** whereas the HKQF requires the intellectual skills to **extend a coherent body of knowledge and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline**. Critical thinking is featured in both frameworks at this level. In the NZQF this is referred to as **critical awareness of issues in a field of study or practice** which compares to **critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge** in the HKQF.

Both frameworks also specify the acquisition of highly specialised skills. The NZQF requires the ability to **develop and apply new skills and techniques to existing or emerging problems** whereas the HKQF focusses on **utilising highly specialised technical research or scholastic skills across an area of study**.

Within the application domain, working within a discipline or professional practice is expected in both frameworks. In the NZQF this is described as **application of highly specialised knowledge and skills within a discipline or professional practice** and in the HKQF it is described as **apply knowledge and skills in a broad range of professional work activities**. Both frameworks demand a significant degree of autonomy at this level with this being described in the HKQF as **practice significant autonomy in determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes** and in the NZQF as **independent application of highly specialised knowledge and skills**. Likewise, both frameworks introduce the concept of leadership at this level although it is described in different ways; in the NZQF it is described as expecting **some responsibility for leadership within the profession or discipline** and in the HKQF it is described as requiring graduates to **demonstrate leadership**. The NZQF introduces the concept of leadership more generally at level 6 and it is subsumed at the higher levels.

The NZQF level 9 descriptors and the HKQF level 6 descriptors are sufficiently similar in terms of the learning outcomes for the levels to be comparable.

### **NZQF level 10 to HKQF level 7**

Qualifications at level 10 of the NZQF and level 7 of the HKQF represent the highest level of educational achievement in New Zealand and Hong Kong. Graduates at this level can apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge in one or more fields of investigation, scholarship or professional practice. Both levels contain Doctoral Degrees.

Both frameworks contain the requirement that knowledge must be at the most advanced level and that new knowledge must be created. In the NZQF this is captured by the statement that knowledge must be at the most **advanced frontier** and in the HKQF **make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of** and **offer original and creative insights into new, complex and abstract ideas and information**. The requirement for the creation of new knowledge is also reflected in the NZQF skills descriptor which specifically states **creation of new knowledge**.

Critical reflection is a key component of the NZQF at this level and is expressed by **critical reflection on existing knowledge or practice**. Similar concepts are expressed in the HKQF by **demonstrate and work with a critical overview of a subject or discipline**. Critical thinking skills have already been stated at lower levels of both frameworks.

A high degree of professional integrity is required in both frameworks at this level as reflected by the HKQF requirement that graduates should be competent to deal with complex ethical and professional issues while the NZQF makes reference to sustained commitment to the professional integrity... at the forefront of discipline or professional practice.

Level 10 of the NZQF and level 7 of the HKQF represent the highest level of academic and professional achievement. The contribution of knowledge is judged by independent experts applying contemporary international standards of the discipline. The learning outcomes at these levels are normally the culmination of study and are sufficiently similar across all domains for the levels to be comparable.

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### **Principle 3: The NZQF and the HKQF are based on learning outcomes and, where these exist, credit systems and the recognition of credit**

Responses to this principle demonstrate that both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by taxonomies of learning outcomes and clearly identify the respective policies for credit systems and their application.

#### **Summary**

The NZQF and HKQF are based on learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of the NZQF and the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) of the HKQF are expressed objectively, avoiding reference to learning mode or institutional setting and are neutral in relation to specific occupational relevance and to 'fields of learning'. The two frameworks use different domains to categorise the learning outcomes, although similar ideas are covered in both the NZQF and HKQF. Qualifications are awarded when the learner has met the learning outcomes and any other requirements of the qualification.

The credit value of a qualification relates to the notional amount of learning required to achieve the defined outcomes. Credit is defined and measured similarly in both jurisdictions. In both New Zealand and Hong Kong, one credit (known as QF credit in Hong Kong) is equal to ten notional learning hours. Notional learning hours take into account the total time likely to be spent by an average learner on all modes of learning including attendance in classes, self-study, on-line learning, practical learning, and examination.

The NZQF credit value system is applied to all qualifications on the NZQF. In the HKQF, the use of QF credit to identify the total volume of learning is compulsory for all qualifications at levels 1-4, while the credit system employed for most qualifications at levels 5-7 is based on contact hours.

Policies and mechanisms for credit recognition and transfer are in place in New Zealand and Hong Kong to support lifelong learning.

#### **New Zealand**

##### **NZQF**

The requirements for learning outcomes are set out in the *NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012*. Each qualification listed on the NZQF must have a set of learning outcomes for a particular stated purpose.

All qualifications listed on the NZQF contain outcome statements which describe the knowledge, skills and attributes of a graduate. Each outcome statement must include information on:

- *Graduate profile*: this describes the knowledge, skills, and attributes a graduate will have when they achieve the qualification
- *Education pathways*: this identifies how the qualification can lead the graduate to other education pathways or qualifications, if relevant
- *Employment pathways*: this identifies any relevant employment pathways for graduates or any contribution to the community, whānau, hapū, iwi, or hāpori Māori.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The requirement to list qualifications with graduate profiles, education and employment pathways was implemented in late 2011. Therefore, the majority of the current qualifications listed on the NZQF do not list

The NZQF is based on learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are defined in terms of what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

- **Knowledge** is what a graduate knows and understands. It is described as a progression from 'basic general knowledge' through to knowledge which is 'factual', 'operational', 'theoretical', 'technical', 'specialised' and 'frontier' knowledge. Complexity of knowledge is described together with breadth and/or depth in the field of study or work
- **Skills** are what a graduate can do. The dimension of integration, independence and creativity is important to describing skills progression and reflects the degree of familiarity of the task/problem requiring:
  - predictability or unpredictability
  - analysis and judgement
  - Standardisation, innovation or adaptation.

Skills are described in terms of:

- the type, range and complexity of processes
  - the types, range and complexity of problems and solutions.
- **Application of knowledge and skills** is the context in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills

Specifically:

- application is expressed in terms of self-management and leadership in a profession or responsibility for the performance of others
- the context may range from highly structured to dynamic.

The learner is progressively more autonomous and more accountable, more responsible for interacting and collaborating with, and managing and leading others, within progressively less transparent, more dynamic contexts.

### **Credit Value**

All qualifications on the NZQF have a credit value. The credit value relates to the amount of learning in the qualification.

In determining the amount of learning in a qualification, a qualification developer estimates how long it would typically take a person to achieve the stated outcomes in the context specified and to demonstrate that achievement through assessment. This determines the credit value for a qualification. One credit is equivalent to ten notional learning hours.

Notional learning hours include:

- direct contact time with teachers and trainers ('directed learning')
- time spent in studying, doing assignments, and undertaking practical tasks ('self-directed')
- time spent in assessment.

A typical learner can usually complete 120 credits of learning in a year.

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information on graduate profiles, education and employment pathways. Transitional arrangements are being put in place to list all qualifications with graduate profiles, education and employment pathways.

## Credit recognition and transfer

Credit can be awarded towards a qualification listed on the NZQF as a result of different types of learning, provided that the programme leading to the award of a qualification has been approved by NZQA. Learning in this context can be:

- formal (assessed through recognised tertiary education and training courses)
- informal (incidental, through life experience)
- non-formal learning (occurring on the job or through structured programmes, but not leading to qualifications).

An important aspect of the NZQF is that skills, knowledge and understanding gained through previous education or experiences outside formal education and training can be recognised and credited towards qualifications listed on the NZQF.

The NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013 require education organisations to have arrangements for the assessment of prior learning.<sup>13</sup> Criterion 5 of the criteria for Programme Approval states that providers should have clear, relevant, and appropriate regulations that specify requirements for credit recognition and transfer (CRT), and recognition of prior learning (RPL). NZQA is able to influence but not enforce the provision of CRT. NZQA is currently writing guidelines to better enable tertiary education organisations to apply CRT and RPL policies.

CRT recognises relevant learning that has taken place in another institution or training arrangement: credit already achieved by a student towards a qualification is recognised as credit for comparable outcomes in another qualification. Credit transfer may happen on a case-by-case basis, or as a structured agreement between education organisations.

## Hong Kong

### Learning Outcomes Basis of the HKQF

The HKQF is based on learning outcomes with each of the seven levels of the framework expressed in terms of generic learning outcomes in four domains *Knowledge and Intellectual Skills; Processes; Application, Autonomy and Accountability; and Communication, IT and Numeracy*).

### Outcomes-based Approach of Accreditation in Hong Kong

#### HKCAAVQ

HKCAAVQ is the Accreditation Authority under the HKQF responsible for the accreditation of all learning programmes recognised under the HKQF (other than those provided by institutions with self-accrediting status). HKCAAVQ publishes guidelines and guidance notes on accreditation, including the processes, criteria used and the sources of evidence to be examined on their website.<sup>14</sup> The guidelines which relate to learning outcomes are reproduced below:

- *Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes*  
The learning outcomes should reflect the stated programme objectives, which will be tested through assessment. The evidence from assessments must show that the HKQF level of the learning outcomes corresponds to the Generic Level Descriptors. The sources of evidence include the following:
  - programme objectives,
  - programme intended learning outcomes,
  - intended learning outcomes of each stream (if applicable),

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/prog-app-accred-rules-2016.pdf> (page 3)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation> (HKCAAVQ: Accreditation)

- mapping of intended learning outcomes against programme objectives.
- *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 and pitched at the appropriate level in the HKQF.

### **Learning Outcomes in Vocational and Professional Education and Training**

Various industries in Hong Kong have set up Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) under the HKQF and drawn up competency requirements and standards for the industries, known as Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs), with reference to the Generic Level Descriptors of the HKQF. These competency standards represent the industry benchmarks for the skills, knowledge and attributes required to perform a task at a certain level. Each unit of competency within the SCSs is assigned a level based on the outcome standards of the Generic Level Descriptors. The assessment guidelines for the outcome standards are also stipulated in the SCSs. As at April 2017, 36 sets of SCS have been completed in relation to 18 industries and five further sets are being drafted.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to industry-specific competencies, generic competencies (known as Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGCs)) have also been developed under the HKQF.<sup>16</sup> These are skills and knowledge that are commonly shared across different industries and trades and are relevant to most people in the workplace. They are complementary to the industry-specific SCSs. The SGCs cover four strands of foundation skills, namely, English, Chinese, Numeracy and Information Technology, at HKQF level 1 to 4.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning**

Through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism introduced under the HKQF, experienced practitioners may also be awarded a HKQF-recognised qualification without completing a formal learning programme.<sup>17</sup> RPL qualifications awarded are based on clusters of units of competency that reflect the competency standards of specific job roles. Practitioners that pass the assessment are awarded a Statement of Attainment. The RPL mechanism has now been implemented in 15 industries. RPL qualifications are also accepted by some professional bodies in fulfilment of membership requirements, or by employers for human resources management purposes such as performance review and promotion etc. Some academic institutions also accept RPL qualifications for admission or articulation. Assessments under the RPL mechanism in each industry are conducted by an independent assessment agency (AA) appointed by the Secretary for Education on an industry basis. At present there are 64 Assessment Agencies for the 154 industries.

### **Credit Requirements under HKQF**

In line with the definition commonly adopted in other economies, one QF credit consists of 10 notional learning hours. The definition is built upon a learner-centred concept. It is defined in terms of notional learning time and takes into account the total time likely to be spent by an average learner in all modes of learning in respect of a specified programme, e.g. attendance in classes, experiment in laboratories, supervised or unsupervised sessions, practical learning at workshop, independent study in library, reading at home, and any other forms of study by the learner. Notional learning time is not limited to time-tabled teaching/lecturing hours in classrooms.

To ensure credibility, the QF credit value assigned to a programme is quality assured as part of the programme accreditation process. Since 1 January 2016, all programmes at HKQF level 1 to 4 must show their QF credit values on the Qualifications Register. For programmes at HKQF level 5 to 7, the use of QF credit is not mandatory but providers are encouraged to indicate the QF credit values of these programmes on the Qualifications Register on a voluntary basis.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/printedmaterial/en/upload/119/QF\(SCS%20guide\)\\_eng.pdf](https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/printedmaterial/en/upload/119/QF(SCS%20guide)_eng.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/scs/sgc/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/rpl/index.html>

With the exception of the advanced research degrees (MPhil and PhD), credit is universally adopted in Hong Kong higher education as a measure of student effort. Nevertheless, the QF credit has not been adopted by UGC-funded universities at present. Instead, a well-established “academic credit” system is adopted in which credits are determined by the number of contact hours per week that a student is required to complete for a given course or activity. A 4-year degree in Hong Kong consists of 120 (academic) credits. The self-financing post-secondary colleges that do assign QF Credit to their degree programmes at HKQF level 5 have established that a four-year degree is 540 QF credits.

### **Credit Accumulation and Transfer**

In July 2014, EDB promulgated the policy and principles for CAT under the HKQF to further strengthen the support for learning progression for learners. The policy and principles together with operational guidelines and suggested good practice for the implementation of CAT were published by EDB in March 2016.<sup>18</sup> According to the policy and principles for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) under the HKQF “Decisions regarding credit transfer should be timely, academically defensible, equitable and based on learning outcomes”. It also specifies a principle that “in determining the eligibility of credits for recognition and transfer towards a new qualification, receiving institutions should satisfy themselves that the learning outcomes attained are comparable to the required outcomes of the new programme”.

While adoption of the CAT policy and principles by individual providers is voluntary, the aim is to provide a clear policy framework within which they may develop or refine their existing arrangements for credit transfer within and across sectors in line with HKQF principles, thereby minimising unnecessary duplication of learning by learners and achieving the ultimate objective of the HKQF in supporting lifelong learning. Operators can upload information on CAT arrangements at institutional level and for individual programmes to the Qualifications Register.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/common/CAT/C.A.T.%20Booklet.pdf>

## Principle 4: There are clear and transparent policies and processes for the inclusion of qualifications on the NZQF and the HKQF

Responses to this principle clearly identify the criteria and processes that are used to include qualifications in the qualifications frameworks.

### Summary

The policies and procedures for listing qualifications on the NZQF, recognising qualifications under the HKQF and listing them on the Hong Kong Qualifications Register are clear and transparent.

The policies for the inclusion and maintenance of qualifications on each qualifications framework are set out in legislation or rules, although there are differences in the quality assurance mechanisms used by each jurisdiction.

Similar practices include:

*Entry/front end processes for listing qualifications on the NZQF and HKQF such as:*

All qualifications on the NZQF must meet the listing requirements for entry on to the NZQF.

In Hong Kong, all qualifications must meet the listing requirements for entry into the Hong Kong Qualifications Register – the online database that provides information on qualifications recognised under the HKQF. Self-accrediting universities have ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality of the qualifications they list on the Qualifications Register subject to cyclical quality audit.

Principle 4 should be considered alongside Principle 5 in referring to the entire quality assurance process that underpins trust and confidence in the ongoing integrity of the qualifications on each framework.

### New Zealand

#### NZQF

NZQA has transparent rules for listing qualifications on the NZQF. These rules are publicly available and accessible from the NZQA website.<sup>19</sup>

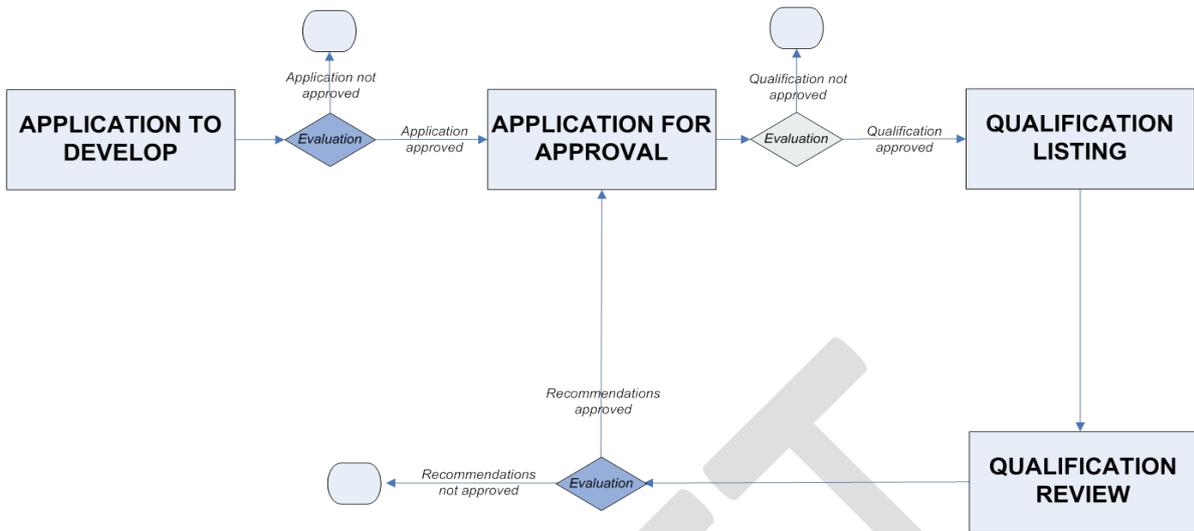
Qualifications are designed to be:

- based on the workforce and skill needs of employers, industry and communities
- focused on outcomes
- flexible
- built on trust and accountability.

Below is an example of the lifecycle of a qualification. A key component is involving stakeholders in the development of qualifications. This is to ensure there is appropriate stakeholder support for the development of particular qualifications and that the qualification is needed by the relevant industry or community. Stakeholders include groups such as industry, employers and the community.

<sup>19</sup> For NZQF Qualification Listing and Operational Rules 2012, please refer to <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/nzqf-related-rules/nzqf-qualification-listing-and-operational-rules-2012/1/>.

## The lifecycle of a qualification application (Qualification levels 1 to 6)



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## Requirements for listing qualifications on the NZQF

The listing requirements in sections 248(2) and 253 of the Education Act 1989 mandate NZQA to make associated rules. The *New Zealand Qualifications Framework Listing and Operational Rules 2012* set out the general listing requirements for qualifications at levels 1 to 10 on the NZQF.<sup>20</sup> There are additional, specific requirements for qualifications at NZQF levels 1 to 6.

All qualifications listed on the NZQF:

- are quality assured
- have the qualification title and details publicly available
- are defined by a qualification type and level
- are allocated a credit value
- have a subject area classification (New Zealand Standard Classification of Education (NZSCED) code, which classifies a qualification into a subject area)
- have a status to indicate whether the qualification is current, expiring or discontinued.

Qualifications at levels 7 to 10 are listed on the NZQF after a successful application for the approval and accreditation of the programme leading to the qualification. This applies to programmes and qualifications from across the whole of the tertiary sector (universities, ITPs, wānanga, and PTEs) and is distinct from the process for qualifications at NZQF levels 1 to 6.

### Specific additional requirements to list a qualification at NZQF levels 1 to 6 on the NZQF

Within the non-university sector, there are specific additional listing requirements for qualifications at NZQF levels 1 to 6. There is an additional two-step approval process: approval to develop a qualification; and the separate approval to list a qualification. NZQA administers both of these processes.

### Listing qualifications at levels 1-6 on the NZQF

Qualifications at levels 1-6 are evaluated and approved separately to the programmes that lead to that qualification.

The NZQA guidelines that apply are the *Guidelines for approval of New Zealand qualifications at levels 1-6 for listing on the NZQF*.

### The two-stage process for listing qualifications at levels 1-6

The development of New Zealand qualifications at Levels 1-6 and their subsequent listing on the NZQF involve two distinct stages.

#### 1. Application to develop

Initially, developers apply to NZQA for approval to develop a qualification.<sup>21</sup> This stage ensures all new qualifications are relevant and do not duplicate those already on the NZQF.

NZQA requires the following forms and information at this stage:

- a separate New Zealand qualification template for each proposed qualification
- NZQF1 - Application for Approval to Develop a Qualification at Levels 1-6
- NZQF2 - Involvement in Pre-Development Stage Stakeholder Attestation
- a needs analysis
- evidence showing how decisions were made, so the quality assurance body analyst can understand how agreement was reached on the qualification detail – “the story”.

#### 2. Application for approval

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<sup>20</sup> See NZQF Listing and Operational Rules 2012

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/listing-qualifications-on-the-nzqf/submitting-application-for-approval-to-develop-a-qualification/>

The second stage occurs once the qualification has been developed and involves applying for NZQA approval. Once approved, that qualification is listed on the NZQF.

To submit an application for approval of a qualification, the following forms must be completed and information provided:

- NZQF3 - Application for Approval of a Qualification at Levels 1-6
- NZQF4 - Involvement in Qualification Development Stakeholder Attestation

The additional listing requirements for qualifications at NZQF levels 1 to 6 reflect NZQA's intention to increase flexibility in the delivery of these qualifications, and to remove any unnecessary distinctions between qualifications apparent in some subject areas under the previous system (e.g. whether a qualification is delivered in the workplace or in the classroom). Specific qualification outcomes at NZQF levels 1 to 6 may be achieved through a variety of means. The qualification itself is separate from the programme of study or training leading to it.

A New Zealand qualification at levels 1 to 6 on the NZQF must have defined outcomes that provide a profile of what graduates can do, be and know, to be listed on the NZQF. Programmes developed by TEOs lead to the award of these New Zealand Certificates or Diplomas.

For a programme at levels 1 to 6 on the NZQF to be approved,<sup>22</sup> it must lead to a listed NZQF qualification and have a structure and components that allow learners to achieve the associated graduate profile. It must also have an appropriate NZQF level, credit value and amount of learning, and be designed to meet the specific identified needs of learners. It must show a progression of knowledge and skills and how the learning outcomes will be assessed.

Degree programmes (at levels 7 to 10 on the NZQF)<sup>23</sup> are approved if they have appropriate learning outcomes and content, delivery methods, equipment, facilities, staff, regulations, assessment and moderation. Degree programmes must also be taught mainly by staff engaged in research. Degree programme applications are evaluated by a panel with the necessary skills and knowledge who advise the TEO and NZQA about the quality of the application.

Training schemes do not lead to qualifications and are approved if they are genuinely needed by learners and stakeholders. Training schemes must have a coherent structure that allows learners to achieve the learning outcomes. They must also have an appropriate NZQF level and incorporate sufficient learning to demonstrate a progression of knowledge.

Qualification developers use a number of approaches when deciding the level of a qualification on the NZQF. The first is to look at the purpose of the qualification and the kinds of work or other experience graduates will commonly undertake and consider it in relation to the definition of the type of qualification. Some of this is known through custom and practice—for example, graduates of level 4 certificates generally are at the level of a qualified tradesperson.

A second approach is to look at the graduate profile of the qualification and consider how well the statements match the NZQF level descriptors for knowledge, skills and application. The best-fit principle may be applied for this approach. The graduate profile is intended to comprehensively describe what a person awarded the qualification **must** be able do, be and know, and considers the full range of capabilities and competencies a graduate of the qualification will need. Each outcome statement that forms part of the graduate profile uses descriptors that are at the level of the qualification. Outcome statements must be able to be assessed directly or indirectly through evidence gathered.

Another approach is to assess the type of qualification and the level at which it needs to sit on the NZQF and develop the qualification around the descriptors and learning outcomes of that level.

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<sup>22</sup> Programmes delivered by ITPs Wānanga and PTEs or organised by ITOs.

<sup>23</sup> Delivered by ITPs, Wānanga and PTEs.

Once submitted for quality assurance the qualification is reviewed against the level descriptors and qualification type definition. It may also be compared to other qualifications at the same level of with a similar purpose and outcomes. This is to ensure that the descriptors and definitions are applied consistently. NZQA evaluates applications using evaluation questions, for example: *How well does the qualification meet the overall requirements for listing on the NZQF?*

### **Qualification developers**

A qualification must be developed by one or more organisations that NZQA accepts as a legal entity. Those organisations automatically recognised by NZQA include: Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs), Private Training Establishments (PTEs), wānanga, universities and current programme owners.

NZQA and the Ministry of Education are directly involved in developing some qualifications. NZQA develops qualifications for Māori, Pasifika,<sup>24</sup> and for generic skills that are not the responsibility of an ITO. The Ministry of Education develops the National Certificates of Educational Achievement for senior secondary school. Other government agencies may participate in or initiate qualifications development to meet particular government policy objectives.

### **Quality assurance of NZQF qualifications and programmes delivered offshore**

NZQF programmes can be delivered offshore, and NZQF qualifications and programmes can be designed to meet specific offshore requirements, but this context must be included in the application for programme approval or approval to develop a qualification. These programmes and qualifications must meet all relevant NZQA rules, including the *NZQF Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2012*.<sup>25</sup>

The tertiary education organisation accreditation process is discussed in Principle 5.

Once qualifications are approved and listed on the NZQF and TEOs are accredited to deliver them, each qualification is subject to ongoing monitoring and review to ensure the consistency of outcomes. These processes are known as consistency review for New Zealand certificates and diplomas at levels 1-6 of the NZQF, national external moderation for NZQA-managed assessment standards, and degree programme monitoring. There is more information about these processes in Principle 5, under *Maintaining quality*. Error! Reference source not found..

### **Programme approval and accreditation in the University sector**

The Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) is the body responsible for exercising powers with regards to compliance, approval and accreditation.<sup>26</sup> CUAP comprises a representative from each of the universities, a Chair (usually a Vice-Chancellor) and Deputy Chair appointed by Universities New Zealand, and a student representative.

Both NZQA and Universities New Zealand use the same overarching rules and criteria to quality assure qualifications.

Universities normally apply for programme approval, and the accreditation to deliver that programme, in one step. Proposals for new qualifications or programmes, or for major changes to existing offerings proceed through internal university development and approval processes before being submitted to CUAP. At various stages in a university's internal process, student, non-academic and professional input is also sought. Proposals approved by a university's council are

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<sup>24</sup> Pasifika are New Zealanders who identify with or feel they belong to one or more Pacific Island ethnicities. The seven largest Pasifika ethnicities in New Zealand are Cook Island Māori, Fijian, Niuean, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan and Tuvaluan peoples. Refer to <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Publications/Strategic-publications/pasifika-strategy.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> See: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/nzqf-related-rules/offshore-programme-delivery-rules-2012/>

<sup>26</sup> Refer to the Committee on University Academic Programmes Handbook <http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/aboutus/sc/cuap/cuap-handbook>

then submitted to CUAP and subjected to a peer-review process across the entire university system. During the CUAP process, proposals are either approved by the universities, amended as part of the peer-review process and then approved, or discussed at a meeting of CUAP. If CUAP is satisfied that the proposals meet the approval and accreditation rules then it will formally approve them. Proposals that are not approved at a CUAP meeting may also be referred back to the submitting university for further changes, withdrawn by the university or rejected.

Programmes approved by CUAP are listed on the NZQF in the same way as programmes approved by NZQA.

Programmes approved by CUAP are subject to moderation once the first cohort has graduated. Universities must submit Graduating Year Reviews to CUAP for peer review. Graduating Year Review reports are assessed by CUAP against the approval criteria of the original proposal. Where CUAP has serious concerns about a programme, it has the authority to require changes, request a further review or to withdraw the programme.

After moderation all university programmes are required to be subject to regular programme review. The review cycle is determined by each university's quality assurance policies. How a university manages and responds to these programme reviews is an important focus of academic audit.

## Hong Kong

### HKQF

A qualification is eligible for recognition under the HKQF if it is an award obtainable by an individual from pursuing a formal learning programme or from assessment of his/her previous informal and non-formal learning through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism.

### Qualifications Register

The Qualifications Register (QR) is a register established by the Secretary for Education under the AAVQ Ordinance which contains qualifications recognised under the HKQF.<sup>27</sup> Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) has been specified in the Ordinance as the Qualifications Register Authority, responsible for maintaining the QR.

The QR is an online database that provides free information for public access on qualifications recognised under the HKQF, including the learning programmes leading to these qualifications and the operators that provide them. It also provides information on qualifications awarded by assessment agencies appointed by the Secretary for Education under the AAVQ Ordinance. The database may be searched by the following criteria:

- Qualifications
- Learning Programmes
- Continuing Professional Development Programmes
- Recognition of Prior Learning Qualifications
- Specification of Competency –Based Programmes
- Non-local Qualifications
- Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies-Based Programmes

The AAVQ Ordinance defines the types of qualifications that may be entered in the QR as follows:

- a qualification obtainable from the completion of a learning programme where the Accreditation Authority determines that the learning programme meets a HKQF standard

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.hkqr.gov.hk/HKQRPRD/web/hkqr-en/>

- a qualification obtainable from the completion of a learning programme operated by a self-accrediting operator, or an accredited operator with Programme Area Accreditation status in the related subject area<sup>28</sup>
- a qualification related to an industry or a branch of an industry awarded by an assessment agency appointed to conduct RPL assessments where the appointed assessment agency determines that the qualification meets a HKQF standard.

The QR is a local register and only contains qualifications and programmes accessible to Hong Kong learners. This means a registered programme should primarily be delivered and the assessment conducted in Hong Kong. Qualifications awarded by a non-local institution (non-local qualifications) may also be registered in the QR after the associated learning programmes have gone through local accreditation, if they are delivered in Hong Kong and are accessible to learners locally.

Learning programmes leading to qualifications eligible for entry into the QR must have been quality assured by HKCAAVQ as the Accreditation Authority or by a self-accrediting operator. Nine institutions (eight UGC-funded universities and The Open University of Hong Kong) are specified as self-accrediting operators in the AAVQ Ordinance. HKCAAVQ publishes guidelines on accreditation including the processes, criteria used and the sources of evidence to be examined.<sup>29</sup>

The QR also contains qualifications awarded by assessment agencies appointed under the AAVQ Ordinance. The RPL mechanism is one of the major support measures underpinning the HKQF to provide an alternative route for experienced employees to acquire a HKQF-recognised qualification without necessarily going through a formal learning programme. The mechanism has been put in place in 15 industries as at the end of April 2017.<sup>30</sup> The assessment agencies of the RPL mechanism must be accredited by HKCAAVQ before appointment by the Secretary for Education.

To encourage operators to register qualifications in the QR, the HKEDB implements the Designated Support Schemes for the HKQF which provide, among other things, grants to education and training providers for successful accreditation of learning programmes and registration of qualifications in the QR.<sup>31</sup> At the end of April 2017, more than 7,900 qualifications were registered in the QR.

### **Accreditation of learning programmes under the HKQF**

To ensure the credibility of qualifications awarded by a wide range of education and training providers, the HKQF is underpinned by a robust mechanism of academic and vocational accreditation to assure the quality of qualifications listed on the QR.

HKCAAVQ is the Accreditation Authority under the HKQF and operates a Four-stage QA Process,<sup>32</sup> Stage 1 and 2 are the key stages in relation to the listing of qualifications in the QR.

**Stage 1:** Initial Evaluation is a process to assess whether operators are able to achieve their stated objectives and to operate learning programmes that meet the stated QF standards. Operators must have a valid Initial Evaluation status before they are permitted to operate accredited learning programmes.

<sup>28</sup> An operator with Programme Area Accreditation status has been deemed capable by HKCAAVQ of self-accrediting its programmes in a specified programme area at a specified QF level for a specified duration.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation> (HKCAAVQ: Accreditation criteria)

<sup>30</sup> Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, Property Management, Automotive, Jewellery, Logistics, Chinese Catering, Beauty, Hairdressing, Retail, Import & Export, Elderly Care Service, Testing, Inspection & accreditation, and Electrical & Mechanical Engineering Services, Manufacturing Technology (Tooling Metals and Plastics)

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/support/dss/index.html> (Designated Support Schemes for HKQF)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.hkqr.gov.hk/HKQRPRD/export/sites/default/content/attachment/en/QR-Guidance-Notes\\_Self-Accrediting-Operators\\_20161026.pdf](http://www.hkqr.gov.hk/HKQRPRD/export/sites/default/content/attachment/en/QR-Guidance-Notes_Self-Accrediting-Operators_20161026.pdf) (HKCAAVQ: Guidance Notes on Upload of QR Records by Self-Accrediting Operators on the QR)

**Stage 2:** Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) is an accreditation exercise through which HKCAAVQ assesses whether the learning programmes meet the required standards to achieve the stated objectives, and deliver the intended learning outcomes that meet the HKQF standards. When a learning programme has been accredited, the qualification can be entered by the operator into the Qualifications Register for an approved validity period.

Self-accrediting universities are not quality assured by HKCAAVQ. They are not required to seek programme accreditation from any external body before registering their programmes on the Qualifications Register. Under Schedule 2 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592), self-accrediting operators in Hong Kong are:

- City University of Hong Kong
- Hong Kong Baptist University
- Lingnan University
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- The Education University of Hong Kong (for learning programmes in teacher education only)
- The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
- The University of Hong Kong
- The Open University of Hong Kong.

HKCAAVQ publishes guidance notes and a checklist of the key features of quality assured learning programmes on the QR for self-accrediting operators<sup>33</sup>

### **Specification of Competency Standard-based programmes and Specification of Generic Competencies-based programmes**

Specification of Competency Standard based programmes (SCS) and Specification of Generic Competencies-based programmes (SGCs) are programmes that are developed by operators based on the SCS approved by ITACs or the SGCs developed by EDB in accordance with guidelines published by EDB<sup>34</sup>. The majority of the learning content (i.e. 60% of total QF credits or 72 QF credits, whichever is the lower) of SCS-based courses must be drawn from the SCS. The programmes will only be placed on the QR if they are offered by an accredited operator and have been subject to programme accreditation.

### **Accreditation of non-local programmes**

HKCAAVQ provides accreditation services for non-local learning programmes (NLP) registered/exempted under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap. 493) leading to non-local awards offered in Hong Kong. These are usually programmes offered in Hong Kong by overseas institutions in partnership with local providers.

The accreditation conducted by HKCAAVQ benchmarks the NLP against Hong Kong's education system and the requirements of the HKQF. The NLP and the associated qualification accredited by HKCAAVQ can be placed on the Qualifications Register and recognised under the HKQF.<sup>35</sup> Also,

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.hkqr.gov.hk/HKQRPRD/export/sites/default/\\_content/attachment/en/QR-Guidance-Notes\\_Self-Accrediting-Operators\\_20161026.pdf](http://www.hkqr.gov.hk/HKQRPRD/export/sites/default/_content/attachment/en/QR-Guidance-Notes_Self-Accrediting-Operators_20161026.pdf) (HKCAAVQ: Guidance Notes on Upload of QR Records by Self-Accrediting Operators on the QR)

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content\\_74/QG%20revised\\_E\\_2014.08.pdf](https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content_74/QG%20revised_E_2014.08.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/non-local-learning-programmes> (HKCAAVQ: Non-local Learning Programme Accreditation)

an accredited NLP will enjoy similar status as an accredited local programme, in that providers offering accredited NLPs are eligible for accreditation grants and learners of the programmes may apply for student financial assistance.

Accreditation of NLPs comprises two stages:

- the Initial Evaluation stage is to determine whether the partnership of a local and a non-local institution is able to achieve its objectives and to operate the learning programmes that meet the claimed HKQF standards. The partnership must demonstrate that it has the ability to effectively manage and provide adequate financial and physical resources for the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the NLPs in all the disciplines covered at the claimed HKQF level(s)
- the Learning Programme Accreditation stage is to determine whether the learning programme meets the required standards to achieve its claimed objectives and deliver the intended learning outcomes. The required standards include the outcome standards of the HKQF and those prescribed in the local education system. For NLPs from countries with a QF, this can be addressed indirectly by considering how the programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) are benchmarked against the QF of the home country. A comparison of the two QFs at the appropriate level is then performed.

### Determining QF Levels

HKCAAVQ prescribes ten criteria for learning programme accreditation. Of these, five are the core criteria underpinning the design and delivery of outcome-based learning programmes. By evaluating the five criteria in relation to each other, HKCAAVQ is able to determine the QF level of a programme. The five criteria are:

- Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes
- Programme content and structure
- Admission requirements and student selection
- Teaching and Learning
- Student Assessment

The inter-relationship between the criteria is explored through a set of key questions and the examination of evidence presented by the operator as shown in the Table below

<b>Key question</b>	<b>Evidence required for review by accreditation panel</b>
1. Are the programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) commensurate with the claimed QF level?	Mapping of PILOs to GLD of HKQF at claimed level
2. Are the PILOs sufficiently and reasonably supported by the module intended learning outcomes (MILOs)?	Mapping of MILOs to PILOs that demonstrates that there are sufficient contributions from the underpinning MILOs to each PILO.
3. Are the MILOs appropriately reflected in the assessments?	Design of assessment tools, sample assessment papers, marking schemes and

	marked assignments/scripts.
4. Do the assessments correspond to the content of the modules?	List of module topics and assessment questions of representative modules
5. Would the average student admitted to the programme have the necessary knowledge, skills and aptitudes to achieve the PILOs?	Admission requirements and admissions process, admissions profile, exemptions granted and non-standard entries

Upon completion of the process the Accreditation Panel is able to determine whether the programme is pitched at the declared QF level.

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## **Principle 5: Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles**

Responses to this principle clearly identify the organisations and agencies responsible for, and their authority for the development and implementation of quality assurance systems. This principle also explains the processes that are in place to ensure that the education and training system outcomes are relevant, locally/nationally and internationally recognised and consistent.

### **Summary**

The NZQF and the HKQF are underpinned by robust quality assurance systems. The quality assurance principles applied in New Zealand and Hong Kong are consistent with international quality assurance principles, as demonstrated by NZQA, AQA and HKCAAVQ's membership of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN).

Quality assurance processes are not identical in Hong Kong and New Zealand, given the many differences in the two systems. However, similar practices include:

#### *Agencies have clear responsibilities/designated responsibility for quality assurance*

Both jurisdictions have agencies that operationalise regulatory processes. In New Zealand, NZQA sets the Rules for quality assurance and quality assures the non-university tertiary sector, while Universities New Zealand has delegated authority to quality assure New Zealand's eight universities.

The HKCAAVQ is the statutory Accreditation Authority for all providers in Hong Kong, except those with self-accrediting status. Providers with self-accrediting status are subject to quality audits by the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Committee.

#### *Entry of educational organisations to national systems is regulated*

In New Zealand, universities, Wānanga and Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics are established through legislation. Private Training Establishments must be registered with NZQA. Industry Training Organisations are recognised by the Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education) under the Industry Training Act 1992 as standard setting bodies for identified industries.

In Hong Kong, self-accrediting universities are established through legislation. Other institutions/operators are accredited by HKCAAVQ and approved by the HKSAR government for registration under the relevant legislation.

#### *Qualifications are maintained and reviewed periodically for relevance and consistency of outcomes*

In New Zealand, this is required through the Rules covering periodic review of qualifications and programmes, assuring consistency of graduate outcomes at levels 1-6, monitoring qualifications at levels 7 -10, and national external moderation of assessments by recognised standard setting bodies.

In Hong Kong, Learning Programme Re-accreditation and Periodic Review for Programme Area Accreditation by HKCAAVQ and Quality Audit conducted by QAC ensure that programmes continue to meet threshold standards and respond to Hong Kong's societal and economic needs.

#### *Quality assurance of delivery is maintained through ongoing monitoring*

In New Zealand, the processes of Academic Audit and External Evaluation and Review assure quality in the university and non-university sectors respectively.

In Hong Kong, QAC quality audit of self-accrediting universities and HKCAAVQ programme reaccreditation and Periodic Review for Programme Area Accreditation also assure institutional quality in their respective sectors.

### *Managing risk*

In New Zealand, NZQA has rigorous processes to investigate and manage risk in education quality and provision in the non-university tertiary sector.

In Hong Kong, the Four-Stage Quality Assurance process operated by HKCAAVQ is designed to recognise good practice and track record. The frequency of accreditation activities and associated evidential requirements in Stages 1 and 2 are directly related to an operator's accreditation record as evidenced in HKCAAVQ's information system.

## **New Zealand**

NZQA operates an integrated quality assurance system in which all the components support each other.

NZQA and Universities New Zealand follow the overarching rules set by NZQA for the quality assurance of qualifications listed on the NZQF and the tertiary education organisations that provide them. NZQA – which quality assures non-university Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) - and Universities New Zealand – quality assuring universities - use the same rules and criteria in their approach. Only the tertiary qualifications and organisations that are quality assured by one of the two agencies can receive government funding.

New Zealand secondary schools also work in partnership with NZQA to manage assessment for national qualifications.

### **The NZQF: a qualifications framework with supporting quality assurance processes**

The effectiveness and quality of the NZQF and the related Directory of Assessment Standards are supported by a multi-layered and integrated quality assurance system. There are quality checks at each level and for each component of the system as well as aspects of the health of the system overall.

## **Quality assurance in the TEO sector**

### **The Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework**

The basis of the quality assurance system in the TEO sector is the Evaluative Quality Assurance Framework (EQAF) which:

- uses evaluation theory and practice to reach well-informed, consistent and reliable evidence-based judgements about all aspects of TEO performance and capability
- has a practical focus on outcomes and key contributing processes<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Including: vocational outcomes that meet graduate, employer, regional and national needs; completing courses and qualifications, continuing to further study (Education Performance Indicators - EPIs); contributing to graduates' local and wider communities; graduates developing relevant personal skills, knowledge and cognitive abilities, and improved well-being; creating and disseminating new knowledge and supporting community, iwi and national development (source: Tertiary Evaluation Indicators, 2010, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/tertiary-evaluation-indicators/>).

- builds awareness and improvement through organisational self-assessment.

This approach is flexible enough to be used by a wide range of organisations, but delivers valid and robust judgements of quality. The approach also seeks to develop and enhance a quality culture in TEOs, and to create an environment which values evidence and accountability and where autonomy is earned.

TEOs are responsible for using self-assessment to maintain and improve their own quality and the outcomes they achieve for their learners and wider stakeholders. NZQA does not prescribe how tertiary organisations do this, as every organisation is different, but has published evaluation indicators as a common guide for TEOs and NZQA to reach consistent evidence-based judgements. TEO self-assessment information provides the evidence base for all quality assurance processes.

The key components of the quality assurance system are represented in the diagram below and a brief description of each component and its role in the system follows.

### **Entry Processes**

A Private Training Establishment (PTE) must be registered with NZQA if it wants to develop, deliver or use qualifications listed on the NZQF and standards listed on the Directory of Assessment Standards. The registration process ensures that the PTE meets all legislative requirements for an educational organisation, including NZQA rules.

NZQA also provides advice to Ministers and the Tertiary Education Commission on the recognition of Industry Training Organisations (ITOs).

In order to be accredited to deliver a programme or training scheme, the applicant TEO must show that it has adequate staff, equipment and facilities to deliver it as approved.

Consent to assess against assessment standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards is granted when the applicant TEO has support from the standard-setting body and meets the requirements associated with the standards. Consent to assess certifies education organisations to assess unit or achievement standards and award credit for them.

### **Maintaining Quality**

Consistency Review is a compulsory quality assurance process used to assure consistency of standards and outcomes for New Zealand certificates and diplomas at levels 1-6 of the NZQF. The reviews, which are facilitated by an independent reviewer, consider the quality of the evidence presented by each TEO to decide if national consistency of the qualification can be confirmed. Consistency Reviews and any follow up are managed by NZQA.

National external moderation ensures that TEOs using NZQA-managed assessment standards are making assessor judgements consistent with national standards. NZQA selects standards for moderation and moderators then look at samples of learner work sent in by TEOs to verify if assessor judgements are consistent with national standards. NZQA can recommend changes to TEO assessment materials and/or moderation practice and follows up with TEOs to ensure they address the identified issues.

After a degree programme at NZQF level 7 and above is approved, NZQA appoints an independent monitor for the degree. The monitor visits the TEO annually to check if the degree is being delivered as approved and reports back to NZQA. NZQA follows up any recommendations from the report with the TEO. After a suitable amount of time, NZQA can give the TEO permission to self-monitor.

### **External Evaluation and Review**

The performance of every TEO is periodically evaluated through External Evaluation and Review (EER) which uses key questions directly addressing achievement, outcomes and key contributing processes to judge the quality of a TEO.

Immediately prior to an EER, NZQA requires compliance declarations and gathers information on the TEO. When NZQA detects issues, the evaluation finds the source and size of the problem. NZQA evaluates the TEO's educational performance and capability in self-assessment on-site and reports a level of confidence on both aspects. The report of the EER is published on NZQA's website.

As a result of the EER process, the TEO is also placed in one of four categories based on whether NZQA considers they are:

**Category 1:** Highly Confident in educational performance and Highly Confident or Confident in self-assessment

**Category 2:** Confident in educational performance and Confident or Highly Confident in self-assessment

**Category 3:** Not Yet Confident in either educational performance or self-assessment

**Category 4:** Not Confident in either educational performance or self-assessment.

Mātauranga Māori Evaluative Quality Assurance provides quality assurance for TEOs that deliver qualifications or programmes based on Mātauranga Māori or where the whole organisational approach is based on Mātauranga Māori. Mātauranga Māori Evaluative Quality Assurance is integrated into all parts of the quality assurance framework and uses evaluative approaches developed collectively with the sector.

### **Managing risk**

NZQA has rigorous processes to investigate and manage risk. NZQA collects information on TEOs from NZQA's quality assurance processes, complaints received and concerns raised by government organisations such as Immigration New Zealand. In its investigations NZQA gathers information on whether there is a risk to students or a breach of NZQA's rules or legislative requirements and can take action, including statutory action to address these, which can include:

- issuing compliance notices to and imposing conditions on organisations
- withdrawing quality assurance status granted by NZQA (i.e. registration, consent to assess, approvals, accreditation)
- legal action for breaches of the Education Act 1989.

### **Quality assurance systems in the University sector**

The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (Universities New Zealand) has statutory responsibility, under the Education Act 1989, for the quality assurance of the New Zealand universities.

There are two bodies that oversee quality assurance of New Zealand universities, Universities New Zealand's Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) and the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA).<sup>37</sup>

Quality assurance in the university sector is underpinned by 10 key principles, i.e. that quality assurance processes are:

- developed by the universities
- evidence-based
- enhancement-led
- founded on self-review
- assured by peer review
- collective and collegial
- individually binding
- internationally endorsed
- independently operated
- publicly accountable.

### **Academic audit in the University sector**

The AQA, an independent body established by Universities New Zealand, undertakes regular audits of institutions and promotes quality enhancement practices across the university sector. AQA's audits of New Zealand universities occur on a five-year cycle and focus on the university's mechanisms for ensuring academic quality.

The key components of institutional audit are:

- institutional self-review
- institutional academic audit by an external panel (including an international member)
- a published audit report
- follow-up reporting on recommendations.

AQA audit panels review university audit portfolios and focus their attention on areas of particular importance to universities, including mechanisms for the quality assurance and enhancement of:

- the design, monitoring and evaluation of courses and programmes of study for degrees and other qualifications
- the research basis of university undergraduate teaching and postgraduate education
- teaching, learning and assessment, including in postgraduate supervision
- the appointment and performance of academic and other staff who contribute directly to the teaching and research functions
- considering the views of students, employers and other stakeholders as part of ongoing quality assurance and enhancement of courses and programmes.

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<sup>37</sup> Previously NZUAAU – New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit

Each audit cycle follows a protocol developed by AQA including a framework which defines the focus of audit.<sup>38</sup> Final audit reports commend good practice and make recommendations intended to assist the university's own programme of continuous improvement. These audit reports are publicly available on the AQA website.<sup>39</sup> Universities report formally on their response to the recommendations one year after each audit and again at the time of the next audit.

## **Quality assurance of assessment in secondary schools**

The regulation of education delivery in schools in New Zealand is carried out by the Education Review Office (ERO) which is the New Zealand government department that evaluates and reports on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services.

Secondary schools also work in partnership with NZQA to manage assessment for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) – this process is known as Managing National Assessment (MNA) and is carried out in two ways:

- Internally assessed standards that are administered and assessed by schools with consent to assess standards. NZQA sets Assessment and Examination Rules and Procedures that are administrative requirements for secondary schools and for tertiary providers delivering achievement standards for students. Schools must have assessment policies and procedures to ensure that results reported to NZQA are accurate and consistent with the listed standard.
- Externally assessed standards are assessed by examinations or portfolios. Examinations are run by NZQA.

### **MNA review**

NZQA reviews the assessment practices of secondary schools approximately every three years, to ensure that internal assessment is valid, fair, consistent, reliable, accurate, to the national standard and in accordance with the Assessment (including Examination) Rules for schools with Consent to Assess.

## **Other international regulation and engagement**

### **Quality assurance of NZQF qualifications and programmes delivered offshore**

NZQF programmes can be delivered offshore, and NZQF qualifications and programmes can be designed to meet specific offshore requirements, but this context must be included in the application for programme approval or approval to develop a qualification.

These programmes and qualifications must meet all the relevant NZQA rules. Any offshore delivery of programmes also needs to meet the *NZQF Offshore Programme Delivery Rules 2012*.<sup>40</sup>

### **Regulation of international education**

New Zealand institutions must be a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (the Code) to enrol international students.

The Code is a legislative document that provides education providers and their agents with a framework for supporting international students while they are studying in New Zealand. The Code is established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989.

The Code sets out the minimum standards of advice and care that are expected of education providers with international students. The Code applies to pastoral care and the provision of information only, and not to academic standards. NZQA administers the Code.

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<sup>38</sup> Refer to [www.aqa.ac.nz/cycle5](http://www.aqa.ac.nz/cycle5)

<sup>39</sup> Refer to <http://www.aqa.ac.nz/academic-audit>

<sup>40</sup> See: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/nzqf-related-rules/offshore-programme-delivery-rules-2012/>

NZQA's *Student Fee Protection Rules 2013* protect the interests of domestic and international students. Registered PTEs in New Zealand must put students' fees in a trust, which can only be drawn on after course content has been delivered to the student.<sup>41</sup> If a PTE closes, the money for the undelivered content can either be refunded to the student, or transferred to a provider willing to enrol the student. This requirement was established under section 253E(1) of the Education Act 1989.

### **New Zealand qualifications and international standards**

NZQA and AQA are members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN).

NZQA works with, or has qualification recognition agreements with the following partner organisations and/or countries:

- Association of Indian Universities
- Bureau of Educational Testing, part of the Thailand Ministry of Education
- China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Centre
- Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange
- Education and Training Quality Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain
- Kultusministerkonferenz of the German states (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs)
- Malaysian Qualifications Agency
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- Republic of Korea Ministry of Education
- Spain
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, Australia
- UK National Recognition Information Centre.

### **Hong Kong**

In Hong Kong, the quality of education and training providers and their programmes is subject to the oversight of one of two quality assurance bodies, depending on the sector to which the provider belongs. The two bodies are HKCAAVQ and the QAC of the UGC.

In order to enhance coordination between different quality assurance bodies, EDB has established the Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance (LCQA) which consists of representatives of EDB, HKCAAVQ and QAC. The objectives of the LCQA are to promote sharing of good practices among the quality assurance bodies and enhance consistency and transparency so as to strengthen accountability. Two Steering Committees were formed under the LCQA to oversee matters pertaining to the further development of the HKQF, including the implementation of the ATS, use of the QF credit and implementation of Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) policy and operational guidelines.

### **Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications**

As the Accreditation Authority under the HKQF, the ambit of Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) covers the accreditation of academic and vocational qualifications offered by institutions, other than those which have self-accrediting status

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<sup>41</sup> See: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/student-fee-protection/>

as listed in the AAVQ Ordinance. Institutions under the purview of HKCAAVQ are wide-ranging, including publicly funded institutions and self-financing post-secondary institutions.<sup>42</sup>

The assessment policy and guidelines of HKCAAVQ are periodically reviewed and updated to keep abreast of the latest developments in credential evaluation and the HKQF.

Since the launch of the HKQF in 2008, HKCAAVQ has accredited over 200 institutions and operators from the education sector and a wide range of industries, e.g. automotive, banking, beauty, hairdressing, catering, elderly care, insurance, property management and retail, etc. Programmes accredited by HKCAAVQ are HKQF-recognised and entered into the Qualifications Register. HKCAAVQ has published summary accreditation reports of Initial Evaluations and LPA on their website since 2013.<sup>43</sup>

HKCAAVQ operates a Four-stage QA Process,<sup>44</sup> The Stages are detailed below.

**Stage 1:** Initial Evaluation is a process to assess whether operators are able to achieve their stated objectives and to operate learning programmes that meet the stated QF standards. Operators must have a valid Initial Evaluation status before they are permitted to operate accredited learning programmes.

**Stage 2:** Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA) is an accreditation exercise through which HKCAAVQ assesses whether the learning programmes meet the required standards to achieve the stated objectives, and deliver the intended learning outcomes that meet the HKQF standards. When a learning programme has been accredited, the qualification can be entered by the operator into the Qualifications Register for an approved validity period.

Learning Programme Re-accreditation (re-LPA) is the cyclical evaluation of an accredited learning programme, which determines whether the learning programme continues to meet the stated objectives, and delivers the learning outcomes that meet the HKQF standards as determined at the LPA stage. The operator is expected to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes and continuous improvement as a result of its internal quality assurance procedures over the validity period. If a learning programme is re-accredited, the programme can stay on the Qualifications Register for an approved validity period. Under normal circumstances, the validity period is N + 1 years, where N is the programme duration.

**Stage 3:** Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) is an accreditation step that determines whether operators have robust and well established internal quality assurance systems to self-monitor and accredit their own programmes, taking into account their track record of self-monitoring and assuring the standards of their accredited learning programme(s). Subject to fulfilling certain eligibility criteria, operators may apply to HKCAAVQ to initiate a PAA exercise in the area of study/training of their accredited learning programmes.

**Stage 4:** Periodic Review (PR) is a review exercise conducted every five years to determine whether an operator with a valid PAA status is capable of maintaining a robust internal quality assurance system to self-monitor its programmes in the specified programme area(s), and ensure that its operation meets the stated objectives.

HKCAAVQ follows four guiding principles in conducting the accreditation processes:

<sup>42</sup> [www.hkapa.edu/](http://www.hkapa.edu/) (The Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts) and <http://www.vtc.edu.hk/html/en/> (Vocational Training Council)

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/publications/summary-accreditation-reports> (HKCAAVQ: Summary Accreditation Reports)

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

The accreditation is conducted based on a principle of “threshold standard”, which means that an operator must demonstrate that it can operate programmes that meet the HKQF standards, and that a learning programme must meet a particular HKQF standard for entry onto the Qualifications Register. The HKQF standards are outcome standards as expressed in the Generic Level Descriptors of the HKQF.

The principle of “peer review” is upheld through the engagement of experts in accreditation panels who possess expertise and experience in the discipline or industry relevant to the programmes under accreditation. The role of the accreditation panel is to review the quality of operators and their learning programmes, collect and evaluate evidence, and form a judgment as to whether the operators and their learning programmes meet the required standards and stated aims and objectives.

“Fitness for purpose” means that the learning outcomes expected of a student upon completion of a learning programme would meet the operator’s stated objectives and standards at the level specified for the learning programme.

The principle of “evidence based” means that an accreditation decision is to be made by the accreditation panel with reference to the evidence provided by the operator to support the claim that the programme meets the threshold accreditation standards and its objectives.

Embedded in the design of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process is the expectation that operator’s internal quality assurance will improve over time through interaction with the external quality assurance activities of HKCAAVQ. Differentiation in accreditation approaches can be applied to individual operators based on their accreditation record as evidenced in the HKCAAVQ information system.

Track records in accreditation can be evidenced by:

- Years of operation after successful LPA by HKCAAVQ
- Number and types of programmes that are successfully accredited by HKCAAVQ
- Outcomes of the previous accreditation exercises, i.e. no pre-condition stipulated in the previous accreditation of the programme or programmes in the same programme area or industry.

As operators are different in various dimensions, including their size, complexity of operation and scope of expertise, HKCAAVQ takes these differences into account in the accreditation processes. The minimum (threshold) standards that must be met by all operators remain the same, but the type of evidence they are required to present may differ.

A transparent approach is adopted throughout the process so that all parties involved (i.e. the operator and the accreditation panel) have a common understanding of the process and relevant issues that may arise. Throughout the accreditation process, the operator is required to respond to any questions and concerns raised by the accreditation panel and to provide evidence to support its responses. An operator who is aggrieved by a determination and/or decision(s) of the accreditation can lodge an appeal to an independent Appeal Board under the AAVQ Ordinance.

HKCAAVQ publishes a number of guidance notes for operators on its accreditation processes.<sup>45</sup> It also provides guidance notes and a checklist of the key features of Quality Assured Learning Programmes on the QR for self-accrediting operators.<sup>46</sup>

### **Hong Kong qualifications and international standards**

To ensure that programmes at higher education levels (i.e. HKQF level 5 and above) are benchmarked to both local and international standards, HKCAAVQ appoints both local and international specialists to the accreditation panel for these programmes.

HKCAAVQ is committed to promoting good practices in quality assurance among institutions, training bodies, authorities and other stakeholders in both local and international contexts. To ensure that its accreditation approaches are benchmarked with the latest international good practices and standards, HKCAAVQ has established links and formal memoranda of understanding with quality assurance agencies in Mainland China and overseas.

HKCAAVQ is a founding member of INQAAHE and APQN. It is also an Affiliate of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). It works together with the following partner organisations under bilateral Memoranda of Co-operation/ Understanding:

- Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities
- Council for Private Education, Singapore
- Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan
- Knowledge and Human Development Authority, Dubai
- Malaysian Qualifications Agency
- National Institution for Academic Degrees, Japan
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, Australia
- UK National Recognition Information Centre.

### **Reviews and surveys of HKCAAVQ**

In June 2015 HKCAAVQ commissioned the INQAAHE to conduct an external review of the organisation and its services. The panel appointed by INQAAHE concluded that HKCAAVQ comprehensively adheres to the Good Practice Guidelines issued by INQAAHE.<sup>47</sup> HKCAAVQ has demonstrated substantial (or full) alignment with all individual guidelines including resources (Guideline 2); quality assurance of the agency (Guideline 3); public reporting (Guideline 4); relationship between the agency and higher education institutions (Guideline 5); institutional or programmatic performance (Guideline 6); and decisions by the agency (Guideline 9). HKCAAVQ is listed on the INQAAHE web-site for comprehensively adhering to the Good Practice Guidelines.

To further enhance international recognition and in line with its vision of becoming a regionally and globally recognised quality assurance agency, HKCAAVQ plans to conduct external reviews every five years.

HKCAAVQ conducts surveys on the services it offers, including an annual survey on operators and panel members to seek their feedback on the standards and processes of its accreditation services

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<sup>47</sup> [http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/file/news/968/INQAAHE-GGP\\_Review\\_of\\_HKCAAVQ\\_-\\_Report\\_-\\_Final.pdf](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/file/news/968/INQAAHE-GGP_Review_of_HKCAAVQ_-_Report_-_Final.pdf) (HKCAAVQ External Review of Compliance with the Good Practice Guidelines of the INQAAHE)

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/file/news/968/INQAAHE-GGP\\_Review\\_of\\_HKCAAVQ\\_-\\_Report\\_-\\_Final.pdf](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/file/news/968/INQAAHE-GGP_Review_of_HKCAAVQ_-_Report_-_Final.pdf) (HKCAAVQ External Review of Compliance with the Good Practice Guidelines of the INQAAHE)

and the improvements required. The results and follow-up actions are reported to the Council and to institutions at annual operator briefing sessions.

## Quality Assurance Council

In the 2016/17 academic year, eight UGC-funded universities provide a total of 15,000 UGC-funded first-year first-degree places.<sup>48</sup> In addition, they offer 4,600 UGC-funded senior year entry places that permit the best graduates of Associate Degree or Higher Diploma programmes at HKQF level 4 to articulate into the third year of a normative four-year degree programme (or the fourth year of the five-year Bachelor of Nursing programme). All UGC-funded universities offer UGC-funded research post-graduate programmes at HKQF levels 6 and 7 as well as self-financing taught post-graduate programmes at HKQF level 6, and most also offer UGC-funded taught post-graduate programmes at HKQF level 6 and self-financing taught post-graduate programmes at HKQF level 7. Through their Sub-degree Providing Units (SDPUs) they also offer a wide range of academic, vocational and professional programmes at HKQF levels 1-6.

UGC-funded universities are statutory organisations with self-accrediting status.<sup>49</sup> They have ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality and academic standards of their programmes.

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) was established as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the UGC in 2007 in response to the growing public concern on the quality of educational provision in higher education institutions. It assists the UGC in providing a third-party oversight on the quality of such provision in the UGC-funded universities. Its mission in 2016 is:

- to assure that the quality of the educational experience in all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above (however funded) offered in UGC-funded institutions is sustained and improved, and is at an internationally competitive level
- to encourage institutions to excel in this area of activity.

The terms of reference of the QAC are to:

- advise the UGC on quality assurance matters in the higher education sector in Hong Kong and other related matters as requested by the UGC
- conduct audits and other reviews as requested by the UGC, and report on the QA mechanisms and quality of the offerings of institutions
- promote quality assurance in the higher education sector in Hong Kong
- facilitate the development and dissemination of good practices in quality assurance in higher education.

In line with the HKSAR Government's commitment to maintain a higher education system that meets international standards, membership of the QAC includes distinguished international academic leaders as well as senior local academics and eminent members of the community who are appointed by the Secretary for Education.<sup>50</sup>

The QAC has been tasked to undertake quality audits of UGC-funded universities in cycles to ensure the universities' fitness for purpose and to monitor the arrangements in place within universities for the effective quality assurance of their provision and its enhancement. Prior to 2016, QAC's audit activities only covered first degree programmes and above, however funded,

<sup>48</sup> [http://gia.info.gov.hk/general/201602/03/P201602030565\\_0565\\_159696.pdf](http://gia.info.gov.hk/general/201602/03/P201602030565_0565_159696.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> All UGC-funded universities, except The Education University of Hong Kong, have full self-accreditation status. The Education University of Hong Kong's self-accrediting status applies only to its programmes in education. All other programmes have been awarded Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status by HKCAAVQ. Subject to successful completion of the next Periodic Review of PAA status in 2017, these programmes will be subsumed under the University's self-accrediting status.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/about/membership/membership.htm> (University Grants Committee: Membership of the Quality Assurance Council)

offered by UGC-funded universities. The first audit cycle was completed in 2011 and the second audit cycle was conducted in 2015 and 2016.

In seeking to assure the quality of learning in the UGC-funded universities, the QAC has set a number of objectives for its second audit cycle:

- to confirm that the arrangements for quality assurance are fit for purpose and conform to the institution's role and mission
- to provide assurance that the standards of higher education (at degree level) align with expectations in Hong Kong and can be compared to provision by similar institutions in other jurisdictions
- to ensure that students have access to appropriate learning opportunities through taught provision, private study and supported learning
- to promote and enhance high quality teaching and learning
- to confirm that students are fully supported in their academic and personal development
- to advance the highest possible levels of student achievement
- to encourage strategic developments which enrich the curriculum and enhance students' opportunities for employment and career development
- to provide public information, through audit reports and other documents, about the quality and academic standards of UGC-funded provision to assist prospective students, employers and other interested parties.<sup>51</sup>

To assist universities and audit panels with their preparation for audit, the QAC has published an Audit Manual for each of the two audit cycles. The Manual for the second audit cycle specifies the factors that will be taken into consideration with regard to the development and implementation of learning outcomes.<sup>52</sup> This includes:

- arrangements for programme design and approval
- the definition of learning outcomes for programmes and for individual modules
- procedures for linking programme outcomes to defined academic standards and qualification descriptors
- principles and procedures for assessing the achievement of learning outcomes
- arrangements for programme monitoring and review.

All audit reports are published on the QAC web-site.

Starting from end 2016, the UGC has assumed the role of the overseeing body of external quality audits on the sub-degree operations of the UGC-funded universities, with the QAC as the audit operator, in order to address the need for greater systematisation and externality in monitoring the quality of sub-degree programmes. The aims of the quality audits<sup>53</sup> of sub-degree operations in UGC-funded universities are to:

- Assure the quality of learning in the SDPUs of UGC-funded universities through providing independent third-party review;
- Support the provision and certification of student learning at an internationally comparable level;
- Support the SDPUs in undertaking critical and comprehensive self-study and follow-through actions in the interests of ongoing

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/publication/report/report.htm>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/doc/qac/manual/auditmanual2.pdf> (Quality Assurance Council: Audit Manual)

<sup>53</sup> QAC SDPU audit manual [http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/doc/qac/manual/auditmanual\\_sub-degree.pdf](http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/doc/qac/manual/auditmanual_sub-degree.pdf)

- quality enhancement to student learning outcomes;
- Increase transparency and enhance public and stakeholder confidence in the internal quality assurance mechanisms of SDPUs and their host universities; and
- Assure that SDPUs are delivering on claims and promises made in public media.

The QAC audit process honours the self-accrediting status of the UGC-funded universities and centres on the quality of student learning and the factors that contribute to it throughout the life cycle of programmes. It is not a programme accreditation exercise.

The QAC uses the ADRI (Approach – Deployment – Results - Improvement) model for its audit exercises which consist of three stages: Self Study by the university; Review by an Audit Panel consisting of local peers, international experts (one of whom must chair the Panel) and/or quality assurance specialists; and Shaping of follow through, in which the university draws up an Action Plan based on the findings and recommendations of the Audit Report and submits it to the QAC three months after publication of the report. The university is required to submit a progress report on the implementation of the action plan eighteen months after publication of the report.

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## **Principle 6: The referencing process shall involve external experts**

Responses to this principle describe the role of the external experts in the project and presents their comments.

*[International expert comments will be inserted into the document following the consultation process]*

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# Glossary

## New Zealand

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Accreditation	Is the status awarded when an organisation has shown it is capable of delivering an approved programme.
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Application (of knowledge and skills)	Application of knowledge and skills is the context in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application is expressed in terms of self-management and leadership in a profession or responsibility for the performance of others</li><li>• The context may range from highly structured to dynamic</li></ul> The learner is progressively more autonomous and more accountable, more responsible for interacting and collaborating with, managing and leading others, within progressively less transparent, more dynamic contexts.
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Approved (programme)	A coherent arrangement of learning or training that is based on clear and consistent aims, content, outcomes and assessment practices, and which leads to a qualification on the NZQF.
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Award	a certificate, diploma, degree, or other qualification that is listed on the NZQF; or a certificate or other document granted in recognition of a student's achievement and completion of a training scheme; Or a certificate granted in recognition of a student's achievement in scholarship examinations at secondary education.
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Award of a qualification	All recognised tertiary education organisations and qualification developers have the right to be able to award qualifications listed on the NZQF. The qualification is awarded by the education organisation where the learner achieved this programme of study or industry training leading to the qualification.
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Best-fit	On balance of the relevant factors, a determination of where a qualifications framework level from one qualifications framework most appropriately sits in reference to a level on another qualifications framework.
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Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP)	CUAP is responsible for assuring the quality of all academic programmes offered in the New Zealand university sector.
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Comparative analysis process	A key part of the referencing process is the comparative analysis of frameworks or systems. This is done through a number of steps which deepen the comparability of the framework or system: technical matching, contextual matching; social effects matching.
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Contextual matching	<p>Contextual matching is part of the comparative analysis process. This involves exchange and interaction between people responsible for the qualifications being compared through study visits and engagement with key stakeholders. Dimensions compared include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualifications (type) definition and purpose</li> <li>• Delivery arrangements</li> <li>• Assessment methods, reliability, validity, sufficiency and authenticity</li> <li>• Externality and verification of assessed outcomes</li> <li>• How is quality assurance managed? What agencies govern the demand of the teaching, learning and assessment processes? What methods of Quality Assurance are used - how much is ex ante and how much ex post?</li> </ul>
Credit recognition and transfer	Credit recognition and transfer is a formal process whereby credit for outcomes already achieved by a student in relation to a qualification is recognised as credit for comparable outcomes in another qualification
Credit value system	A credit value system uses a generally agreed-upon value to measure a student workload in terms of learning time required to complete a programme of study, resulting in learning outcomes.
Criteria for approval of programmes	Criteria for programme approval and accreditation that all tertiary education providers must meet. They are the criteria against which any accrediting/approval body must measure a programme and the organisation proposing to offer it.
Directory of Assessment Standards	The Directory of Assessment Standards (DAS) lists all quality assured unit and achievement standards, known collectively as 'assessment standards'. The assessment standards listed on the DAS can contribute to national qualifications. National qualifications are listed on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).
Evaluative quality assurance framework	The evaluative quality assurance framework (EQAF) is an integrated framework focusing on the outcomes of tertiary education, the key processes contributing to those outcomes, and the maintenance and improvement of these outcomes through a tertiary education organisation's self-assessment.
External Evaluation and Review (EER)	A periodic evaluation of a tertiary education organisation, to provide an independent judgement of their educational performance and capability in self-assessment. NZQA is responsible for ensuring that tertiary education organisations continue to comply with the statutory policies and criteria after initial programme approval and accreditation and/or registration is granted.
Formal learning	Learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning and typically leads to the award of a qualification. It includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.
Graduate	A person has that completed a qualification. The word "graduate", in some contexts, may also refer specifically to someone that has

	completed degree level study
Government training establishments	New Zealand government-owned organisations providing education or training (for example, New Zealand Police Training Services, New Zealand Army).
Industry training organisations (ITO)	New Zealand industry-specific organisations. An ITO sets NZQA-accredited skill standards for their specific industry, and runs industry training that helps learners achieve those standards through education organisations.
Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP)	New Zealand government-owned tertiary education organisations. The ITPs provide technical, vocational and professional education and training ranging from foundation studies through to full degree and post-graduate programmes, including applied doctorates.
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective.
Knowledge	Knowledge is what a graduate knows and understands. It is described as a progression from 'basic general knowledge' through to knowledge which is 'factual', 'operational', 'theoretical', 'technical', 'specialised' and 'frontier' knowledge. Complexity of knowledge is described together with breadth and/or depth in the field of study or work.
Learning outcome	The minimum knowledge, skills and application that the learner is expected to have as a result of gaining a qualification.
Level	The ten levels of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Levels are based on complexity, with level 1 the least complex and level 10 the most complex. All qualifications on the NZQF are assigned on the 10 levels.
Level descriptors	Level descriptors are broadly defined in terms of what a graduate is expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge is what a graduate knows and understands (see definition for Knowledge)</li> <li>• Skills are what a graduate can do (see definition for Skills)</li> <li>• Application of knowledge and skills is the context in which a graduate applies knowledge and skills (see definition for Application (knowledge and skills)).</li> </ul>
New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF)	The NZQF contains a comprehensive list of all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand. All qualifications listed on the NZQF contain outcome statements which describe the knowledge, skills and application of a graduate. The NZQF has 10 levels describing the increasing complexity of learning. Level 1 is the least complex and level 10 the most complex. Levels do not equate to 'years spent learning' but reflect the outcomes

	<p>of the qualification.</p> <p>Levels 1-3 are senior secondary education and basic trades training qualifications, levels 4-6 are advanced trades, technical and business qualifications, and levels 7 and above are graduate and postgraduate diplomas, certificates and degree qualifications.</p> <p>The level of each qualification is set nationally according to general guidelines. Qualification definitions describe the different types of qualifications that sit at each level.</p>
New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (AQA)	Is an independent body owned by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee that carries out audits of quality assurance and quality enhancement processes in the universities.
New Zealand Record of Achievement	The New Zealand Record of Achievement is an individual learner's transcript of unit standards and achievement standards credited and national qualifications completed, provided by NZQA from a national database
Non-formal learning	Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships). It may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers.
Notional learning time	Notional learning hours include direct contact time with teachers and trainers ("directed learning"); time spent in studying and doing assignments and undertaking practical tasks ("self-directed" or "on-task" learning); and time spent in assessment. 10 notional learning hours equals 1 credit.
Outcome statement	All qualifications on the NZQF contain an outcome statement which describes the knowledge, skills and attributes of a graduate. Different learners will achieve the outcomes in different ways, so outcome statements are an indicator of the minimum achievement expected from a qualification.
Private Training Establishments (PTE)	Private training establishments are operated in New Zealand by a wide range of companies, trusts and other entities, and are not publicly owned. Some PTEs focus on re-engaging learners into education and training while others specialise in vocational education aimed at specific occupations. A few private training establishments deliver research-led degree programmes and postgraduate opportunities.
Programme	An approved programme is a coherent arrangement of learning or training that is based on clear and consistent aims, content, outcomes and assessment practices, which leads to a qualification listed on the NZQF.
Programme approval	Programme approval confirms that a programme meets the necessary criteria and requirements. A "programme" is a "course" in terms of sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989.

Programme accreditation	Confirms that a provider is deemed capable of delivering an approved programme. A provider may seek accreditation to deliver their own or another organisation's approved programme. Both the NZQA and CUAP use the same criteria for programme approval and accreditation.
Qualification	Formal outcome of an assessment process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard.
Qualification title	Qualifications listed on the NZQF have a title where the generic stem of the title beings with the qualification type and is completed by a designator, which identifies its main discipline or subject field, and the level. The title may include other qualifiers, such as optional discipline and focus qualifiers.
Qualification type	All quality assured qualifications listed on the NZQF fit into a qualification type. Each qualification type is defined by an agreed set of criteria which includes the level at which the qualification is listed and the number of credits required at each level.
Quality assurance	A collective term for activities used to ensure that business is carried out effectively and efficiently. Quality assurance focuses on the quality of learning outcomes recognised through qualifications as a whole. It also examines the systems and processes that support delivery of quality by providers.
Quality assurance body	There are two quality assurance bodies responsible for approving qualifications in New Zealand. NZQA sets the rules for quality assurance in the tertiary sector, and is responsible for quality assuring all non-university tertiary education organisations and approves qualifications developed by these organisations. Universities New Zealand, is responsible for quality assuring all universities, and approves qualifications developed by the universities.
Recognition of prior learning	Recognition of prior learning is a process that involves formal assessment of a student's relevant and current knowledge and skills ( <i>gained through prior learning</i> ) to determine achievement of learning outcomes of a qualification for the purpose of awarding credit towards that qualification. RPL does not include credit recognition and transfer
Referencing	Referencing results in the establishment of a relationship between the levels of two frameworks.
Registration	A process for ensuring that a private training establishment is able to provide a sound and stable learning environment; establishments are required to be registered before they can be accredited. NZQA is responsible for the registration of PTEs.
Self-assessment	Refers to the processes that providers of post-school education and training services use to establish evidence of their own effectiveness. The results of these processes should inform future planning and lead to actions that bring about improvements in educational performance.

Social effects matching	Social matching has now become a secondary check on the technical matching. NZQA uses it to provide a more holistic picture of how their national qualifications frameworks relate internationally.
Skills	Skills are what a graduate can do. Skills are described in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the type, range and complexity of processes</li> <li>• the types, range and complexity of problems and solutions.</li> </ul>
Standard-setting bodies (SSB)	SSB's are responsible for the quality and credibility of standards submitted to NZQA for registration on the NZQF. SSBs include ITOs, the Ministry of Education and NZQA.
Strategic purpose statement	A strategic purpose statement identifies why the qualification should be listed on the NZQF. It clearly states the qualification's use and relevance to learners, industry and communities.
Substantial difference	A principle used in the recognition of foreign qualifications where recognition should be granted unless substantial difference is demonstrated by competent authorities. Substantial differences are those that can impact on the suitability of a foreign qualification for various purposes.
Technical matching	The first step in the comparative analysis process is matching the framework or system of New Zealand to that of the other country (technical matching).
Tertiary education	Tertiary education in New Zealand covers all training outside of the school sector. The tertiary sector covers private training establishments (PTEs), institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), Government Training Establishments (GTEs), wānanga, universities and workplace training.
Universities	There are eight universities in New Zealand and all are publicly-owned institutions. They undertake a diverse range of teaching and research, especially at a higher level. New Zealand universities are internationally recognised.
Wānanga	An organisation recognised as a wānanga by the Crown under the Education Amendment Act 1989, section 162, is characterised by teaching and research that maintains, advances, and disseminates knowledge and develops intellectual independence, and assists the application of knowledge regarding ahuatanga Māori (Māori tradition) according to tikanga Māori (Māori custom).

## Hong Kong

### Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)

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Appointed Assessment Agency	An agency appointed by the Secretary for Education under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592) to conduct assessment of skills, knowledge or experience of an individual and to grant qualifications under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) upon successful completion of the assessment.
Award Titles Scheme (ATS)	A scheme aims to standardise the use of award titles under the HKQF, which reflects the nature, area of study and hierarchy of the qualification. Details at <a href="https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/KeyFeatures/ats/index.html">https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/KeyFeatures/ats/index.html</a> .
Credit	Credit is a measurement of the size or volume of learning. It enables learners to know the extent of effort to be spent in order to complete a learning programme (or a module of a programme) and acquire the relevant qualification
Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)	A process to facilitate recognition and validation of units of learning and allows learners to move from one programme to another without having to duplicate learning. Details of policy, principles and operational guidelines of CAT implementation at <a href="https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/common/CAT/C.A.T.%20Booklet.pdf">https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/filemanager/common/CAT/C.A.T.%20Booklet.pdf</a> .
Education Bureau (HKEDB)	The policy bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government responsible for formulating, developing and reviewing policies, programmes and legislation in respect of education from pre-primary to tertiary level; and overseeing the effective implementation of educational programmes. It is also the bureau responsible for the establishment of the HKQF. Details at <a href="http://www.edb.gov.hk">http://www.edb.gov.hk</a> .
Formal Learning	Planned learning that normally takes place in a structured setting and leads to a full or partial qualification.
Four Stage Quality Assurance Process	An approach of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to conduct accreditation according to a structured process to underpin the HKQF. The stages of the process include Initial Evaluation, Learning Programme Accreditation (LPA), Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) and Periodic Review (PR). Details at <a href="http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/four-stage-qa-process">http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/four-stage-qa-process</a> .
Granting body	A granting body is the person, school, institution, organisation or other body which grants the qualification. A granting body can be the operator delivering the learning programme leading to the qualification, or the appointed assessment agency assessing the skills, knowledge and/or experience acquired by an individual for the purpose of recognition of prior learning.

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Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)	As the Accreditation Authority and Qualifications Register Authority under the HKQF, HKCAAVQ is entrusted with the role of implementing a quality assurance system to underpin the HKQF and to develop and administer the Qualifications Register. Details at <a href="http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk">http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk</a> .
Informal learning	Opportunistic learning that is not structured in terms of content or assessment method but gained through work or social experiences.
Industry Training and Advisory Committees (ITACs)	These Committees are set up by the HKEDB under the HKQF to provide platforms for stakeholders to take forward the HKQF on industry basis, and to exchange views on manpower development and upgrading. Details at <a href="http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/com_ITAC.asp">http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/com_ITAC.asp</a> .
Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC)	An independent corporate quality assurance body established in 2005 by the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) of Hong Kong constituted by the eight institutions under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC). Disestablished in October 2016, its major function was to provide for the peer review of the quality assurance processes of the self-financed sub-degree programmes of these institutions.
Mode of delivery	<p>Learning Programmes in the Qualifications Register may be delivered using one or more of the following four modes of delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-Time mode generally refers to the delivery of programme with a full load of course work and the learners are expected to be a full-time learner. It also includes mixed mode, sandwich and blended learning;</li> <li>• Part-Time mode generally refers to the delivery of programme with less than a full load of course work and normally outside normal working hours. The programme usually can allow learners to have his/her own full-time job. It also includes day release and evening classes;</li> <li>• Electronic learning refers to the delivery of learning solely or mainly by electronic means; and</li> <li>• Distance learning refers to learning under which a student is separated by location from the instructor or other learners. The learner may or may not have face-to-face contact with the instructors and he/she can learn by self-study of various means.</li> </ul>
Non-formal learning	Learning that takes place in a formal setting (e.g. workplace training) but does not lead to a formally accredited qualification.
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes refer to what a learner should know, understand and/or be able to do upon successful completion of a learning process.
Learning programme	A learning programme is a programme of study or training defined by a curriculum and operated by an education/training operator which will lead to a qualification upon successful completion of the learning.
Non-local qualification	Non-local qualification refers to a qualification granted in Hong Kong by an operator from another country or region that operates in Hong Kong

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(either independently or in partnership with an accredited Hong Kong provider). The learning programme of the qualification is registered (or exempted from registration) under the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (Cap. 493). Only those non-local programmes which have been accredited by HKCAAVQ can be registered in the Qualifications Register.

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**Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)** PAA is the third stage of the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process. It is conferred on programme providers with sufficient quality assurance competency and maturity at the organisational level and a good track record in their validated programme(s). Upon the award of PAA status, a provider may develop and operate learning programmes within an approved scope of programme areas at specified HKQF level(s) for an approved period of time (validity period), and have the qualifications of its learning programmes entered into the Qualifications Register for HKQF recognition without going through the normal route of learning programme accreditation or re-accreditation by HKCAAVQ.

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**Qualification** A qualification in the Qualifications Register is granted by an education/training operator upon completion of a learning programme. A qualification may also be granted by an appointed assessment agency after successful assessment of the skills, knowledge or experience acquired by an individual in a particular industry through the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism.

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**Qualifications Framework Credit (QF Credit)** QF credit is a measurement of the size or volume of learning in a credit is awarded for completion of 10 notional learning hours with attainment of learning outcomes upon assessment. Notional learning hours take into account the total time likely to be spent by an average learner on all modes of learning including attendance in classes, self-study, on-line learning, practical learning, examination, etc.

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**Qualifications Framework Level (HKQF Level)** HKQF level is ordered and benchmarked against the outcome-based generic level descriptors of the HKQF which describe the common features of qualifications at the same level. The HKQF level reflects the complexity of learning in a qualification.

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**Qualifications Register** The Qualifications Register is a register established by the Secretary for Education under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592) for entering qualifications recognised under the HKQF. HKCAAVQ has been specified in the Ordinance as the Qualifications Register Authority, with responsibility for administering the Qualifications Register. All qualifications registered in the Qualifications Register have been quality assured by an appropriate accreditation authority including HKCAAVQ or a self-accrediting operator.

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**Qualifications Register Authority** HKCAAVQ is specified under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap 592) as the Qualifications Register Authority to maintain the Qualifications Register.

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**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** The RPL mechanism under the HKQF enables experienced practitioners of various backgrounds to receive formal recognition of the knowledge, skills or experience already acquired at the workplace. Successful

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mechanism	applicants will be awarded a Statement of Attainment, which is recognized under the HKQF. Details at <a href="https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/rpl/index.html">https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/rpl/index.html</a> .
Self-accrediting operators	<p>These operators have ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality and academic standards of their programmes. They are not required to seek programme accreditation from any external body before registering their programmes on the Qualifications Register. Under Schedule 2 of the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592), self-accrediting operators in Hong Kong are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City University of Hong Kong</li> <li>• Hong Kong Baptist University</li> <li>• Lingnan University</li> <li>• The Chinese University of Hong Kong</li> <li>• The Hong Kong Institute of Education (for learning programmes in teacher education only)</li> <li>• The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</li> <li>• The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology</li> <li>• The University of Hong Kong</li> <li>• The Open University of Hong Kong</li> </ul>
Specification of Competency Standard (SCS)-based programme	SCS-based programmes are designed in accordance with the requirements of the Qualifications Guidelines with adoption of the SCS established by individual ITACs which set out the skills, knowledge and competency standards required of practitioners to perform various job functions in specific industries effectively. Details at <a href="http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/SCS_SCS-based.asp">http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/SCS_SCS-based.asp</a> .
Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGC)-based programme	SGC-based programmes are designed in accordance with the requirements of the Qualifications Guidelines with adoption of the SGC, which cover four strands of foundation skills, namely English, Chinese, Numeracy and Information Technology. Details at <a href="http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/SCS_SGC.asp">http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/SCS_SGC.asp</a> .
University Grants Committee (UGC)	UGC is a non-statutory advisory committee responsible for advising the HKSAR Government on the development and funding needs of the publicly funded higher education institutions. Details at <a href="http://ugc.edu.hk">http://ugc.edu.hk</a> .