

Subsidy for Persons Holding Non-local Qualifications to Conduct Qualifications Assessment (SNQQA)

Frequently Asked Questions

Objective and Implementation Period

Q1: What is the objective of implementing SNQQA?

A1: There are views that some grassroots hold higher non-local qualifications (including Hong Kong residents, arrivals from the Mainland and ethnic minorities migrated to Hong Kong who are holding non-local qualifications) but they do not know whether their overall qualifications meet the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong. To individuals or households with financial difficulties, the additional cost for qualifications assessment may add to their burden. The Education Bureau provides subsidy for needy persons to apply for qualifications assessment for general purpose conducted by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), probably offering them chances for achieving upward social mobility if their non-local qualifications have been confirmed to meet the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong.

Q2: Have there been changes to the mode of implementation after the regularisation of the subsidy programme with effect from 1 September 2020?

A2: For the period from September 2017 to August 2020, the Community Care Fund Assistance Programme – Subsidy for Persons Holding Non-local Qualifications to Conduct Qualifications Assessment (CCF QA) was implemented on a pilot basis to provide subsidy for needy persons to apply for qualifications assessment for general purpose. Starting from 1 September 2020, the programme has been incorporated into the Government’s regular assistance programme and the implementation details remain essentially the same as in the CCF QA.

Target Beneficiaries

Q3: What are the requirements for the target beneficiaries of SNQQA?

A3: Target beneficiaries of SNQQA must fulfil all the following three criteria:

- i. holding non-local qualifications which have not yet been assessed by HKCAAVQ.
- ii. being one of the following categories of Hong Kong resident¹:
 1. holders of Hong Kong permanent identity cards; or
 2. persons who have come from the Mainland to Hong Kong for settlement on “Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao” (commonly known as One-way Permit) but have not yet obtained Hong Kong permanent identity cards; or
 3. ethnic minorities who are holders of Hong Kong identity cards and (i) have the right to land; or (ii) on unconditional stay in Hong Kong; or (iii) permitted to stay in Hong Kong as dependants (and their sponsors are Hong Kong permanent residents, or non-permanent residents with the right to land or on unconditional stay in Hong Kong) but have not yet obtained Hong Kong permanent identity cards.
- iii. being the applicants and/or their spouses who have passed the means-test establishing eligibility for assistance under any of the following specified assistance schemes and receiving assistance (i.e. “Major Recipients” of the following specified assistance schemes (1) to (5) and /or their spouses of the following specified assistance schemes (1) to (4):
 1. Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme; or
 2. Working Family Allowance Scheme; or
 3. School Textbook Assistance Scheme (for full grant only); or
 4. Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (for full or 3/4 remission) ; or
 5. Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme.

¹ Persons from the following categories are excluded:

- i. persons and their dependants admitted into Hong Kong under the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme; or
- ii. persons and their dependants admitted into Hong Kong under the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme; or
- iii. persons admitted into Hong Kong for employment as imported workers under the Supplementary Labour Scheme; or
- iv. persons admitted into Hong Kong under the Working Holiday Scheme; or
- v. persons and their dependants admitted under the following immigration policies/arrangements: training, study, employment or investment under the General Employment Policy, employment under the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, employment under the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates, or employment under the Admission Scheme for the Second Generation of Chinese Hong Kong Permanent Residents; or
- vi. foreign domestic helpers; or
- vii. visitors; or
- viii. persons whose travel documents are endorsed with a condition of stay specifying “Employment is not permitted”.

Q4: Are Hong Kong permanent residents, who have completed non-local courses in Hong Kong, eligible for SNQQA?

A4: Hong Kong residents holding non-local qualifications, regardless of where they take the course, can apply for SNQQA as long as they fulfil all the eligibility criteria (please refer to Q3).

Q5: In respect of the requirement on Hong Kong resident status, are persons who have resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years eligible for SNQQA?

A5: Persons in the following categories, though having resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years, can apply for SNQQA:

- i. persons who have come from the Mainland to Hong Kong for settlement on “Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao” (commonly known as One-way Permit) but not yet obtained Hong Kong permanent identity cards; or
- ii. ethnic minorities who are holders of Hong Kong identity cards and (i) have the right to land; or (ii) on unconditional stay in Hong Kong; or (iii) permitted to stay in Hong Kong as dependants (and their sponsors are Hong Kong permanent residents, or non-permanent residents with the right to land or on unconditional stay in Hong Kong) but have not yet obtained Hong Kong permanent identity cards.

Application Procedures

Q6: How do interested persons apply for SNQQA?

A6: Interested persons can obtain the application forms at HKCAAVQ website (<https://iportal.hkcaavq.edu.hk/help>). Completed application forms, together with copies of all supporting documents, should be submitted to HKCAAVQ. SNQQA applicants are not required to pay any assessment fee when submitting their applications.

Q7: What are the normal assessment procedures of SNQQA?

A7: Applicants are required to submit documentary evidence of the non-local qualifications, personal identification documents and records of receipt of assistance under any of the specified assistance scheme (please refer to Q13 – Q17 for details). When all required documents are submitted, HKCAAVQ will verify the eligibility of SNQQA applicants and then issue them an acknowledgement. The assessment will normally take 15 working days starting from the next working day of the acknowledgement. Applicants may perhaps be informed and requested to provide further information to HKCAAVQ for the assessment and the assessment process may take longer. When the assessment is completed, HKCAAVQ offers a professional opinion on whether the totality of the educational qualifications (i.e. the integrated learning outcomes of the highest

qualification including those learning outcomes achieved through learning deemed to have a substantial bearing on the qualification under assessment) of an individual meets the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong.

Q8: Are applicants required to hand in the application forms in person?

A8: Completed application forms, together with required documents, can be submitted to HKCAAVQ by the following means:

- i. online by visiting HKCAAVQ website (<https://iportal.hkcaavq.edu.hk/>) with the following steps: (a) select the application method, (b) complete the online Qualifications Assessment (QA) application form; (c) upload the images of the signed SNQQA application form; and (d) upload the images of all supporting documents. To avoid delays, applicants are recommended to submit application via the online method. ; or
- ii. in person, or by authorised representatives of the applicants. For applications submitted in person or by authorised representatives, an appointment at specified date and time should be made in advance through HKCAAVQ website.

Q9: Are applicants required to pay the assessment fee when submitting the completed SNQQA application forms?

A9: Eligible applicants of SNQQA are not required to pay any assessment fee. They should submit relevant documents proving that they are eligible for SNQQA. After verifying their eligibility, EDB will settle the payment with HKCAAVQ direct. However, the subsidy only covers the entire amount of the assessment fee but not the postage or the costs for translation.

Q10: Will HKCAAVQ proceed with qualifications assessment process if applicants are not able to produce all necessary documents to prove their eligibility for SNQQA?

A10: HKCAAVQ will not accept SNQQA applications without sufficient information to support applicants' eligibility. It is the responsibility of the applicants to submit all required documents to HKCAAVQ to prove their eligibility for SNQQA.

Q11: How does HKCAAVQ notify applicants of the assessment results?

A11: A report for Qualifications Assessment (the Report) will normally be issued in English and be posted to applicants, or collected by applicants/their authorised representatives at HKCAAVQ's Office. The Report will state HKCAAVQ's professional opinion on whether the totality of the applicants' educational qualifications meets the standard of a particular level of qualification in Hong Kong. The full name and the identity card number of the applicant will be printed on the Report for identification purpose.

Q12: Can applicants apply for review if they do not agree with the assessment results made by HKCAAVQ? What are the procedures for review?

A12: Applicants who are aggrieved by HKCAAVQ’s assessment determination may apply for review within 30 days of the receipt of the Report. The Education Bureau will not cover the cost for review and applicants have to pay the review fee (the review fee is one-third of the original assessment fee). HKCAAVQ will notify applicants of its final decision on review in writing. The review fee is not refundable unless the review results vary from the original assessment determination of HKCAAVQ.

Preparing Supporting Documents

Q13: What types of documents do SNQQA applicants need to prepare?

A13: In general, SNQQA applicants need to prepare the following three types of documents:

- i. documentary evidence of non-local qualifications of the SNQQA applicants
 1. graduation diplomas/certificates; and
 2. full official transcripts.

For further details, please refer to “Qualifications Assessment — Guidance Notes for Application” available on HKCAAVQ website.

- ii. personal identification documents of the SNQQA applicants
 1. copy of Hong Kong permanent identity cards / Hong Kong identity cards, with the exact name shown in other documents submitted for SNQQA.
 2. persons holding Hong Kong identity cards are also required to provide valid travel documents (including travel document pages showing personal particulars and landing endorsements/landing slips with unexpired limit of stay issued by the Hong Kong Immigration Department) or “Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao” (commonly known as One-way Permit). Copy of “Certificate of Registered Particulars” issued by the Hong Kong Immigration Department should also be submitted if the English name appears on the “Permit for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao” is different from the English name appears on the Hong Kong identity card.
- iii. records of receipt of assistance under any of the specified assistance schemes
 1. ***for SNQQA applicants who are the Major Recipients of any of the specified assistance schemes:*** a copy of the notification letter of the specified assistance schemes, complying with both the assistance level and claim period requirements (please refer to Q14 and Q15).
 2. ***for SNQQA applicants who are the spouses of the Major Recipients of any of the specified assistance schemes:*** a copy of the notification letter of the specified assistance schemes, complying with both the assistance level and claim period

requirements (please refer to Q14 and Q15), a copy of the marriage certificate of SNQQA applicant with the Major Recipient, and a copy of the Major Recipient's Hong Kong identity card.

Example (a) When a Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme applicant applies for SNQQA, he/she should prepare:

- i. documents related to his/her non-local qualifications
- ii. his/her identification documents
- iii. CSSA Scheme notification letter

Example (b) When the spouse of a Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme Major Recipient applies for SNQQA, he/she should prepare:

- i. documents related to his/her non-local qualifications
- ii. his/her identification documents
- iii. WFA Scheme notification letter,
marriage certificate of the SNQQA applicant and the WFA Scheme Major Recipient, AND
identification documents of the WFA Scheme Major Recipient

Q14: What are the requirements regarding the assistance level provided in the notification letter of the specified assistance schemes?

A14: SNQQA applicants are required to submit notification letters of any of the specified assistance schemes fulfilling the assistance level requirement. The assistance level requirement is provided as follows:

- i. Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (any level of assistance)
- ii. Working Family Allowance Scheme (any level of assistance)
- iii. School Textbook Assistance Scheme (for full grant only)
- iv. Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (for full or 3/4 remission)
- v. Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme (any level of assistance)

Q15: What are the requirements regarding the claim period provided in the notification letters of the specified assistance schemes?

A15: SNQQA applicants are required to submit notification letters of any of the specified assistance schemes fulfilling the claim period requirement, i.e. the period for the receipt of assistance stated in the notification letter should be not more than 12 months from the date of application for SNQQA.

Examples:

For a SNQQA application made in September 2020, the applicant should submit a notification letter of any of the specified assistance schemes covering a claim period including September 2019 or any subsequent months.

Scenarios (a) – (d) **fulfil** the claim period requirement:

- (a) the claim period on the notification letter is from January to June 2020 (the last month of the claim period is June 2020, which is not more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)
- (b) the claim period on the notification letter is from July to December 2019 (the last month of the claim period is December 2019, which is not more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)
- (c) the claim period on the notification letter is from February to September 2019 (the last month of the claim period is September 2019, which is not more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)
- (d) the claim period on the notification letter is 2019/20 school year (the claim period is from September 2019 to August 2020, which is not more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)

Scenarios (e) – (g) **do not fulfil** the claim period requirement (applicants need to submit more recent notification letters to apply for SNQQA):

- (e) the claim period on the notification letter is from January to June 2019 (the last month of the claim period is June 2019, which is more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)
- (f) the claim period on the notification letter is from February to August 2019 (the last month of the claim period is August 2019, which is more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)
- (g) the claim period on the notification letter is 2018/19 school year (the claim period is from September 2018 to August 2019, which is more than 12 months from the application in September 2020)

Q16: How do applicants apply for SNQQA if they have misplaced the notification letters of the specified assistance schemes?

A16: The notification letters are important documents proving applicants' financial status. In case applicants have misplaced the notification letters, they may contact the offices/departments concerned and request them to consider re-issuing the relevant documents.

Q17: Is it necessary to translate documents that are not written in Chinese or English for SNQQA applications?

A17: Documents written in language other than Chinese or English must be accompanied by certified Chinese or English translations. Translation costs are to be borne by applicants and the translation must comply with the following requirements:

- i. the translation must be prepared by a notary office, a law firm, the relevant granting body/bodies, or consulate;
- ii. the translation must be on official letterhead and bear the stamp or signature of the translator or translation service;
- iii. the translator must certify that the translation is a correct translation; and
- iv. the translation must not be prepared by applicants or their family members, or any persons interested in the outcome of the qualifications assessment.

Subsidy Coverage

Q18: What fees does SNQQA cover?

A18: SNQQA covers the assessment fee for conducting qualifications assessment for general purpose. Please refer to the HKCAAVQ website (<https://iportal.hkcaavq.edu.hk/>) for details regarding the assessment fee.

Q19: Can applicants apply for SNQQA repeatedly?

A19: All eligible applicants are entitled SNQQA once. In addition, if the applicants have received subsidy from CCF QA for the period from September 2017 to August 2020, they will not be eligible for SNQQA.

Q20: Will eligible applicants still be considered having received the subsidy once even if they submit more than one non-local qualification for assessment in a single SNQQA application?

A20: The assessment is based on the totality of an applicant's educational qualifications obtained and is focused on the integrated learning outcomes of the highest qualifications, including those learning outcomes achieved through learning deemed to have a substantial bearing on the qualification under assessment. Regardless of how many non-local qualifications submitted in a single application, the applicant is still considered to have benefitted once.

Q21: If eligible SNQQA applicants failed to submit required documents when the assessment is already in progress, will they be regarded having received the subsidy?

A21: If eligible SNQQA applicants failed to submit documents requested by HKCAAVQ after receipt of acknowledge, their applications will be terminated. HKCAAVQ will not proceed with the assessment. At the same time, one-third of the original assessment fee will be deducted as administrative charge. The administrative charge will be settled by the Education Bureau but applicants will be considered having received the subsidy for SNQQA.

Q22: Does SNQQA cover the costs for translation?

A22: SNQQA does not cover the costs for translation.

Q23: Does SNQQA cover the review fee?

A23: SNQQA subsidy does not cover the review fee.

Others

Q24: Are interpretation services available at HKCAAVQ if applicants have queries but cannot communicate in Chinese or English?

A24: Applicants who are unable to communicate in Chinese or English can request for multilingual interpretation or translation services offered by the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER), funded by the Home Affairs Department of HKSAR Government. For details, please contact CHEER at 3106 3104 or email them at tis-cheer@hkcs.org.

**Education Bureau
September 2020**