

**TASK FORCE ON PROMOTION OF
VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT
MAY 2019**

Background and Purpose of the Review

Vocational education has a long history in Hong Kong which can be traced back to the establishment of the first Junior Technical School in the early 1930s, followed by the setting up of more technical institutes and the Hong Kong Polytechnic, as well as the establishment of statutory institutions including the Construction Industry Training Authority and the Clothing Industry Training Authority in the 1970s for meeting the specific training needs of the respective industries. Over the years, vocational and technical education has been an integral part of Hong Kong's education system running parallel to the academic stream. In 1982, the Government established the Vocational Training Council (VTC) as a government funded statutory body to provide technical education and industrial training in Hong Kong. Since then, more comprehensive vocational education has been gradually developed and extended to post-secondary level. Under the prevailing secondary education system, a variety of learning opportunities related to vocational education are provided through Applied Learning courses, which are subjects with stronger elements of practical learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields, introduced as elective subjects leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education qualification.

2. Vocational education and training (VET) has always been a key driver of manpower development of Hong Kong for meeting the needs of the ever changing economy. As in many other economies including Finland, Germany, Australia and Singapore, VET covers a wide spectrum of disciplines including engineering, business and administration, social service as well as other service sectors such as hospitality. VET is not limited to the technical sector but covers all sectors of working life, equipping students and practitioners with practical work skills and competence.

Government Policy

3. Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) is an integral part of our education system, which is provided at different levels of the education system, offering diploma to post-graduate qualifications. It is the Government's policy to provide multiple and flexible pathways for young people with diverse aspirations and abilities through VPET. This is achieved by providing subventions and support measures to the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities, VTC and other post-secondary education and training institutions, and financial subsidy to students to enable them to acquire skills and knowledge that prepare them for employment and at the same time equip them with the foundation for lifelong learning. Furthermore, the Government also invests heavily in strengthening our qualifications system through development of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) to facilitate recognition of vocational and professional qualifications with a view to promoting the status and value of VPET and supporting lifelong learning.

4. In order to map out a strategy to promote vocational education and raise public awareness towards vocational education and recognition of its value, the Government set up the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education (The 2014 Task Force) in June 2014. The 2014 Task Force submitted its report to the Government in July 2015, proposing a three-pronged strategy with a total of 27 recommendations. The three-pronged strategy comprises (a) rebranding VET to VPET; (b) strengthening promotion; and (c) sustaining efforts. The Government accepted all the recommendations as announced in the 2016 Policy Address and has been actively following up the recommendations.

Current Challenges

5. To keep track of changes in stakeholders' attitude towards VPET, the Government has conducted tracking surveys in 2015, 2017 and 2018 respectively. While there has been an improvement in the public's overall perception of VPET (as reflected in the increased proportion of respondents who expressed that they had a positive impression on VPET from 50.8 % to 60.2%) since the promotion strategies were launched in 2015, the survey conducted in 2018 revealed that about half of the respondents did not have knowledge about the academic attainment one could achieve by pursuing VPET. Amongst the student respondents, only 54.0% of them considered VPET a valuable choice for further academic or career pursuit, and 20.7% were very interested / interested in pursuing VPET. In addition, the top reason quoted by students for not pursuing VPET is that "their academic results allowed them to pursue better education opportunities". The above results reflected that VPET is still considered by some as inferior to other academic articulation pathways such as degree education in universities providing mainly programmes with stronger orientation in academic studies and research.

6. At the secondary school level, in the 2017/18 academic year, Applied Learning (ApL) courses, which are elective subjects leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) qualification with stronger elements of practical learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields, were taken up by around only 8% of secondary 5 students. There is room to attract more students to consider taking ApL courses with VPET-related contents to broaden their exposure to VPET at secondary school level, to provide them with exposure to how knowledge is practically applied in the work environment and to more vocational-oriented studies. To strengthen the appeal of VPET to students as a valued choice, we need to further review our strategy and step up efforts in promoting VPET to stakeholders.

Setting up of the new Task Force on Promotion of VPET in 2018

7. To further consider how VPET can be promoted through a more targeted

approach, the Chief Executive announced in her 2017 Policy Address to set up a task force to review the promotion of VPET in Hong Kong. The Task Force on Promotion of VPET (the Task Force) was set up in April 2018, its terms of reference is to evaluate the implementation progress of the recommendations of the 2014 Task Force, and advise the Secretary for Education on the following areas:

- (a) how VPET can be better promoted in the career and life planning education in secondary schools to cater for students' diverse abilities and interests;
- (b) how to foster closer business-school collaboration through the Business-School Partnership Programme to meet the manpower needs of Hong Kong; and
- (c) to make recommendations on other VPET promotion measures.

8. The membership of the Task Force is as follows -

Chairman

Dr Roy CHUNG Chi-ping, GBS, JP (鍾志平)

Non-official Members

Mr Alan CHEUNG Yick-lun (張益麟)

Ms Quince CHONG Wai-yan, JP (莊偉茵)

Mr Eugene FONG Yick-jin (方奕展)

Mr IP Wai-ming, MH (葉偉明)

Mr Brian LIU (廖家陞)

Mr Thomas LO Sui-sing, JP (盧瑞盛)

Mr Joseph TSANG Chi-to (曾志滔)

Dr TSANG Wing-hong (曾永康)

Miss Winnie YING Fung-sau (應鳳秀)

Mr Taylor YIP (葉泰萊)

Official Members

Representative(s) of the Secretary for Education

9. During its deliberation, the Task Force recognises that many stakeholders including students, parents and teachers hold a narrow view about VPET, many of them are not aware of the development and opportunities available in VPET pathways. They often associate VPET with education and training programmes pitched at relatively lower qualifications level (mainly at the sub-degree level or below), and career opportunities in “blue collar” work involving laborious or manual tasks only. The Task Force firmly believes that more needs to be done to enable stakeholders to have a more comprehensive understanding about the latest development of VPET so that they can make more informed decisions about pursuing VPET or other education

and training pathways.

10. Since its inception, the Task Force has held six meetings to discuss key issues relating to VPET in Hong Kong. The Task Force has also arranged eight focus group discussions from January 2019 onwards to gauge stakeholders' feedback on the key issues set out below.

- (a) Overall strategies on the promotion of VPET;
- (b) Promotion of VPET in secondary education, including assisting students to identify their career aspirations and orientation for life-long learning in specific areas, so that they can select pathways that suit their aspirations;
- (c) Ways to enhance VPET in post-secondary education and to provide greater incentives for secondary school students to pursue the VPET route; and
- (d) Building clear articulation pathways in the vocational sector or industries for school leavers and in-service personnel to progress to the professional level by establishing vocational qualifications under the QF.

11. Taking into account the discussion of the Task Force and feedback received from stakeholders in the focus group sessions, the Task Force has formulated some preliminary observations and recommendations for consultation with the public and stakeholders. With the benefit of further views gathered during the consultation period, the Task Force will finalise its proposals and make specific recommendations to the Government by the end of 2019.

Invitation of Submissions

12. Members of the public and stakeholders are welcome to provide views/opinions on the preliminary observations and proposals put forward in this consultation document, and/or on any other issues pertinent to the future development of VPET. Written submissions should be sent to the Education Bureau **on or before 12 July 2019** by post, e-mail or fax:

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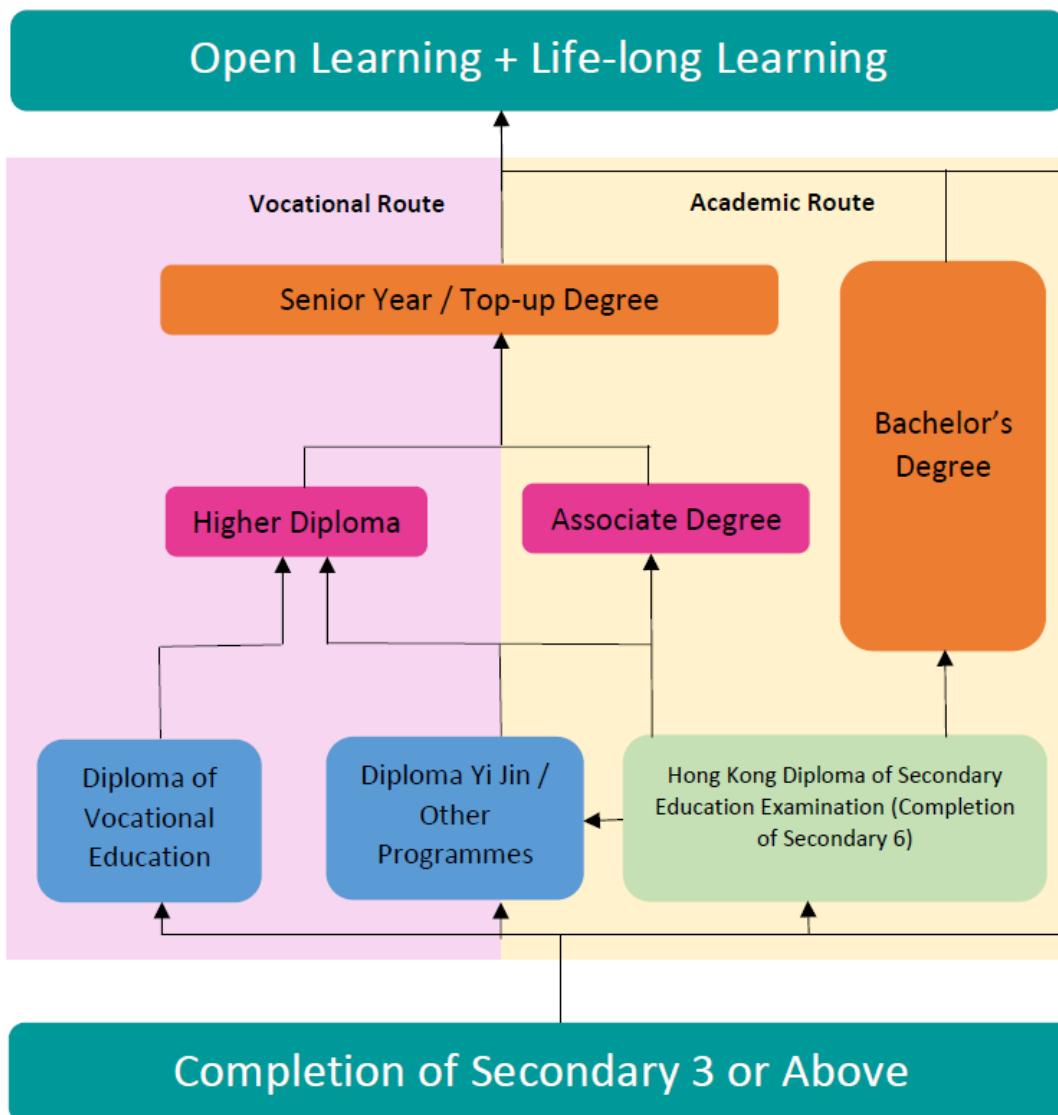
Abbreviations and Glossary

ApL	Applied Learning
AY	Academic Year
BSPP	Business-School Partnership Programme
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DVE	Diploma of Vocational Education
HD	Higher Diploma
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
LPE	Life Planning Education
OLE	Other Learning Experiences
QF	Qualifications Framework
SSSDP	Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors
the 2014 Task Force	Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education
the Task Force	Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training
UGC	University Grants Committee
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPET	Vocational and Professional Education and Training
VQP	Vocational Qualifications Pathway
VR	Virtual Reality
VTC	Vocational Training Council

Chapter 1: Overview of Vocational and Professional Education and Training

1.1 The Government is committed to providing quality, flexible and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points for secondary school leavers with diverse aspirations and abilities. At the same time, Hong Kong's business sector needs a life-long learning workforce with good knowledge and skills to contribute to the sustainable development of Hong Kong's society and economy. While there is no clear-cut definition of VPET, following its rebranding, the scope of VPET has been generally described as vocational and professional education and training programmes of up to degree level with a high percentage of the curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge. VPET plays a pivotal role in broadening the learning opportunities for youngsters and in-service personnel as well as nurturing the requisite human capital in support of Hong Kong's development. Chart 1.1 below illustrates the articulation pathways under the education system in Hong Kong.

Chart 1.1 Overview of education system in Hong Kong



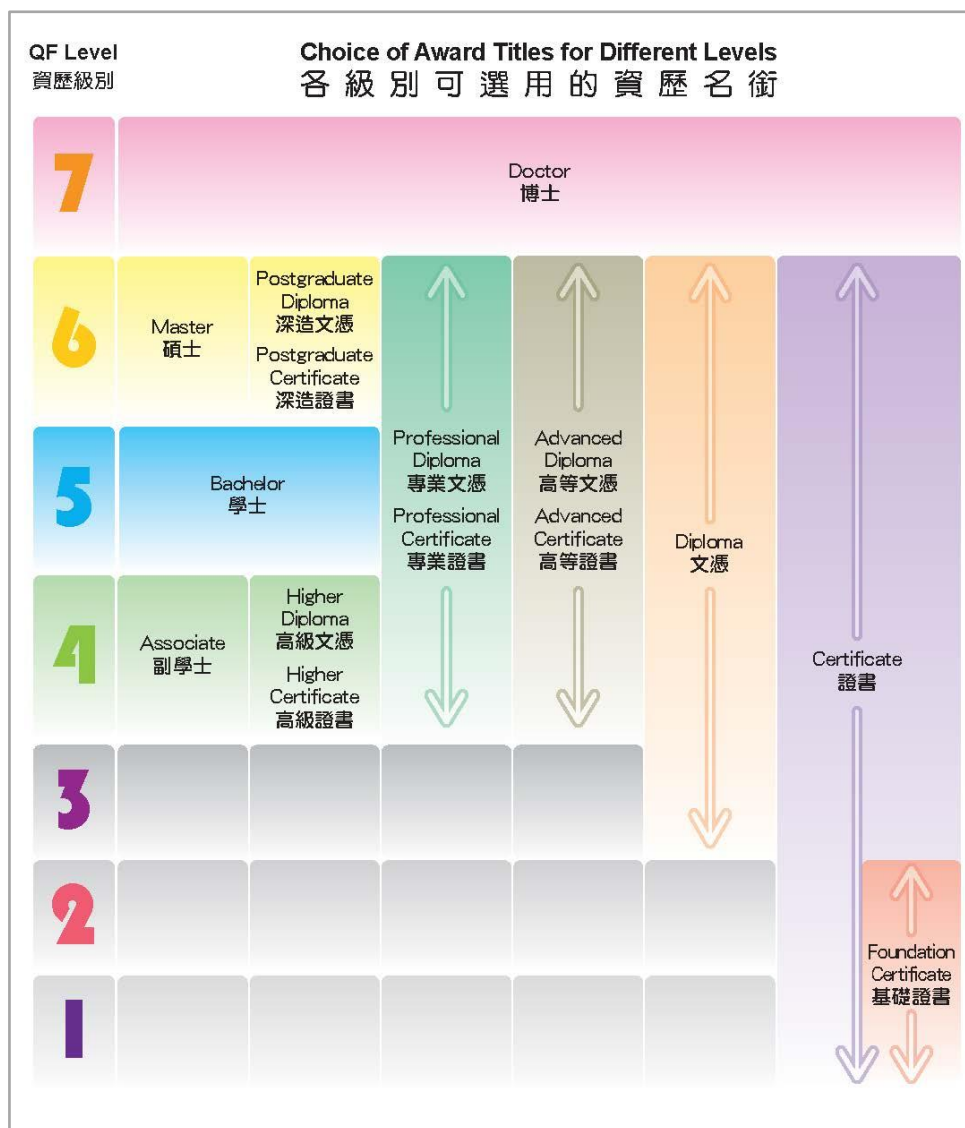
1.2 VPET programmes are provided by a wide variety of institutions including the UGC-funded universities, post-secondary education and training institutions, statutory bodies (including VTC, Construction Industry Council, Clothing Industry Training Authority and Employees Retraining Board) as well as corporate academies such as MTR Academy and Hong Kong International Aviation Academy.

VPET and QF

1.3 In Hong Kong, we have in place the QF, a credible qualifications system which enables integration of education and vocational training as well as recognition of skills and experiences. The QF can provide a solid foundation to establish vocational and professional pathways with a view to enhancing the promotion and development of VPET in Hong Kong.

1.4 The Government introduced the QF in 2008, which is a seven-level hierarchy embracing qualifications in the academic, vocational, professional and continuing education sectors (please refer to Chart 1.2 below). VPET qualifications which are recognised under QF are quality assured and level-rated in accordance with well-defined standards. QF also provides a common platform that facilitates articulation of qualifications among different sectors. It is an important foundation underpinning our VPET system, rendering assessment and comparison of achievements within the vocational route and between the vocational and academic routes possible, projecting a professional image of VPET and enhancing articulation of pathways among different sectors. At present, over 8 000 academic and vocational qualifications, including VPET qualifications, are recognised under QF and registered on the Qualifications Register.

Chart 1.2 Seven-level hierarchy under the Hong Kong QF



VPET in the Education System

(a) VPET in the Secondary School System

1.5 **Life planning education** (LPE) plays a significant role at schools in fostering students' self-understanding, personal planning, goal setting, reflective thinking and articulation to progression pathways. LPE consists of three key elements, namely, self-understanding and development, career exploration and career planning and management. At **junior secondary levels**, LPE focuses more on promoting students' self-understanding and development; whereas the weighting of career exploration as well as career planning and management would progressively be increased at senior secondary levels.

1.6 At the **senior secondary level** (equivalent to QF Levels 2 to 3), students'

understanding in VPET is enhanced through a variety of learning opportunities. **Applied Learning (ApL) courses**, which are subjects with stronger elements of practical learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields, are introduced as elective subjects leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) qualification. Currently, most ApL courses are registered on the Qualifications Register as certificate programmes at QF Level 3. Students will obtain QF certificates issued by course providers in addition to the HKDSE qualification upon successful completion of these ApL courses.

1.7 On the other hand, career-related experiences are also embedded in the **Other Learning Experiences (OLE)** activities, which become an integral part of the Senior Secondary Curriculum implemented since 2009 and made accessible to all senior secondary students to complement their learning in core and elective subjects in order to nurture their all-round development and positive values. Through OLE, various career-related experiences are provided for students to enhance and update their knowledge about the world of work, strengthen their work ethics, and facilitate their decision making and personal career planning. VPET may be introduced to students as an articulation choice through relevant career-related experiences.

(b) Post-secondary level

1.8 At the **sub-degree level** (QF Level 4), there are currently 21 local post-secondary institutions¹ providing sub-degree programmes, and 65% of some 370 full-time sub-degree programmes offered in the 2018/19 academic year (AY) are **Higher Diploma (HD) programmes**², making available nearly **20 000** intake places (about two-thirds of the total sub-degree intake places). According to the *Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes under the New Academic Structure*³, an HD programme's curriculum should consist of at least 60% specialised contents (e.g. learning related to concentrations, disciplines and professions, vocational skills, etc.). HD programmes seek to enable students to acquire the appropriate attitude, knowledge and skills to support their initial employment at the para-professional level.

1.9 At the **undergraduate level** (QF Level 5), many higher education institutions are also offering degree programmes with strong professional/vocational element. Examples include Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy, etc. Besides, articulation opportunities to senior year places of publicly-

¹ Besides local post-secondary institutions, some other providers such as private hospitals are also offering HD programmes such as HD in General Nursing.

² Notable examples include HD in Airfreight Management and Global Logistics, HD in International Hospitality and Tourism Management, etc.

³ The Common Descriptors was drawn up by the Education Bureau, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, and the Joint Quality Review Committee in 2010.

funded undergraduate programmes and top-up degree programmes in the self-financing sector are provided to sub-degree graduates.

(c) Other VPET programmes

1.10 Apart from the above, there is a wide array of full-time and part-time certificate and diploma programmes equivalent to QF Levels 2 and 3, primarily targeting young people having completed Secondary 3 to 6, including the Diploma of Vocational Education (DVE) programmes, apprenticeship schemes and Foundation Diploma programmes provided by the VTC as well as Diploma Yi Jin programmes offered by different institutions. Working adults who wish to acquire training or formal qualifications may also articulate using these alternative pathways.

Development of VPET outside the education sector

1.11 In recent years, more industries have played a more proactive role in promoting VPET through partnership with education and training institutions in developing programmes for specific sectors/professions. For example, the Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited and CLP Power Hong Kong have partnered with VTC to offer more specialised training in nurturing professionals for their respective industry. These joint programmes⁴ enable students to keep abreast of the latest industry knowledge and trends through theoretical learning and practice provided by the partner companies. Notable progress has also been made by companies and government departments in implementing the QF in recruitment and training. Their involvement has underscored the importance of VPET in manpower development in Hong Kong, and also helped to raise students' awareness of the employment prospect and opportunities for further education available for young people pursuing VPET. Furthermore, there has also been a growing trend for employers especially those in the property management, retail, catering, banking and insurance industries to develop QF-recognised in-house training programmes to suit the needs of particular occupations or positions.

Implementation of Recommendations of the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education

1.12 The Government set up the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education in June 2014 with a view to mapping out a strategy to promote vocational education and raise public awareness towards vocational education and recognition of its value. The 2014 Task Force submitted its report to the Government in July 2015, proposing a

⁴ Examples including Professional Diploma in Gas Engineering and Professional Diploma in Power Engineering.

three-pronged strategy with a total of 27 recommendations. The three-pronged strategy comprises (a) rebranding VET; (b) strengthening promotion; and (c) sustaining efforts.

1.13 The Government accepted all the 2014 Task Force's recommendations as announced in the 2016 Policy Address and has been actively following up on the recommendations, the major progress is summarised as follows –

- rebranded VET to VPET, covering programmes up to degree level with a high percentage of the curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge;
- carried out a series of publicity campaign for promotion of the professional image of VPET;
- fully subsidised ApL courses at the senior secondary levels starting from the 2016/17 AY, with a view to encouraging more schools to offer ApL courses so that more students with interests in VPET can benefit from the courses;
- extended a Pilot Training and Support Scheme⁵ for two more cohorts of students from 2016/17 AY, under which apprenticeship training for targeted industries will be provided to students alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance; and
- earmarked a site in the urban district to develop a new campus for the VTC with adequate capacity and state-of-the-art facilities so as to enhance the image and professionalism of VPET.

1.14 The 27 recommendations, which have been implemented by the Government, are set out at the **Annex**.

Recent efforts by the Government to promote VPET

1.15 To encourage more young people to pursue VPET as a valued choice, and to raise public awareness of the potential and prospect of pursuing VPET, the Government has introduced a number of new initiatives to further promote and support the development of VPET. Some of the latest initiatives are listed as follows -

⁵ The scheme aims to attract and retain talent for specific industries with a keen demand for labour, by integrating structured apprenticeship training programmes and clear career progression pathways. Under the scheme, apprenticeship trainings for targeted industries are provided to students alongside a guaranteed level of salary and incentive allowance.

(a) Training and Support Scheme

1.16 As announced in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address, the Government will increase training places of the regularised Training and Support Scheme to 1 200 per year from the 2019/20 AY to enable trainees to join industries which require specialised skills under the "Earn and Learn" model with an average monthly subsidy of \$2,500 per month for each trainee. At the same time, in order to evaluate trainees' abilities and performance in the workplace more effectively, the Government will introduce a three-year pilot incentive to employers participating in the workplace assessment under the Scheme. It encourages employers to participate in the workplace assessment for trainees so as to adjust the content of training courses more effectively and improve trainees' work performance.

(b) Industrial attachment programme

1.17 Starting from the 2014/15 AY, recurrent funding of \$18 million has been allocated to VTC to provide industrial attachment opportunities for its students. The programme aims at enhancing the employability of students and preparing them for a smooth transition from study to work. It is estimated to benefit over 9 000 students in VTC every year.

(c) Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors

1.18 The Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) was introduced in the 2015/16 AY on a pilot basis to subsidise students to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. SSSDP has been regularised from the 2018/19 AY onwards with an increase in the number of subsidised places from about 1 000 to about 3 000 per cohort. Starting from the 2019/20 AY, the scheme will be expanded to subsidise 2 000 students per cohort enrolling in selected sub-degree programmes. Currently, the designated undergraduate and sub-degree programmes fall under ten disciplines that have been identified as having keen manpower demand, namely architecture and engineering, computer science, creative industries, financial technology, health care, insurance, logistics, sports and recreation, testing and certification and tourism and hospitality.

(d) Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes

1.19 To encourage working adults in designated industries to pursue higher qualifications, the Government will allocate an additional \$234 million to provide

tuition fee subsidy from the 2019/20 AY for three more years under the Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes, which will benefit another 5 600 students admitted to designated part-time architecture, town planning, engineering and technology programmes offered by the VTC. The extended Pilot Subsidy Scheme will also be expanded to cover around 2 500 practioners in the creative industry.

Chapter 2: Promotion of VPET in Secondary Schools

2.1 One of the key areas of review by the Task Force is promotion of VPET in secondary schools. The Task Force notes that currently there are different programmes and activities that promote VPET in secondary schools. At the junior secondary level, students are progressively provided with career-related experiences and relevant exposure through life-wide learning activities. At senior secondary level, students' understanding of VPET is further enhanced through ApL courses, the career-related experiences embedded in OLE activities, and other subjects such as business studies and science.

Background

Life Planning Education and Business-School Partnership Programme

2.2 Under LPE, three key elements, namely, self-understanding and development, career exploration and career planning and management are related to students' subsequent consideration of different articulation pathways including VPET. To foster closer partnership between business entities/community organisations and secondary schools, the EDB launched the **Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP)** in 2005. Through BSPP, industries and community organisations provide a wide range of career exploration activities to students on various industries and professions, such as career talks, workplace visits, workshops, work experience programmes and competitions to support the implementation of LPE. It leads students out of the classroom to gain a wider perspective of the world so that they can get prepared for life in society. Through this non-traditional learning platform, students are able to learn about various industries and their operation, explore their own career orientation, enhance generic skills and develop work ethics, hence enable them to acquire an initial understanding of the workplace.

Applied Learning

2.3 VPET has also been promoted through ApL in secondary schools. The understanding of VPET can be deepened through ApL, which offers learning contexts linked to broad vocational and professional fields. Through application and practice, students develop beginners' skill sets, career-related competencies and generic skills, and have the opportunities to explore their career aspirations. ApL courses are offered as Category B elective subjects⁶ to enhance diversification within the senior secondary curriculum. The ApL curriculum focuses on achieving the following two

⁶ HKDSE subjects are divided into three categories, including *Category A* (4 core subjects such as English and Mathematics and 20 elective subjects such as History and Music), *Category B* (ApL subjects) and *Category C* (other language subjects such as French and Urdu).

aims –

- (a) enable students to **understand fundamental theories and concepts** through **application and practice**, and to **develop their generic skills** in authentic contexts; and
- (b) provide students with opportunities to **explore their career aspirations and orientation** for lifelong learning in specific areas.

2.4 For 2019-21 AY, ApL courses will be available in the areas of creative studies, media and communication, business, management and law, services, applied science, engineering and production, as well as ApL Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students). Many of the ApL courses are vocationally-related, such as Aviation Studies, Railway Studies, Electrical and Energy Engineering, Hotel Operations and Western Cuisine, etc. The ApL course provision aims for a balance between breadth and depth in ApL and for lateral coherence within the senior secondary curriculum. A flexible combination of ApL courses with core subjects, other elective subjects and OLE broadens students' learning experiences for holistic learning, and helps students explore their career aspirations.

2.5 Acknowledging ApL courses as a key platform for promoting VPET in secondary education, the 2014 Task Force has made a number of recommendations to promote ApL. Pursuant to the recommendations, the following measures have been implemented–

- (a) providing 100% grant subsidies to schools for the ApL course fees from the 2016/17 AY and encourage more schools to offer ApL courses based on student aptitudes, abilities and backgrounds; and
- (b) encouraging course providers to arrange accreditation of more ApL courses under the QF where appropriate so that apart from the HKDSE, students completing ApL courses may obtain a separate QF-recognised qualification for further studies in the relevant fields or entry into the industries concerned. As at March 2019, 34 out of 36 courses had been recognised under QF, most of the courses were registered on the Qualifications Register as certificate programmes at QF Level 3.

2.6 Furthermore, the 2014 Task Force has also suggested post-secondary education institutions in Hong Kong to give due consideration to the results of ApL courses attained by students in the HKDSE Examination in student admission. Currently, for further studies in sub-degree programmes, students are eligible to apply for admission to HD or Associate Degree programmes if they meet the minimum entrance requirements of Level 2 in five HKDSE subjects (including Chinese Language and English Language); and in general, each student is allowed to use up to

two ApL subjects in the application. For further studies in undergraduate programmes, in general the tertiary institutions value the learning experiences that students acquired in ApL. ApL subjects are used as elective subjects, or considered for award of bonus or additional information, varying by individual institutions, faculties or programmes.

Task Force's Observations for Consultation

2.7 To understand more about the key issues regarding promotion of VPET in secondary education, the Task Force has gauged the views of some stakeholders through focus group discussion and come up with some observations for consultation with the public and stakeholders.

Promotion in Secondary School

2.8 The BSPP is generally considered to be a useful platform for engaging industries on the promotion of VPET in secondary schools. As regards the types of VPET activities suitable for secondary school students, the Task Force has noticed that while there is sufficient number of VPET activities and taster programmes, some stakeholders would like to have more comprehensive and in-depth exposure to the workplace environment organised for secondary school students, which enable them to acquire first-hand experience and interaction with practitioners. The Task Force suggests that the Government should continue to facilitate industry involvement through BSPP in promoting VPET, and to engage more industry partners and their corporate academies, as well as professional bodies to **develop, improve and enrich the variety and structure of VPET activities** (such as organising “mini-job fair” and work experience programmes).

2.9 In the light of the Task Force's discussion and the views of the stakeholder groups, especially students, the Task Force sees merits in **facilitating junior secondary students to have more exposure to VPET activities**. Apart from providing students with more inspiration about their career and personal development, more access to VPET information at the junior secondary level (secondary 2 or secondary 3) can facilitate early consideration of various articulation options and selection of suitable elective subjects for their senior secondary level of studies. The Task Force suggests the Government **stepping up promotion of VPET-related activities for junior secondary students, BSPP partners can be encouraged to provide career exploration activities for junior secondary school students to enhance students' exposure**.

2.10 The Task Force notes that secondary school teachers and career masters have a key role to play in advising students on their articulation pathways. Currently,

teachers participate actively in various continuing professional development (CPD) programmes/activities, which include programmes that aim at enhancing teachers' knowledge and experience in career and VPET-related areas. Mandatory training consisting of management and refresher training courses is applicable to promotion posts as appropriate in aided schools.

2.11 The Task Force considers that VPET institutions, professional and trade associations can be encouraged to provide input to and assist in organising workshops, career talks, workplace visits, etc. for secondary school teachers. Taking into consideration the views of the principals, teachers and career masters interviewed, the Task Force suggests that the Government should **better equip secondary school teachers with knowledge and information about VPET** through training of new teachers and professional and career development for in-service teachers.

2.12 Apart from school teachers, the Task Force also suggests that the Government should **enhance parents' understanding of the opportunities and prospect of VPET** through various channels including regular communications between schools and parents, workplace visits under BSPP and more targeted promotion efforts.

Enhancing VPET through Applied Learning

2.13 The Task Force is supportive of the efforts made by the Government in enhancing ApL courses, and affirms the role of ApL courses in combination with other senior secondary subjects as an effective platform for promoting VPET through exposing students to the opportunities for exploring career aspirations and orientation for lifelong learning in specific areas. In particular, the Task Force sees VPET-related ApL courses as a gateway for students to learn about the opportunities and articulation pathway leading to professional vocational qualifications.

2.14 The Task Force notes that employers, students and teachers interviewed are generally positive about the vocationally-related ApL courses as a means of promoting VPET and understanding of the work environment. The Task Force suggests for the Government to continue its efforts to **promote VPET through ApL**, which is an integral component of the senior secondary curriculum for both academically-oriented students and students less interested in or fitted for academic pursuits to study in combination with other senior secondary subjects, and provide teachers and students with more information about the articulation opportunities and vocational qualifications to enhance diversification for multiple pathways. The scope of **VPET-related ApL courses can be broadened with contents enriched to include more vocationally-related elements**, with a view to better equipping students and raising their awareness to pursue VPET in continuing education and employment.

2.15 The Task Force recognises the positive feedback from teachers and students

interviewed regarding the value of industry input to ApL courses, including elements of workplace experience, in response to students' wish to understand more about the work environment and skill requirements for the relevant industries. Some stakeholders interviewed also indicated that higher level of recognition for ApL courses with VPET-related contents would attract more students to pursue vocationally-related ApL courses.

2.16 The Task Force suggests that efforts be stepped up to encourage participation of industries in development of ApL courses, in order to facilitate industry recognition. Towards this end, the Task Force recommends that the **engagement of industrial partners** from different sectors should be made a necessary condition in the development and design of VPET-related courses in ApL. Institutions providing ApL courses should also be further encouraged to consider **designing ApL courses with closer reference to competency standards of respective trades** under the QF where applicable. However, the Task Force recognises that generic contents in the vocationally-related ApL courses are also important to prepare students for employment or further education. There is also a need to allow suitable flexibility for course providers and their industry partners to determine the nature of the latter's involvement as well as the extent of trade specific competencies to be covered in such ApL courses, which will vary amongst different courses.

Chapter 3: Building Promising Pathways for VPET

3.1 In response to the evolving needs for talents in tandem with our economic and societal development, the Task Force considers it important to reinforce VPET to highlight its value within the overall landscape of higher education and professional development.

3.2 Education and training pathways for VPET have to be further **expanded and enriched**, underpinned by professional and vocational qualifications, for young people to acquire professional work skills, applied knowledge in information technology and innovation, as well as critical soft skills for progression in specialised areas. The Task Force proposes that the positioning of VPET in higher education should be clearly differentiated, and at the same time there is a need to develop vocational progression pathways for practitioners. The Task Force would like to put up the following observations and recommendations for consultation.

The Role of VPET in Higher Education

At the Degree Level

3.3 The Task Force is aware that it is the common aspirations of many students and their parents to pursue higher education at the undergraduate degree level. A degree qualification, which generally equips students with more generic skills and knowledge in academic subjects, is commonly perceived as a prerequisite for a career in “white-collar” jobs in professional, managerial or administrative roles in Hong Kong.

3.4 While some degree level programmes in the higher education sector are also vocational or professional-oriented, for example, those in the disciplines of nursing, engineering, etc., the role of VPET in higher education is not apparent in the Hong Kong community. To promote VPET at the degree level, the Government launched the SSSDP in the 2015/16 AY to provide subsidy for students pursuing designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines with demonstrated market needs. The programmes selected have a high level of vocational/professional content, and have been well-received by students. This has encouraged post-secondary institutions in the self-financing sector to offer more undergraduate programmes with vocational orientation in professional fields. Nevertheless, we do not have a separate stream in the higher education system to differentiate the “VPET” degrees. We notice that it is not uncommon in places like Canada, Finland, Australia, etc. to offer vocational degree programmes which adopt a more practical approach leading to Bachelor of Technology or Polytechnic Degree qualifications. These qualifications provide a clear articulation pathway for secondary school students as well as sub-degree graduates pursuing VPET route to attain degree qualifications through programmes with primary orientation towards

practical skills.

3.5 Having regard to the Task Force's discussions with stakeholders from some industries, as well as the recent trends observed in the collaboration between post-secondary education institutions in VPET programmes at both the sub-degree and degree levels, it is apparent that VPET plays a significant role in the higher education sector in meeting manpower needs of industries in Hong Kong. The positioning of VPET in our higher education system will have significant bearing on the future development of post-secondary education programme in VPET as well as students' choice in pursuing VPET.

3.6 The Task Force sees a need to **review the positioning of VPET in the higher education system in Hong Kong**. Specifically, the Government should **explore the merits of developing professional vocational qualifications at the degree level** (e.g. vocational degree with primary orientation towards practical skills), which should be differentiated from conventional degrees by a **combination of basic theoretical components of academic degree and practical learning, industry experience and recognition** by the relevant professional and specialised trades.

3.7 Against the background that the senior year places offered by the UGC-funded universities has been increased to 5 000 per year from the 2018/19 AY and with ample supply of self-financing top-up degree programmes, a review of the provision and distribution of senior year places of UGC-funded universities for launching vocational degrees should be conducted.

At the Sub-degree Level

3.8 Apart from VPET training at the undergraduate degree level, the Task Force notes that some employers expressed concerns over the mismatch in the present job market where many semi-professional/technician positions requiring VPET training and knowledge at the sub-degree level (mainly HD programmes) remain unfilled. Statistics show that many HD graduates opt for further studies (around 40%). The Task Force notes that HD education is particularly important to the re-industrialisation and the next phase of economic development of Hong Kong. In anticipation of rising degree-level participation rate in Hong Kong as supported by the adequate supply of undergraduate-level study places (subvented plus self-financing) in the foreseeable future, and having regard to the feedback from industry stakeholders, further promotion of HD qualification is considered necessary.

3.9 A number of stakeholders, especially the VPET programme providers, have expressed the view that the adequate supply of undergraduate-level study places has steered the preference of many secondary school leavers, many of whom are aspired for a UGC-funded university degree, to pursue Associate Degree programmes instead

of HD programmes. This trend has posed challenges to efforts made to promote HD programme as an important VPET pathway preparing our talents to meet the human resources much needed by many industries.

3.10 The Task Force suggests the Government reinforcing the role of HD qualifications as a key VPET pathway at the post-secondary level. The Task Force supports the proposal to conduct a more focused study on refining the structure and curriculum of HD programmes to better promote VPET and skill-based vocational qualifications (e.g. enhancing workplace attachments as an essential part of its curriculum), including a review of the qualifications level of HD programmes to promote the attainment of semi-professional/technician qualifications. The Task Force also agrees with the view held by some stakeholders that there is room to further enhance the adequacy of HD programmes in providing better training to students in respect of vocational and generic skills required for employment at para-professional level, through strengthening room for practicum and job attachments to enhance students' employability.

3.11 To ensure that VPET programmes can provide work-ready skills and training, the Task Force considers that the Government should formulate more robust policies to encourage, coordinate, support and facilitate the post-secondary education sector, including the self-financing post-secondary institutions, to offer VPET programmes at both sub-degree and degree levels in close partnership with industries to equip students with professional work skills and applied knowledge in specialised fields, especially in industries with keen or growing manpower demand.

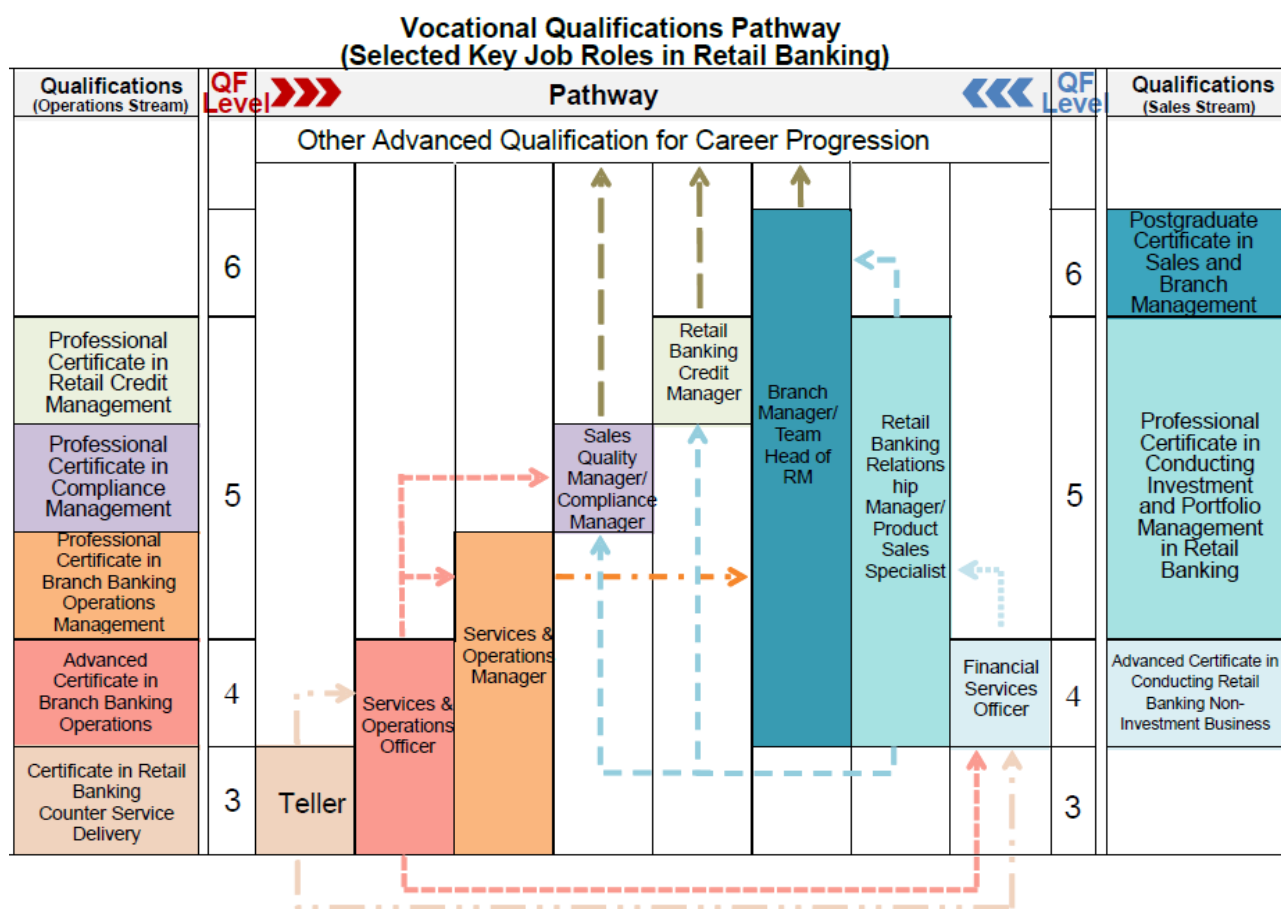
Development of Vocational Progression Pathways for Practitioners

3.12 In addition to the articulation pathways available under the formal education system, a number of graduates opt to pursue other vocational training opportunities or on-the-job training through employment, which are also important pathways for pursuing VPET. To facilitate and encourage progression and development, it is crucial for our VPET system to duly recognise their skills, trade-specific competence and experience obtained through these channels underpinned by a comprehensive qualifications system. The Task Force believes that these secondary school leavers opting for the “vocational route” should also be provided with clear and well-recognised progression ladder so that they can progress to the professional level in their respective trade through a “non-academic route” based on their skills and industry knowledge.

3.13 The Task Force notices that some industries have begun to develop clear articulation pathways underpinned by QF to facilitate school leavers to gain a better understanding about different job functions and requirements. In this regard, the Government introduced Vocational Qualifications Pathway (VQP), a recent initiative

in promoting the application of QF in the vocational sector. VQP represents a roadmap for progression in learning and employment in an industry, along which learners and practitioners can progress at various levels through attainment or acquisition of the required occupation-based qualifications. Specifically, VQP identified the QF Level, scope of learning, competency standards required, learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the required occupation-based qualifications for each principal job role. Key competencies, entry requirements, qualifications required and employment pathway for each principal job role were also clearly set out. Development of VQP for four industries (automotive, banking, property management and elderly care service industries) have been completed since 2017. A sample of VQP in the banking industry is set out at Chart 3.1 below. Over 30 VQP programmes have been developed and recognised under QF so far for manpower training. The Task Force considers that there is room to further explore the development of vocational progression route whereby skill-based qualifications can be duly recognised under QF in close partnership with the industries, in which qualifications along the pathways are quality-assured and achievable through skills training and assessment to provide young people with different aspirations and talents to develop.

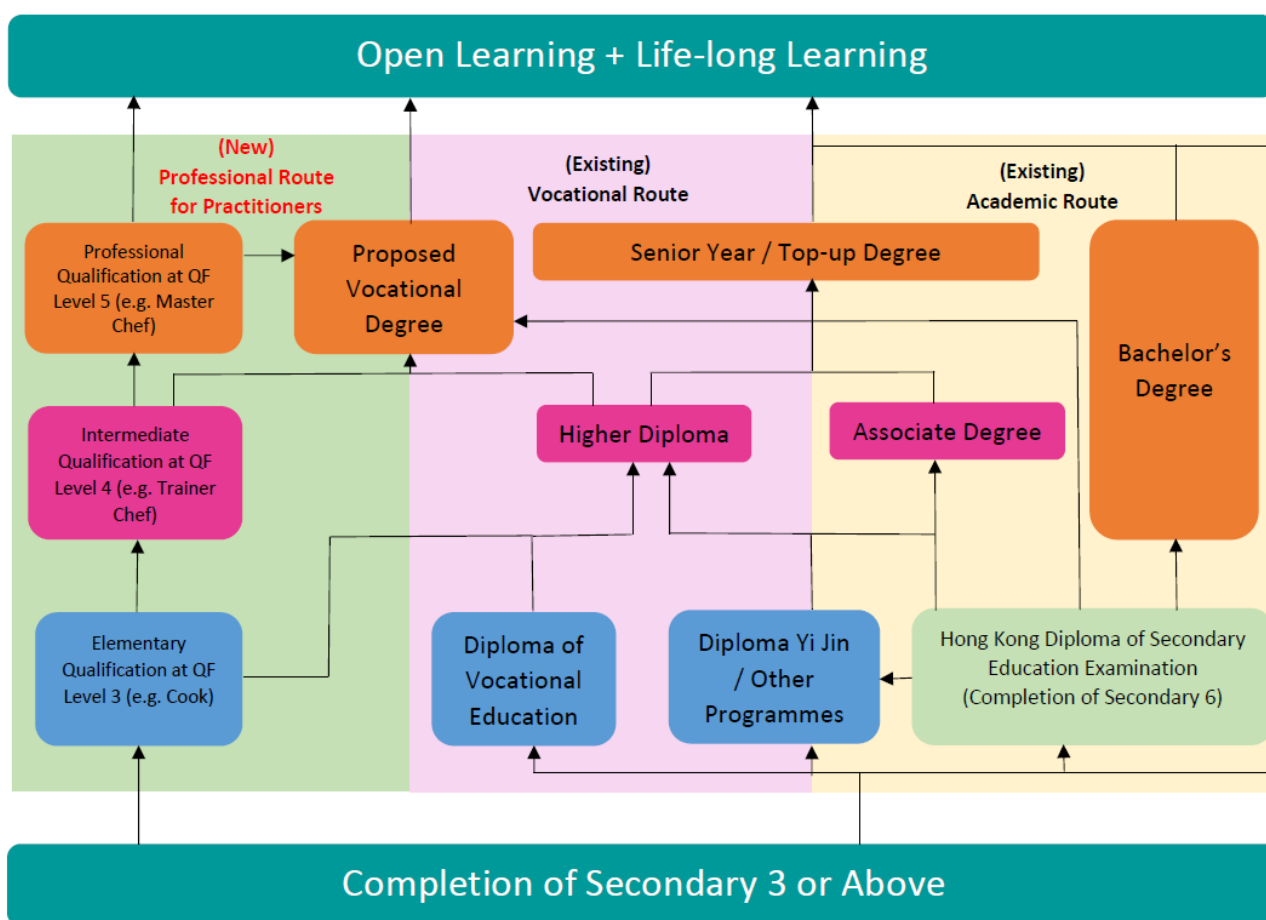
Chart 3.1 VQP in retail banking



3.14 The Task Force urges the Government to explore the development of a **vocational route whereby professional skill-based vocational qualifications can be**

acquired through an appropriate combination of vocational training at schools and workplace assessment or in-service training and duly recognised under the QF in close partnership with the industries. This pathway should run parallel to the VPET pathway in the higher education sector for obtaining professional skills and knowledge with industry recognition (please refer to Chart 3.2 below). As a start, focus could be put on professions such as culinary and creative industries to map out clear professional development pathway underpinned by skill-based qualifications.

Chart 3.2 Proposed professional route for practitioners alongside the existing academic and vocational routes



Chapter 4: Future Promotion of VPET

4.1 VPET has been rebranded from VET in recent years, covering programmes up to degree level with a high percentage of curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge. Since then, the Government and different training institutions, including the VTC, have been using the term VPET in all promotional and publicity materials. A publicity campaign has been launched to promote the professional image of VPET, including promotion through online media, production of television drama series to present real success stories of VPET graduates, etc. Despite the rebranding efforts, according to a tracking survey in 2017, only around 2.5% of the respondents had the first impression that VPET comprised professional training. The Task Force has some initial views on the future promotion of VPET for consultation with the public, as set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Key messages in promoting VPET

4.2 While the scope of programmes for VPET can vary from healthcare services to business and engineering, the common perception among people in Hong Kong is that VPET only covers vocationally-oriented programmes with education and training of practical skills specific for the “traditional” industries such as construction, manufacturing, etc. The Task Force considers that the public’s understanding of VPET should be enhanced to highlight the diverse opportunities available for a career in different professions through professional skills training. Different role models or success stories of VPET graduates in a wide range of professions should be shared with secondary school students, parents and the community at large.

4.3 The Task Force also suggests that more aspects of the benefits of pursuing VPET should be promoted to the public, with the meaning of VPET enriched to emphasise how VPET is associated to **work skills for the future**. VPET encompasses job-ready “professional skills” and “applied knowledge”, application of technology and innovation, as well as the “critical soft skills” required for the new age. VPET embraces excellence in practical vocational skills which can lead to skill-based qualifications and progression to different professions. Opportunities available through VPET pathways will provide students and practitioners with integrated experiences of practical learning at work, application of new and emerging technologies to solve real life problems, as well as acquisition of generic skills and knowledge (e.g. creativity and IT skills) necessary for meeting new challenges in the changing workplace.

Broaden and deepen industry and business partnership

4.4 The Task Force has reviewed how the business sector has been making

valuable contributions to the promotion of VPET in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions through different channels, including business-school co-operation activities as well as VPET programme designs through industry collaboration. The Task Force considers that it is necessary for the Government to step up measures to facilitate industries to play a greater and more strategic role in areas such as programme development and conducting of workplace assessment to enrich VPET courses and programmes in ApL courses and at post-secondary level. Incentive programmes can be considered to give recognition to encourage employers to champion the Government's VPET initiatives.

Promote VPET through more interactive channels

4.5 On publicity and promotion, the Task Force considers that VPET should be promoted in the society through more innovative approaches with a view to raising community-wide awareness. The Task Force agrees that “hands-on skills”, work competence, application of technology and innovation, etc. are some important concepts of VPET which require more promotion through the mass media. This may be achieved by promoting VPET in a more interactive way, such as simulating workplace experience with virtual reality (VR) technology. On the other hand, the attractiveness and positive image of VPET can be further projected by promoting success stories of VPET students through on-line media.

Enhance parents' understanding of VPET

4.6 The Task Force notes that in addition to school teachers, parents' advice has considerable influence over students' choice of their articulation pathways, it is important for parents to have more understanding of the prospects and opportunities provided by VPET for suiting different aspirations and talents of young people. The Task Force suggests enhancing communication between parents and secondary schools as well as formulating more targeted promotion measures for parents (e.g. via TV commercials or programmes) to help parents understand more about VPET.

Organise large-scale VPET events

4.7 The Task Force considers that stakeholders are very receptive to organisation of “job expo” to enable students to find out more about different occupations outside school hours through voluntary participation. In addition, the Task Force also suggests that secondary schools can be engaged more extensively in large-scale events such as skills competitions (for example together with STEM-related initiatives) to cultivate a culture that promotes skills and VPET. The Task Force further suggests raising community awareness on VPET by organising large-scale skills events

(including Skills Expo, WorldSkills Hong Kong competition, VPET Conference, QF Conference, etc.) on a regular basis.

Recommendations of the 2014 Task Force on Promotion of Vocational Education

Recommendations	
<u>Strategy 1: Rebranding Vocational Education and Training (VET)</u>	
1.	the Government to rebrand VET in Hong Kong as “vocational and professional education and training (VPET)” covering programmes up to degree level with a high percentage of curriculum consisting of specialised contents in vocational skills or professional knowledge;
<u>Strategy 2: Strengthening Promotion</u>	
<i>(a) <u>Promotion of Professional Image of VPET</u></i>	
(i) Publicity Campaign	
2.	the Government to produce Announcement in Public Interest (API) on TV/radio by involving industry role models where appropriate. The API may also be broadcast on Facebook, YouTube, dedicated portal for VPET and other online media;
3.	the Government to produce TV drama series (including related publicity and production of DVDs), presenting real success stories of persons graduated from VPET programmes and make them continuously accessible to the public through the VPET portal which facilitates guidance to students;
4.	the Government to continue to support major VPET provider(s) to organise large-scale skills competitions to showcase VPET students’ achievement and provide interactive activities for secondary school students’ experience, or even consider bidding for the hosting of such competitions in Hong Kong in due course with a view to raising public awareness of the professionalism of VPET and related industries as well as enhancing the skill level of local talent;
(ii) Campus Facilities of VPET Providers	
5.	the Government to facilitate the provision of state-of-the-art facilities to VPET providers in order to provide conducive learning environment to VPET students and enhance the professional image of VPET riding on the existing support schemes or otherwise;
(iii) Quality of Programmes Offered by VPET Providers and Research Capability	
6.	VPET providers to enhance quality of their VPET programmes, and strengthen the support services to students where possible;
7.	VPET providers to consider whether it is appropriate for them to engage in (more) research activities (which could be action research, applied research, technology-oriented research other than academic research) to inform teaching and learning, etc.;

Recommendations	
	<i>(b) <u>Provision of More Information about VPET and Related Career</u></i>
	(i) VPET Portal
8.	the Government to develop and maintain a VPET portal which gathers comprehensive and impartial information on VPET programmes and related industries in Hong Kong, as well as links up other relevant portals;
	(ii) VPET Forum
9.	the Government, VPET providers and industry sectors to attend international VPET forums from time to time to keep abreast of the latest development of VPET worldwide;
10.	the Government or VPET providers to organise local VPET forums from time to time with the participation of the industry sectors, in order to provide up-to-date industry and career information to secondary school students, parents and teachers;
	<i>(c) <u>Promotion of VPET through Career and Life Planning Education</u></i>
11.	EDB to encourage secondary schools to adopt a whole school approach in career and life planning education and enhance individual guidance and support to students to facilitate self-understanding and exploration of multiple pathways including VPET;
12.	VPET providers and major chambers of commerce to arrange (more) training workshops cum visits for principals, teachers and career masters in secondary schools, with the facilitation of EDB through the Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP) so as to provide them with the latest developments of VPET in Hong Kong and the related careers. Such training workshops cum visits should also be extended to prospective secondary school teachers pursuing teaching programmes in tertiary institutions as well as non-Governmental organisations which play a role in offering articulation and career advice to students;
13.	VPET providers and major chambers of commerce to arrange (more) taster programmes for secondary school students with the facilitation of EDB through BSPP;
14.	VPET providers and major chambers of commerce to organise seminars and visits for parents of secondary school students for their better understanding of VPET and the related careers as well as the progression pathways, with the facilitation of EDB;
	<i>(d) <u>More Contribution from Industries</u></i>
	(i) Closer Collaboration with VPET Providers
15.	the major chambers of commerce and VPET providers to have closer collaboration on the design and development of VPET programmes (including the curriculum, industrial attachment, etc.) such that the learning outcome could fulfill employers' needs and expectation;

Recommendations	
16.	VTC to regularly review the list of Training Boards to cover emerging industries so that manpower surveys would be conducted to better inform VPET training providers and prospective students of the areas with growing manpower demand;
	(ii) Remuneration, Working Conditions and Progression Pathways
17.	the major chambers of commerce to encourage their members to devise comprehensive human resource strategy to attract and retain staff, covering the remuneration package, working conditions and progression pathways, etc.;
	(e) <u>Promotion of Applied Learning</u>
18.	EDB to encourage course providers to arrange accreditation of more Applied Learning (ApL) courses under the Qualifications Framework (QF) where appropriate so that apart from the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), students completing ApL courses may obtain a separate QF-recognised qualification for further studies in the relevant fields or entry into the industries concerned;
19.	post-secondary education institutions in Hong Kong to give due consideration of the results of ApL courses attained by students in the HKDSE Examination in student admission as an incentive for students to take ApL and benefit from the experiences and also an incentive for their parents to support them to do so;
20.	the Government to consider providing 100% grant subsidies to schools for the ApL course fees and encourage more schools to offer ApL courses based on their student profiles;
	(f) <u>Provision of Financial Support by the Government</u>
	(i) Pilot Training and Support Scheme (Pilot Scheme)
21.	the Government to consider extending the Pilot Scheme to benefit more students pending a review;
	(ii) Industrial Attachment (IA)
22.	the Government to extend the IA initiative to benefit students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree and undergraduate programmes where applicable;
	(iii) Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions / Sectors (SSSDP)
23.	the Government to consider extending the SSSDP if it is proven effective;
	<u>Strategy 3: Sustaining Efforts</u>
	(a) <u>Influence by the Government</u>
24.	the Government to encourage the senior Government officials to seize every opportunity to promote and support VPET on different occasions so as to demonstrate the Government's

Recommendations	
	support and recognition of VPET as an integral part of the community;
	<i>(b) <u>Promotion of Qualifications Framework</u></i>
25.	EDB to enhance the publicity efforts on QF targeting at employers and the general public. Articulation pathways for lifelong learning and progression pathways for different industries under QF should also be further promoted;
26.	the major chambers of commerce to encourage their members to make reference to QF in recruitment and promotion, so as to increase the relevance of QF to learners and practitioners which would in turn help promote VPET; and
	<i>(c) <u>Tracking Surveys on Attitude Change</u></i>
27.	the Government to conduct tracking surveys by involving relevant stakeholders to keep track of any changes in their attitude towards VPET.