UNESCO
Expert Meeting on Developing Regional Guidelines for National Qualifications Frameworks in Asia and the Pacific

The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework: A Platform for Lifelong Learning

Presented by:
Qualifications Framework Secretariat, HKSAR, China
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Outline of Presentation

• Part 1 – Introduction
• Part 2 – Infrastructure of HKQF
• Part 3 – Progress and Challenges
• Part 4 – Latest Development and Way Forward
Part 1 - Introduction

Background of HKSAR, China

- **Political**: a Special Administrative Region of China since 1997, after over 150 years under British rule
- **Demographic**: - 7.2 million population (91% Chinese); - 3.87 million labour force
- **Cultural**: an international city where east meets west
- **Economic**: the world’s 8th largest trading economy; a financial centre with strong links to Mainland China
### Part 1 - Introduction

#### The HK education system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Secondary Education (ages 18 or above)</th>
<th>Post-graduate / Life-long Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Years’ Bachelor’s Degree</td>
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<td>Two Years’ Senior Year/</td>
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<td>Top-up Degree</td>
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<td>Two Years’ Sub-degree (Higher</td>
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<td>Diploma / Associate Degree )</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yi Jin Diploma or other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>qualifications</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary schooling (ages 12-18)</th>
<th>Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Senior Secondary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>S5</td>
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<td>S4</td>
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<td>S3</td>
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<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Junior Secondary Education</td>
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<td>S1</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Education (ages 6-12)</th>
<th>Primary School</th>
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<td>P1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Childhood Education (ages 3-6)</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
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</thead>
</table>
Part 1 - Introduction

The HK education system (cont.)

- **19** degree-awarding institutions (including 9 universities)
- A “3-3-4” system for the school sector
- Total student enrollment (2014/15):
  - Primary: **332,500**
  - Secondary: **394,000**
  - Post-secondary: **327,000**
Part 1 - Introduction

Background and objectives of setting up HKQF

- HKQF: a policy initiative of the Education Bureau of the HKSAR Government to respond to the growth of a knowledge-based economy and to enhance competitiveness of the workforce; the Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS) is its executive arm to implement QF in Hong Kong.

- Proliferation of various qualifications and the need for a common benchmark on quality and recognition.


- Major objectives -
  * establish an effective platform to support lifelong learning
  * enhance capability and competitiveness of local workforce.
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

Main features in QF infrastructure:

1. A QF hierarchy (7 levels) and Generic Level Descriptors (GLD)
2. Legal Backing – AAVQ Ordinance to stipulate a robust Quality Assurance (QA) mechanism underpinning QF
3. Qualifications Register (QR)
4. Award Titles Scheme (ATS) & QF Credit
5. Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)
6. Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) and Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)
7. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism
# Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

## Ambit of HKQF – A unitary framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Sector</th>
<th>QF Levels</th>
<th>Vocational/Continuing Education Sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>Level 7</td>
<td>To be further developed under QF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>e.g. articulated learning pathways</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree / Higher Diploma</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 7 / HKDSE / Diploma</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 5 / Certificate</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary 3 / Certificate</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, Cap. 592 came into full operation in May 2008 to underpin QF with a robust quality assurance (QA) mechanism.

The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) is empowered as the “Accreditation Authority” and “QR Authority” under the aforesaid AAVQ Ordinance.

All qualifications/programmes recognised under QF have to be quality assured and uploaded onto the Qualifications Register (QR).

Other quality assurance bodies include:
- Self-accrediting institutions, e.g. the publicly funded universities
- Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC) – sub-degree programmes offered by the extension arms of self-accrediting universities
### How to decide the QF Level?

- The Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) describe the requirements of each level in four aspects - **Knowledge & Intellectual Skills**, **Processes**, **Application, Autonomy & Accountability** and **Communication, IT & Numeracy**.

### Table: Generic Level Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Knowledge &amp; Intellectual Skills</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Application, Autonomy &amp; Accountability</th>
<th>Communication, IT &amp; Numeracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5     | - Generate ideas through the analysis of abstract information and concepts <br> - Command wide ranging, specialised technical, creative and/or conceptual skills <br> - Critically evaluate information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources and develop responses <br> - Analyse, reformat and evaluate a wide range of information <br> - Critically analyse, evaluate and/or synthesise ideas, concepts, information and issues <br> - Draw on a range of sources in making judgments. | - Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of technical, professional or management functions <br> - Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes. | - Perform tasks involving planning, design, and technical skills, and involving some management functions <br> - Accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes <br> - Work under the mentoring of senior qualified practitioners <br> - Deal with ethical issues, seeking guidance of others where appropriate. | - Use a range of routine skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline for example: <br> - Use a range of IT applications, support and enhance work <br> - Interpret, use and evaluate numerical and graphical information <br> - Evaluate and synthesise information and evidence from diverse sources of evidence and generate conclusions.
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

Public face of HKQF - Qualifications Register (QR)

- Web-based Qualifications Register which is **free** for public access
- Over **8,000** programmes / qualifications registered on QR
- Covering qualifications of the **academic, vocational** and **continuing education** sectors
- **Non-local qualifications** as well

[www.hkqr.gov.hk](http://www.hkqr.gov.hk)
# Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

## Award Titles Scheme (ATS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QF Level</th>
<th>Choice of Award Titles for Different Levels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Doctor (博士)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Master (碩士)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma (深造文憑)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate (深造證書)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelor (學士)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Diploma (專業文憑)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Certificate (專業證書)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Associate (副學士)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Diploma (高級文憑)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Certificate (高級證書)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

QF credit

• 1 QF credit = **10 notional learning hours**

• **Notional learning hours** refer to amount of time an average learner expected to take to complete all the learning and achieve the **learning outcomes** upon assessment

• Including **all modes of learning** (e.g. attendance in class, self-study, on-line learning, practical learning, assessment, etc.)
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

Credit Accumulation & Transfer (CAT)
A CAT (Credit Accumulation and Transfer) system is necessary to facilitate the progression of learners.

The Education Bureau announced the launch of CAT Policy and Principles in July 2014 (www.hkqf.gov.hk/CAT)

The CAT Policy and Principles will apply to credit transfer at all QF levels (levels 1-7) and qualifications in academic, vocational and continuing education sectors.
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

QF at industry level

• QF is industry-led

• Industries join the QF by setting up Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)

• ITAC’s functions include:
  - To help implement QF in the industry by developing, maintaining and updating the Specification of Competency Standards (SCS), as well as formulating a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism for the industry
  - To promote the QF within the industry
  - To advise on such other matters relevant to the QF as may be referred to the Committee by the Secretary for Education
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

Competency standards
Part 2 - Infrastructure of HKQF

Competency standards (cont.)

- **Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)** is a whole set of competency requirements and outcome standards at various QF levels for a specific industry or industry sector.

- SCS is made up of **Units of Competency (UoCs)** that are competency-based with threshold standards; each UoC is designated a QF level and an indicative credit size.

- SCS is developed with extensive industry consultation and consensus, representing **competency standards and good practices** of the trade/industry.

- Apart from SCS, the Government has also produced a set of **Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competences (SGC)**, covering 4 strands of subject: **English**, **Chinese**, **Numeracy** and **IT**.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism

• The RPL mechanism gives formal recognition to the knowledge, skill and experience previously acquired by practitioners in the workplace

• RPL is a kind of recognition of non-formal and informal learning

• The years of experience required for RPL qualifications in respect of QF Level 1 to Level 4 are respectively 1, 3, 5 and 6 years

• RPL is conducted by appointed Assessment Agency nominated by respective ITACs and approved by the Secretary for Education upon accreditation by HKCAAVQ
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

- Printing & Publishing
- Fashion
- Security Services
- Elderly Care Service
- Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals & Plastics)
- Human Resource Management
- Testing, Inspection & Certification
- Retail
- Insurance
- Import & Export
- Banking
- Logistics
- Beauty and Hairdressing
- Jewellery
- Information & Communications Technology
- Electrical & Mechanical Services
- Property Management
- Automotive
- Catering
- Watch & Clock
- ITAC/CITAC

Employers

Employees

Professional Bodies
Number of SCS completed

• Now 17 well-established ITACs have produced at least one set of SCS while 3 relatively new ITACs are going to write up their SCS. The SCS are mainly used in (i) curriculum development (ii) HR functions, and (iii) benchmarking e.g. RPL

• There are 36 sets of SCS (some ITACs have produced more than one set) available for free access in the QF website www.hkqf.gov.hk

• Over 700 SCS-based Courses had ever been developed while 6 sets of SCS-based Training Packages are near completion

• SCS is more widely used in curriculum development and in HR functions like recruitment, staff appraisal, in-house training etc.
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

**RPL applications**

- RPL mechanism has been launched for **10 industries** so far, with some **14,000 applicants** obtaining a “Statement of Attainment”, which is a qualification recognised under QF

- RPL is conducted by appointed **Assessment Agency (AA)** nominated by respective ITACs and approved by the Secretary for Education upon accreditation by HKCAAVQ

- So far, the **Vocational Training Council (VTC)** has been appointed as the AA for the 10 industries

- Other organisations will also be appointed as AA e.g. **the Hong Kong Polytechnic University** for the Import & Export industry
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

- **Promulgation of the ATS and use of QF credit (2012)**
- **Use of QF credit at QF Level 1- 4 & ATS (QF Level 1-7):**
  - **New programmes** (1 Jan 2014)
  - **Existing Programmes** (1 Jan 2016)
- **CAT Policy and Principles (2014)**
- **CAT operational guidelines to be issued in late 2015**

- As at July 2015, **96%** of the titles of learning programmes at QF level 1 to 7 conform to requirement of the ATS.
- **68%** of learning programmes at QF level 1 to 4 have shown their credit values.
- Over **800** learning programmes registered on QR have CAT arrangement.
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

Critical success factors

- Support of employers
- Genuine benefits for stakeholders
- Quality assurance system perceived by providers
- Government supports
- Promotion and publicity
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

Support of employers
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

QA system perceived by providers
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

Government supports

- QF Fund of HK$1 billion (September 2014)
  - Designated support schemes for QF
  - Public Education
  - QF-related studies or projects

- Budget Initiatives
  - Award Scheme for Learning Experiences
  - SCS-based training packages
  - Industry-wide promotional activities

- Continuing Education Fund
  - SCS-based courses will be put on the approved list with fee reimbursement to learners
Part 3 - Progress and Challenges

Promotion and publicity

Industry leaflets

Promotional activities
Part 4 - Latest Development & Way Forward

More ITACs to be developed

• Formation of the Cross-Industry Training Advisory Committee for the HRM Sector on 1 July 2014

• Merging of the Hairdressing ITAC and Beauty ITAC to become the Beauty & Hairdressing ITAC w.e.f. 1 January 2015

• The Fashion ITAC, the 20th of its kind, was just formed on 1 July 2015, and altogether about 53% of the total working population are now covered under QF

• Several industries are in the pipeline, e.g. Travel Agents sector

• Conduct a brand-building project for HKQF
Part 4 - Latest Development & Way Forward
Part 4 - Latest Development & Way Forward

Collaboration with other QF-related Authorities

- Signed a Letter of Intent with Occupational Skill Testing Authority (OSTA) of Guangdong Province on enhancing exchange and sharing of experiences on mapping of occupational skills standards and on laying the foundation for “One Examination, Three Certificates” (May 2011)
- Signed a MOU with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) on the development of QF (March 2012)
- Signed a Collaboration Arrangement with New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) on QF (March 2014)
- Collaboration with European Commission (EC) on comparison with European QF (EQF)
- The QFS has just signed a MOU with Thailand Professional Qualifications Institute (TPQI) to strengthen collaboration on QF (July 2015)
- Liaising with QF/QA authorities in Korea, Ireland, Philippines, Indonesia and so forth for experience sharing and possible collaboration on QF development
# Relevant Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HKQF</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hkqf.gov.hk">www.hkqf.gov.hk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>HKQR</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hkqr.gov.hk">www.hkqr.gov.hk</a></td>
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<td>HKCAAVQ</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk">www.hkcaavq.edu.hk</a></td>
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Thank You