
2I. Qualifications Framework (QF) - a platform to facilitate lifelong learning

While participation in Hong Kong's Qualifications Framework (QF) is voluntary, it is backed up by legislation, that is, the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (abbrev. AAVQO) (Cap. 592) which lays the foundation for establishing QF and the associated quality assurance mechanism underpinning it.



To ensure the territory's sustainable manpower development in the era of knowledge-based economy, QF was established to facilitate the development of a network of learning pathways leading to articulation of learning among academic, vocational and continuing education sectors. By encouraging and promoting lifelong learning, the framework also enables individual learners to pursue their learning flexibly according to their own roadmaps.

QF was officially launched in Hong Kong in May 2008. The underpinning quality assurance mechanism aims to clearly define the standards of different qualifications, ensure their quality and make available articulation between qualifications at different levels. Qualifications encompassed in the QF are outcomes-based and are not confined to academic attainment.

2I.1 Quality assurance mechanism

The AAVQ Ordinance, which came into full operation on 5 May 2008, empowers inter alia the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to be the Accreditation Authority and the Qualifications Register Authority, responsible for assuring the quality of qualifications recognized under the QF and the administration of the Qualifications Register (QR).

2I.2 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs)

The Qualifications Framework Secretariat (QFS), the executive arm of the Education Bureau to implement QF, is responsible for assisting various industries in setting up Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs). Each ITAC will consist of representatives from employers, employees, professional bodies, trade associations, and related government agencies. So far, ITACs have been formed for 19 industries, namely, Automotive, Beauty, Banking, Chinese Catering, Elderly Care Service, Electrical & Mechanical Services, Hairdressing, Import & Export, Information & Communications Technology, Insurance, Jewellery, Logistics, Manufacturing Technology (tooling, Metals & Plastics), Printing & Publishing, Property Management, Retail, Security Services, Testing, Inspection & Certification, and Watch & Clock.

One of the major roles of ITACs is to draw up the competency standards of various job functions in an industry (collectively known as Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)) and to promote the SCS to the education and training market for the development of SCS-based programmes that meets the training needs of the industry.

21.3 Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)

To strengthen the industry's leading role in the development of vocational training so as to enhance the industry's competitiveness, the ITACs are actively developing the Specification of Competency Standards (SCS), setting out the competency standards required for job holders to effectively perform different tasks up to workplace requirements. The competency standards specified in units of competency (UoCs) are learning outcomes for learners to attain through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

In addition, each UoC has a designated QF level to indicate the complexity and depth of learning in the UoC, and designated QF credits to indicate the volume or size of learning in the UoC.

21.4 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism

Under the QF, qualifications are not confined to academic and training attainments. A Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism will be considered and developed by each ITAC for which the SCS is completed for the purpose of allowing experienced practitioners without formal qualifications to acquire some QF-recognised qualifications by virtue of the skills, knowledge and experience acquired at the workplace. With the RPL qualifications, employees may pursue further studies as well as career progression more easily as they need not start from scratch or repeat training.

