UNESCO 2016 Education Research Institutes Network in Asia-Pacific (ERI-Net) Annual Meeting

A Case Study on the Development and Implementation of Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)

By: Qualifications Framework Secretariat HKSAR
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Outline of Presentation

Part I : Recap on HKQF

Part II : Experience Sharing on Lessons Learnt

Part III : Challenges Ahead
PART I : RECAP ON HKQF
The HK Education System

- **Doctoral degree (QF level 7)**
- **Master’s degree (QF level 6)**
- **Bachelor’s degree* (senior year entry or top-up degree for sub-degree graduates) (QF Level 5)**
- **Higher Diploma (HD) / Associate Degree (AD) / (QF level 4)**

Other courses / qualifications (e.g. Advanced Diploma / Advanced Certificate, Professional Diploma / Professional Certificate) (QF level 4–6)

**Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)**

**Yi Jin Diploma* / Foundation Diploma* / other courses / qualifications (QF level 3)**

Other courses / qualifications (e.g. Diploma in Vocational Education, Craft Certificate) (QF level 1–3)

**Compulsory Education**

Continuing Education, Lifelong Learning and Employment
## HKQF – A Unitary Framework

### Academic Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree/School Level</th>
<th>QF Levels</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>Level 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree / Higher Diploma</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 7 / HKDSE / Diploma</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 5 / Certificate</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary 3 / Certificate</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Vocational/Continuing Education Sectors

To be further developed under QF e.g. articulated learning pathways.
The objective of setting up HKQF

• Launched in 2008, HKQF is a policy initiative of the Education Bureau (EDB) of the HKSAR Government

• The Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS) is an executive arm of EDB to implement QF in Hong Kong

• The objective is to establish an effective platform to support lifelong learning, with a view to enhancing capability, professionalism and competitiveness of the local workforce
A new piece of legislation, namely the **Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, Cap. 592** came into full operation in May 2008 which provides legal backing to HKQF by means of a robust QA mechanism.

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

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

Other quality assurance bodies include:
- **Quality Assurance Council (QAC)** for self-accrediting universities
- **Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC)** – sub-degree programmes offered by the extension arms of self-accrediting universities
Public face of HKQF - Qualifications Register (QR)

- Web-based Qualifications Register which is **free** for public access
- Over **7,500 programmes / qualifications** registered on QR
- Covering qualifications of the **academic, vocational and continuing education** sectors
- **Non-local qualifications** as well
# Award Titles Scheme (ATS)

## Choice of Award Titles for Different Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QF Level</th>
<th>Award Titles</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Master, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelor, Professional Diploma, Professional Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Associate, Higher Diploma, Higher Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

15 standard award titles
QF credit and CAT

• 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.)

• The Education Bureau announced the launch of **CAT Policy and Principles** in July 2014 ([www.hkqf.gov.hk/CAT](http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/CAT))
QF for the Vocational Sector

• QF for the vocational sector should be **industry-led**

• ITAC will be set up on industry basis when a specific industry or sector has reached **consensus** for joining QF

• ITACs are composed of representatives from **major stakeholders**, including relevant trade associations, workers’ unions, employers, employees, professional bodies, regulatory body and Government departments concerned

• ITACs are tasked to produce the **Specifications of Competency Standards** (SCS) for respective industries, develop a suitable **Recognition of Prior Learning** (RPL) mechanism and to promote QF and QF-related products and services to the industry stakeholders
Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)
Development of Competency standards

- **Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)** sets out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees under various functional areas of any industry or a 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.

- Apart from SCS, **Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competences (SGC)**, covering 4 strands of subject from Level 1 to Level 4: **English**, **Chinese**, **Numeracy** and **IT** have also been produced and are made available for public consumption.
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, repeated training is avoided

• RPL has been implemented in 14 industries. Over 15,000 applications and 27,000 clusters of competencies have been processed

• RPL is conducted by appointed Assessment Agency nominated by respective ITACs and approved by the Secretary for Education upon accreditation by HKCAAVQ
International Networking
Collaboration with Mainland and Overseas Qualifications Authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Collaboration details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guangdong Occupational Skill Testing Authority (OSTA) of China</strong></td>
<td>Signed a Letter of Intent to explore the possibility of benchmarking competency standards with the relevant National Occupational Standards of China (May 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP)</strong></td>
<td>Signed a MOU on the development of QF (March 2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)</strong></td>
<td>Signed a Collaboration Arrangement to enhance collaboration on QF (March 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group (EQF AG)</strong></td>
<td>Completed a comparability study on HKQF and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (December 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thailand Professional Qualifications Institute (TPQI)</strong></td>
<td>Signed a MOU to facilitate the exchange of views on QF development (July 2015)</td>
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PART II: EXPERIENCE SHARING ON LESSONS LEARNT
Lessons Learnt

I. Structure of HKQF and its infrastructural Set-up:

• A Unitary framework covering academic, vocational and continuing education sectors
• A 7-level hierarchy that fits into the existing educational system
• A set of Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) with common and consistent standards
• A Voluntary system
II. A robust Quality Assurance (QA) mechanism underpinning HKQF:

- a dedicated new piece of legislation, namely the *Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, Cap. 592* which provides legal backup to QF implementation

- a dedicated QA authority, namely the *Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)* has been empowered to become the *Accreditation Authority* and the *Qualifications Register Authority*

- The HKCAAVQ provides a transparent process for programme accreditation by way of a 4-stage accreditation process for inclusion of QF-recognised programmes on the *Qualifications Register (QR)*
III. Stakeholders Engagement:

- Setting up ITACs on industry basis is proven effective in engaging **major stakeholders** to take part in QF implementation

- **Industry-wide consultation** in the drafting of SCS, RPL, CAT and other promotional events
IV. Consensus from Stakeholders:

- Participation and support from large enterprises or employers’ associations and workers’ unions in ITACs is very important as they are always the drivers for adopting the QF deliverables.

- **Concerns from trade unions**: Is QF a new work permit? Is it a licensing system?

Compulsory for all? A licensing scheme? Only formal learning?
Lessons Learnt

V. Commitment from the HKSAR Government:

• Setting up of the QFS with **recurrent funding** for the operation of the QFS

• Annual funding of **$10 million** for all ITACs to launch new initiatives and to promote QF at industry level

• A **$1 billion QF Fund** to provide investment returns to sustain the development of HKQF
PART III: CHALLENGES AHEAD
Challenges Ahead

• The inclusion or alignment of other forms of qualifications, e.g. **Professional Qualifications** and school qualifications in HKQF
• The closer linkage of HKQF with the **labour market**
• The promulgation of **Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)** arrangements to facilitate programme articulation between the vocational and professional education & training (VPET) and the higher education (HE) sector
Challenges Ahead

• The expansion of the RPL mechanism to cover non-formal and informal learning (NFIL)
• The closer collaboration and referencing with other QF systems overseas
• Evaluation, review and refinement of the infrastructural set-up of HKQF e.g. GLD, SCS development, RPL etc.
• Public image and branding of HKQF
Thank you