For discussion
on 27 January 2014

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Policy Initiative on Qualifications Framework by
Education Bureau

Purpose

      The Chief Executive announced his 2014 Policy Address on 15 January 2014. This paper aims to brief Members on the major development of the Qualifications Framework (QF), and seek Members' views on the proposal to establish a QF Fund with a financial commitment of $1 billion to provide long-term support for the sustainable development of QF.

Background

2.   QF is a platform covering academic, vocational and continuing education sectors to promote lifelong learning with a view to continuously enhancing the quality, professionalism and competitiveness of our workforce in an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy. With the approval of the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) in 2007, a non-recurrent commitment of $208 million was created to implement a basket of financial assistance schemes, known as Qualifications Framework Support Schemes (QFSS) to provide time-limited financial assistance to encourage relevant stakeholders to participate in QF. Since the formal launch of QF in 2008, we have been making steady progress in developing the key components including –

    (a)   establishing Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs);

    (b)   drawing up Specification of Competency Standards for industries;

    (c)   implementing Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism in the relevant industries;

    (d)   promoting Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies;

(e)   maintaining a Qualifications Register;

(f)   introducing the Award Title Scheme and the use of QF credit;

(g)   publicising and promoting QF; and

(h)   building up network with QF authorities and quality assurance (QA) bodies of other places proactively to enhance understanding and mutual trust and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications.

3.   Apart from the above, the Financial Secretary announced in the 2013-14 Budget to allocate $10 million per year to support ITACs to launch new initiatives to further enhance the knowledge and skills of workers in the industries, and their competitiveness in the labour market. We have been supporting ITACs to launch the initiatives which will also be reported in paragraphs 11 to 14 below.

(a) Industry Training Advisory Committees

4.   At present, 19 industries[1] have set up ITACs, covering 46% of the workforce in Hong Kong. We shall continue to reach out to the stakeholders of other industries to explore the feasibility of setting up new ITACs.

(b) Specification of Competency Standards (SCSs)

5.   ITACs are tasked to draw up SCSs for the relevant sectors, which set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas of the respective sectors. Fourteen ITACs have drawn up their SCSs, and the other ITACs will complete drawing up their SCSs successively. As at 31 December 2013, more than 530 SCS-based courses have been developed by education and training providers. In addition, SCSs are gaining wider acceptance by employers as useful guides for the development of in-house training and human resources management, such as staff recruitment and performance assessment.

(c) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Mechanism

6.   QF not only covers qualifications obtained from academic

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[1]   Printing & Publishing, Watch & Clock, Chinese Catering, Hairdressing, Property Management, Electrical & Mechanical Services, Jewellery, Information & Communications Technology, Automotive, Beauty, Logistics, Banking, Import & Export, Testing, Inspection & Certification, Retail, Insurance, Manufacturing Technology (Tooling, Metals and Plastics), Elderly Care Service and Security Services.

education and training, but also enables formal recognition of the skills, knowledge and relevant experience acquired by practitioners in the workplace through the RPL mechanism which is based on the SCSs of various industries.   Practitioners may pursue further learning with their RPL qualifications as a starting point to acquire higher and broader qualifications.   At present, the RPL mechanism has been implemented in eight industries[2].   As at 30 November 2013, over 9 000 applications involving about 17 000 clusters of competencies were processed by the assessment agency.   Details are set out at **Annex A**.   We will continue to work closely with other industries with a view to extending the RPL mechanism to the sectors which have completed their respective SCSs. With the introduction of RPL mechanism to more industries as well as further enhancement to the support schemes being planned (see paragraph 20(b) below), we envisage that more practitioners will benefit from the mechanism.

(d)   Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGC)

7.   Generic (Foundation) Competencies are generic skills and knowledge that are shared across different industries and trades and are relevant to most people in the workplace.   SGC covers four strands of foundation skills, namely, English, Chinese, Numeracy and Information Technology.   In 2011 and 2012, we have invited the Vocational Training Council to launch a pilot project, the Vocational English Enhancement Programme (VEEP), on the development of vocational English courses based on the SGC of QF.   A total of 21 courses[3] were rolled out from April 2011 to August 2012.   In the light of the positive feedback from the industries, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) has approved the use of the Language Fund to continue providing VEEP to the industries for another three years starting from November 2012.

(e)   Qualifications Register (QR)

8.   QR, a web-based database containing information on qualifications and their respective learning programmes that have been quality assured and recognised under QF, is available to the public free of charge.   As at 31 December 2013, there were about 7 900 academic and vocational qualifications, involving about 200 education and training

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[2]   Printing & Publishing,   Watch & Clock,   Hairdressing,   Property Management,   Automotive, Jewellery, Logistics and Chinese Catering.

[3]   These are courses in Transport Logistics; Import/Export & Wholesale; Hotel, Catering & Tourism; Retail; Banking & Finance; and Generic Skills.

providers, registered in QR. As the statutory Accreditation Authority and QR Authority, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) conducted a review of the QR website with a view to improving the user-friendliness and effectiveness. The new QR interface was launched on 23 December 2013. HKCAAVQ will continue to ensure the quality and standards of QF-recognised programmes. Statistical information on the qualifications registered in QR is set out at **Annex B**.

(f)   Award Title Scheme (ATS) and the use of QF Credit

9.   The Education Bureau (EDB) announced the introduction of ATS and the use of QF credit in October 2012. ATS specifies the award titles that can be used for qualifications at various QF levels whereas QF credit is a measure of volume or size of learning programmes recognised under QF. To facilitate lifelong learning, practitioners need a flexible learning mode in order to cope with their work and families. Based on the QF credit, we are exploring the development of the credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system whereby practitioners can accumulate the credits of different programmes and training systematically and transfer the accumulated credits into recognised qualifications to minimise the possibility of repeated learning. QF provides a common platform and a standardised benchmark to facilitate the arrangement of credit accumulation and transfer among different sectors and training institutions.

(g)   Co-operation with Other Places on QF

10.   We have been actively establishing network with QF and QA authorities of other places to enhance understanding and mutual trust and promote co-operation. So far, EDB has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership. The QF Secretariat and the Guangdong Occupational Skill Testing Authority have also signed the "Letter of Intent on Enhancing the Exchange on and Transferability of Vocational Standards and Qualifications Recognition between Hong Kong and Guangdong", witnessed by representatives from EDB of Hong Kong and the Department of Human Resources and Social Security of Guangdong. We are also exploring opportunities to further enhance collaboration between the European QF and the Hong Kong QF.

(h) 2013-14 Budget initiatives

11.   The Financial Secretary announced in the 2013-14 Budget to allocate $10 million per year to support ITACs to launch new initiatives to further enhance the knowledge and skills of workers in the industries, and their competitiveness in the labour market.   These initiatives include –

(a) introducing the QF Award Scheme for Learning Experiences for outstanding practitioners to engage in learning activities in different places around the world;

(b) designing SCS-based training packages that meet the needs of the industries; and

(c) stepping up promotion and publicity of QF for its wider acceptance among all sectors.

(i)   QF Award Scheme for Learning Experiences

12.   The Award Scheme aims to recognize outstanding or emerging practitioners who can serve as exemplars and role models for their respective industries and help attract the younger generation to pursue career in these fields.   The Award also encourages them to engage in learning activities in different places around the world with a view to broadening their horizons and developing network with industry partners in and outside Hong Kong.   For the 2013-14 Award Scheme, a total of 49 practitioners have been selected by the respective ITACs for the award. Awardees engaging in learning activities in Hong Kong receive an award of $10,000 while those engaging in learning activities outside Hong Kong receive an award of $30,000.   We shall invite applications for the 2014-15 Award Scheme starting from February 2014.

(ii)   Development of SCS-based Training Packages

13.   The SCS-based training packages, developed with reference to SCSs of respective industries, aim to serve as a catalyst for the development of SCS-based materials for wider adoption by enterprises and course providers to meet the needs of the industries.   It is expected that the first batch of training packages for four ITACs will be ready for publishing in the third quarter of 2014.

(iii) Promotion and publicity of QF

14. We have stepped up our promotion and publicity targeting three groups :

(a) ***School sector:*** Riding on the ITAC networks and the competency standards and progression pathways developed for the respective industries, we have organised six career information seminars from October to December 2013, covering career information on 19 industries with ITACs. Over 1 000 students, teachers and parents from more than 150 schools attended the seminars. We continue to participate in many talks organised by school sponsoring bodies, youth groups and trade unions to further the promotion of QF. We also set up a booth in the "Information Expo on Multiple Pathways 2013". All these efforts aimed at enabling teachers, students, parents and the community at large to understand how QF can facilitate students' planning of further study and careers.

(b) ***Industry sector:*** We organised a QF Stakeholders Forum in May 2013 to solicit views of over 100 stakeholders from industries and training providers on the implementation and development of QF. Moreover, a RPL Sharing Session was conducted in November 2013 to consolidate the experiences of the eight industries that have implemented the RPL mechanism. Over 300 representatives from ITACs, employers, personnel responsible for human resource management, practitioners and training providers attended the RPL Sharing Session.

(c) ***Community at large:*** In 2013, we published more than 50 QF related articles in newspapers as well as publications of professional bodies, trade unions and trade associations to increase stakeholders' understanding and awareness on QF. The announcement of public interest (API) on QF and QR continue to be broadcast on the QF website (*www.hkqf.gov.hk*) and EDB YouTube Channel (*www.youtube.com/user/edbgovhk*). The revamped QR website was launched on 23 December 2013. We are considering to carry out a revamp of the QF website in the coming year.

Qualifications Framework Support Schemes (QFSS)

15.　　　QFSS plays an important role in supporting the development of QF for the benefit of many stakeholders such as students, practitioners, employers, industries, course providers and quality assurance agencies. We have hence kept it under review.　With the approval of FC in 2011, we have improved the operating parameters of QFSS, including the scope, eligibility criteria and level of assistance to boost the development of QF. Some key features of the QFSS is summarized below –

Qualifications Framework Support Schemes	Major benefits and beneficiaries (as at 31 December 2013)
Support for Accreditation	
(a) Accreditation Grant for Self-financing Programmes	82 education and training providers have received a total grant of $32.4 million for seeking accreditation of about 350 programmes by HKCAAVQ
(b) Accreditation grant for courses under EDB (then EMB)-subsidised schemes	About 3 700 programmes involving 176 training bodies under the Employees Retraining Board have benefited from the grant of $18.3 million for seeking accreditation by HKCAAVQ
(c) Grant for Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)	3 education and training providers have received a total grant of $3.2 million for the accreditation of 22 programme areas by HKCAAVQ
Support for RPL mechanism	
(d) Accreditation Grant to RPL Assessment Agencies	Assessment Agency for 7 industries which have implemented the RPL mechanism for seeking first time or subsequent accreditation from HKCAAVQ, involving a total grant of $0.9 million.
(e) Start-up grant to RPL Assessment Agencies	Assessment Agency for 1 industry which has implemented the RPL mechanism, involving a start-up grant of $0.3 million.
(f) Reimbursement of RPL Assessment Fees	About 5 300 practitioners for 8 industries have received reimbursement for the RPL Assessment Fees of about $2.2 million in total.
Development	
(g) Development Grant for SCS-based Courses	7 education and training providers have received development grant of $0.4 million for 13 SCS-based courses.

Qualifications Framework Support Schemes	Major benefits and beneficiaries (as at 31 December 2013)
Qualifications Register (QR)	
(h) Subsidy for Qualifications Register Registration Fees	Qualifications registered in the QR[4], involving a total subsidy of $9.3 million to cover the registration fees and hosting fees charged by the QR Authority.

Details of the schemes under QFSS and the actual expenditure of the schemes are at **Annex C** and **Annex D** respectively.

Qualifications Framework Fund

Review of QFSS

16. As foreshadowed in FC Information Note FCRI(2013-14)4 on the extension of QFSS until around 31 March 2014, we have reviewed the effectiveness of QFSS, taking into account the feedback from stakeholders received by us from time to time. It is noted that –

(a) a significant increase in the number of applications for accreditation grants and other subsidies under QFSS is observed after the enhancement made in July 2011. There was a three-fold increase from around $18 million in end July 2011 to $67 million as at 31 December 2013, including a total of 258 education and training providers applying for accreditation grant to cover the accreditation fees for around 4 100 qualifications. In particular, more and more companies are seeking accreditation of their in-house training courses for recognition under QF;

(b) stakeholders generally recognise the value of QF and agree that QF should be underpinned by a robust QA mechanism to ensure credibility of the framework. On this, they have been relying on the support provided by QFSS to alleviate the financial burden in participating in QF. While QF is gaining more recognition in the community and the time-limited

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[4] Before the enhancement of the QFSS in July 2011, only self-financing qualifications/programmes registered by non-profit-making providers in the QR for the first time were eligible for the subsidy. The subsidy then covered 50% of the registration and hosting fees of the qualifications/programmes. After the enhancement, the Government decided to bear the full registration and hosting fees of all qualifications and programmes in QR, irrespective of the status of the providers and source of funding of the qualifications and programmes, and whether they are registered in QR for the first time.

financial assistance under the QFSS has given impetus for the development of QF, continuous financial support for stakeholders is necessary and appropriate to maintain the momentum and cultivate a culture of sustainable QA, which will translate into long-term benefits for the community. Absence of ongoing financial support will not only hinder their participation in QF, but also the financial burden may be transferred to the learners;

(c) the number of SCS-based courses developed remains low as education and training providers have to incur extra manpower and resources to study the SCSs and adopt them in curriculum design. Moreover, it is too restrictive to confine the development grant for SCS-based courses to only those with 36 QF credits[5] or more, as some learners may prefer to enroll in bite-size SCS-based training modules for more flexibility in learning;

(d) consideration may be given to providing incentives to encourage the provision of more SGC-based programmes such as vocational Chinese or English courses;

(e) some ongoing financial support should be provided to RPL assessment agencies to sustain operation under a self-financing model. Separately, recurrent subsidy should be provided to the QR Authority for daily maintenance and regular upgrading of QR; and

(f) there has been a consistent feedback from stakeholders that our efforts to promote QF should be further enhanced by reaching out to all members of the community, thereby soliciting their support for the implementation of QF.

Proposed introduction of QF Fund

17.   Taking into account the feedbacks in paragraph 16, we see the need for providing recurrent funding to support the sustainable development of QF. Recurrent government funding support for stakeholders is considered necessary for continuously incentivizing

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[5]   One QF credit consists of 10 notional working hours, which takes into account the total learning time required through different modes of learning, including class attendance, on-line learning, practical learning, self-study, examinations and other assessment activities.

stakeholders to participate in QF to promote the development of quality-assured qualifications and enhance the competitiveness of our human capital on a regular basis.   We have considered the option of further extending QFSS for a few more years and using up the balance of the earlier approved commitment (about $141 million as at 31 December 2013).   However, we consider that stable source of funding is necessary to support the implementation of QF in the long run.   Recognising the importance of QF in maintaining a quality workforce, the Chief Executive announced in the 2014 Policy Address to establish a fund of $1 billion, namely the QF Fund, to provide a steady source of income to support the sustainable development and implementation of QF.   The target beneficiaries of the QF Fund are practitioners, employers, education and training providers, assessment agencies as well as QA bodies.   Subject to the approval of the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council, we plan to establish the QF Fund in 2014-15.

Management of the QF Fund

18.   The QF Fund will be established as a trust fund under the Permanent Secretary for Education Incorporated as its trustee.   The QF Fund will be managed in accordance with a trust deed which will stipulate the framework and the salient features necessary for its proper management and administration.   The annual audited accounts will be tabled in the Legislative Council.   We shall set up a Steering Committee on the QF Fund (the Steering Committee) to advise the Secretary for Education on the policy, strategy and administration of the QF Fund. The Steering Committee will be composed of official members as well as non-official members drawn from different stakeholders of QF including practitioners, employers, education and training providers and QA bodies, etc.   EDB will provide secretariat support for the Steering Committee. The proposed membership and terms of reference of the Steering Committee are set out at **Annex E**.

Proposed Uses of the QF Fund

19.   The QF Fund will support schemes/initiatives for the sustainable development and implementation of QF, including but not limited to the following two areas –

(a)   Support schemes for QF development; and

(b)   Funding for ITACs, QF-related studies/projects and public education.

Details will be explained in the ensuing paragraphs.

Support schemes for QF development

20.   The proposed QF Fund will incorporate the existing schemes under QFSS and regroup them under four categories –

(a) **Accreditation Grant Scheme** – The three existing accreditation grant schemes under QFSS (i.e. items (a) to (c) in paragraph 15) will be subsumed under the Accreditation Grant Scheme.   We also propose three enhancement measures namely, increasing the accreditation grant for SCS-based programmes from 90% to 100% for non-profit-making providers and from 45% to 50% for other providers; extending the accreditation grant to cover SGC-based programmes (to be further explained under paragraph 20(c) below); and lifting the existing ceiling per provider for accreditation grant for learning programmes ($3 million) and grant for PAA ($3 million) to encourage and support their quality assurance activities on an on-going basis.

(b) **RPL Support Scheme** – The three existing RPL-related schemes under QFSS (i.e. items (d) to (f) in paragraph 15) will be subsumed under the RPL Support Scheme.   We also propose two enhancement measures.   First, we propose to remove the ceiling for reimbursement of RPL assessment fees ($3,500) per practitioner so that practitioners aspiring to undertake more RPL assessments may apply for reimbursement. Moreover, we plan to provide RPL assessment agencies with a subsidy of $500 for each new application of RPL cluster processed.   This will maintain the assessment fees at a reasonable level and alleviate the pressure for raising the fee to a cost-recovery level, which may in turn deter practitioners from seeking RPL assessment for fear of not being able to obtain reimbursement.   The subsidy will also provide ongoing financial support for the healthy and sustainable operation of RPL assessment agencies, and enable them to step up promotion for the RPL with a view to enhancing the employability and competitiveness of the practitioners.

(c) **Programme Development Grant Scheme** – The Development Grant for SCS-based Course under the QFSS (i.e. item (g) in paragraph 15) will continue with an expanded scope.   First,

we propose to increase the development grant for SCS-based courses from $30,000 to $50,000 for each newly developed and operating SCS-based course successfully accredited and registered in QR with 36 QF credits or more. Secondly, we propose a development grant of $30,000 for each SCS-based course with 12 to 35 QF credits so as to encourage the provision of bite-size training modules where appropriate. Thirdly, we propose removing the ceiling per provider for development grant for SCS-based courses ($1 million). Fourthly, we plan to introduce a new one-off development grant for SGC-based programmes under a two tier structure: $20,000 for newly developed and operating SGC-based programmes successfully accredited and registered in QR with 6 to 17 QF credit and $40,000 for those with 18 QF credit or above.

(d) **QR Subsidy Scheme** – This Scheme will cover the existing Subsidy for QR Registration Fees under QFSS (i.e. item (h) in paragraph 15). Acknowledging that QR is owned by the Government, we plan to provide $3 million per year to the QR Authority (i.e. HKCAAVQ under Cap. 592) for the daily maintenance and regular upgrading of QR under this Scheme. The annual subsidy will maintain the QR registration fee at a reasonable level and take into account the fixed cost of maintaining QR and the need to upgrade the computer system from time to time.

Details of the support schemes for QF development under the proposed QF Fund are set out at **Annex F**.

21.   In future, the Secretary for Education will consider the need for any further revisions to the operational details of the above support schemes on the advice of the Steering Committee, having regard to the prevailing policy, operational experience, changes in costs of related QF activities, views of the stakeholders, etc.

22.   Members may wish to note that in FCR(2011-12)11, EDB proposed to set up a Quality Assurance Support Scheme (QASS) under the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund (SPEF) to provide financial support to self-financing post-secondary institutions, covering, among other things, fees for conducting first time or subsequent accreditation and/or fees for other related reviews or assessments for the purpose of QA of the institutions and their learning programmes. It was originally planned that QASS would commence operation after the

completion of QFSS in the 2014/15 academic year. Given the proposed establishment of the QF Fund to support the continued operation of support schemes for QF development, only those QA activities of the post-secondary sector which do not receive support under the QF Fund (e.g. QA enhancement projects conducted by self-financing post-secondary institutions for internal enhancement) will be covered under QASS to be launched in due course. This will avoid overlapping between QASS and the QF Fund. Hence, it is expected that the funding required for QASS will be less than the original estimated expenditure of around $25 million each year. The unused amount for QASS will be gainfully re-deployed for use by the other schemes of SPEF, i.e. Self-financing Post-secondary Scholarship Scheme and Quality Enhancement Support Scheme.

Funding for ITACs, QF-related studies/projects and public education

23.   ITACs established under QF provide a platform for stakeholders of various industries such as employers, employees, professional bodies and other related persons to exchange views on the development and enhancement of manpower. Overseas experience indicates that bodies similar to ITACs play an important role in developing vocational qualifications for different job roles at various QF levels for the respective industries so as to further link up QF to the workplace. Individual ITACs may engage experts and/or education and training providers in designing the vocational qualifications, which will help attract new blood and encourage practitioners to pursue learning and upgrading. Other new initiatives for ITACs in future may also be supported under this area of funding for ITACs, in consultation with the Steering Committee.

24.   Apart from the above, studies or projects may be conducted from time to time for the further development of QF. For example, we are currently planning or conducting various projects such as the development of Credit Accumulation and Transfer policy and principles, recognition of informal and non-formal learning under QF, recognition of professional qualifications, etc. Separately, we have been actively establishing network with QF and QA authorities of other jurisdictions, and some benchmarking or referencing studies might be necessary.

25.   Furthermore, there have been on-going calls from stakeholders for stepping up our efforts to promote QF to the community at large through a host of publicity channels and engagement of more

stakeholders. The QF Fund will provide the funding support for these efforts. These public education and publicity activities that target the wider community will complement the industry-led promotion activities being funded out of the $10 million per year as announced by the Financial Secretary in the 2013-14 Budget.

Financial Implications

26. The Government will earmark sufficient funds in the 2014-15 draft Estimates for the establishment of the QF Fund. If the proposed establishment of the QF Fund is approved, we will make appropriate investment arrangements. On assumption that the rate of return is 5% per annum, the funding available may be around $50 million per year on average. For illustration purpose, we intend to allocate the investment income to the two areas on a 60% (support schemes for QF development) to 40% (funding for ITACs, QF-related studies and public education) ratio. The ratio to be allocated to each of the two areas may vary each year, depending on the income of the QF Fund and actual needs in each area. Other new areas may also be covered in future in consultation with the Steering Committee.

27. Generally, expenditure from the Fund ought to be met by the investment returns of the QF Fund. However, there may be times of market volatility where we may have to adjust our expenditure in the light of the reduced investment income or use a small part of the principal to finance the schemes under very exceptional circumstances.

28. The existing QFSS schemes will be implemented until the establishment of the proposed new QF Fund to ensure continuity. As it takes time for the QF Fund to generate and accumulate sufficient investment income to meet the funding requirements of the proposed initiatives, the balance of the existing approved commitment for QFSS (about $141 million as at 31 December 2013 out of the total commitment of $208 million) will continue to be used for meeting the cash flow requirements of the proposed new initiatives together with the investment income generated by the principal of the proposed QF Fund subject to FC's approval.

Advice Sought

29. Members are invited to note the implementation of ongoing

measures under QF as set out under paragraphs 2 to 15, and offer views on the proposed QF Fund as set out under paragraphs 16 to 28.

Education Bureau
January 2014

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism
(as at 30 November 2013)

Industry	Launch Date	No. of applications	No. of clusters of competencies	Success rate
Hairdressing	2008	763	4 357	99.98%*
Printing & Publishing	2008	792	1 410	97.9%*
Watch & Clock	2008	286	356	100%
Property Management	2011	5 774	8 463	99.3%*
Automotive	2011	304	587	98.5%*
Jewellery	2011	290	497	98.9%*
Logistics	2012	461	652	100%
Chinese Catering	2013	352	712	100%
	Total	**9 022**	**17 034**	**99.4%**

*Automotive	:	With 2 applications failed to provide documentary proof and 6 applications failed in the assessment
Hairdressing	:	With 1 application failed in the assessment
Jewellery	:	With 5 applications failed in the assessment
Printing & Publishing	:	With 30 applications failed in the assessment
Property Management	:	With 58 applications failed in the assessment

**Qualifications registered in the Qualifications Register
(as at 31 December 2013)**

Category	No. of qualifications
(1) Qualifications offered by universities and other self-accrediting institutions	3 299
(2) Qualifications offered by non-self-accrediting institutions	4 241
(3) Qualifications offered under the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism	353
Total:	**7 893**

**Existing Grants and Subsidies provided under
Qualifications Framework Support Schemes**

1. Accreditation Grant for Self-financing Programmes

Scope	The accreditation grant aims to encourage education and training providers to seek accreditation of their learning programmes under the Qualifications Framework (QF). Accreditation grant will be provided for the following activities – • Initial Evaluation[6] • Institutional Review[7] • Programme Validation • Programme Re-validation		
Eligibility	• Providers and qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) • Programmes/qualifications concerned must be registered in the Qualifications Register (QR) • Applicable to self-financing programmes[8]		
Level of Subsidy		Non-profit-making providers	Other providers
	Initial Evaluation / Institutional Review fees	100%	50%
	Programme Validation / Programme Re-validation fees		
	• Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)-based programmes	90%	45%
	• Other programmes	70%	35%
Ceiling	$3 million per provider		

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[6] "Initial Evaluation" is an accreditation process by HKCAAVQ to examine the suitability of the providers to provide education and training.

[7] "Institutional Review" is an accreditation exercise for establishing evidence of an institution's competence to operate programmes at Bachelor degree level while meeting the standards at QF level 5 and for the purpose of seeking registration under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320).

[8] Self-financing programmes refer to programmes other than publicly-funded programmes offered by the eight institutions funded by the University Grants Committee, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Vocational Training Council and Prince Philip Dental Hospital.

2. *Accreditation grant for courses under the EDB (then Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB)) - subsidised schemes*

Scope	The grant covers the accreditation fee for courses subsidised by EDB (then EMB), including "Skills Upgrading Scheme" (which is now renamed "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus") and the "Employees Retraining Scheme" (which is now renamed "Manpower Development Scheme"). The grant also covers re-validation fees of these courses and, where appropriate, the fees for accreditation for Institutional Review or Initial Evaluation.
Eligibility	The courses of both schemes have to be accredited by HKCAAVQ.
Level of Subsidy	100%
Ceiling	No ceiling

3. *Grant for Programme Area Accreditation (PAA)*

Scope	The grant aims to assist established education and training providers in seeking self-accrediting status in specified programme areas. The scope of the grant covers both first-time and subsequent PAA exercises (currently takes the form of Periodic Review).		
Eligibility	Programmes and qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited by HKCAAVQ		
Level of Subsidy		Non-profit-making providers	Other providers
	PAA/ Periodic Review fees	70%	35%
Ceiling	$3 million per provider		

4. *Accreditation grant to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment agencies*

Scope	The grant covers the fees for accreditation of RPL assessment agencies.
Eligibility	• First time and subsequent accreditations • Successful accreditation by HKCAAVQ • Appointed by the Secretary for Education
Level of Subsidy	50% of accreditation fee
Ceiling	No ceiling

5. *Start-up grant to RPL assessment agencies*

Scope	The scheme provides a one-off start-up grant capped at $300,000 per agency for the actual expenditure incurred by the agency in setting up the assessment mechanism
Eligibility	• Successful accreditation by HKCAAVQ (first-time accreditation) • Appointed by the Secretary for Education
Level of Subsidy	• $300,000 per agency for the actual expenditure incurred in setting up the assessment mechanism
Ceiling	

6. *Reimbursement of RPL assessment fees*

Scope	The scheme provides reimbursement to practitioners who have successfully applied for RPL assessment.
Eligibility	Practitioners successfully completed the RPL assessments
Level of Subsidy	100% of RPL assessment fees.　To be reimbursed in two stages: • Successfully completed RPL assessments 　– 75% of RPL assessment fees • Completed a QF-recognised training course 　– the remaining 25% of RPL assessment fees
Ceiling	$3,500 per practitioner

7. *Development grant for SCS-based courses*

Scope	The scheme provides a one-off grant for education and training providers to develop SCS-based courses.
Eligibility	• Newly developed and operating SCS-based courses • 36 QF credits or above • Courses/qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited • Must be registered in QR
Level of Subsidy	$30,000 for each course
Ceiling	$1 million per provider

8. *Subsidy for QR registration fees*

Scope	The subsidy covers the registration and hosting fees of the qualifications/programmes onto QR.
Eligibility	All qualifications and their associated programmes registered in QR
Level of Subsidy	100% for both registration fees and hosting fees
Ceiling	No ceiling

Actual Expenditure as at 31 December 2013 of
the Qualifications Framework Support Schemes (QFSS)

Schemes under QFSS	Actual Expenditure ($ million)						Total ($ million)
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	
(a) Accreditation Grant for Self-financing Programmes	0.3	2.0	3.0	5.5	12.6	9.0	32.4
(b) Accreditation grant for courses under the EDB (then EMB) - subsidised schemes	4.5	1.6	0.8	0	11.5	0 [Note 1]	18.3
(c) Grant for PAA	0.7	0.2	0.1	1.2	1.0	0 [Note 1]	3.2
(d) Accreditation grant to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment agencies	0	0	0	0.5	0.4	0 [Note 1]	0.9
(e) Start-up grant to RPL assessment agencies	0	0	0	0	0.3	0 [Note 1]	0.3
(f) Reimbursement of RPL assessment fees	0 [Note 2]	0 [Note 2]	0 [Note 2]	0.4	0.9	0.9	2.2
(g) Development grant for SCS-based courses	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.4
(h) Subsidy for QR registration fees	1.8	2.0	1.1	1.8	2.5	0 [Note 1]	9.3
Total	**7.3**	**5.8**	**5.0**	**9.5**	**29.4**	**10.0**	**67.0**

Note 1: Relevant expenditures will be paid in the first quarter of 2014

Note 2: The total actual amount of reimbursement of RPL assessment fees already made to employees is $85,360. It is not shown here due to rounding.

Remarks: Summation of items may not reflect the exact total amount due to rounding-up of figures.

Steering Committee on Qualifications Framework Fund

Proposed Membership

Chairman: Non-official

Members: Representatives from practitioners, employers, education and training providers and quality assurance bodies, etc. as well as official member(s). The Steering Committee may also invite co-opted members as and when necessary.

Proposed Terms of Reference

The Steering Committee advises Secretary for Education on –

(a) the overall strategy for making use of the Qualifications Framework Fund (the Fund) as a vehicle to support the sustainable development and implementation of the Qualifications Framework;

(b) the scope and parameters of schemes, initiatives and activities to be covered by the Fund; and

(c) any other matters that may be referred to the Steering Committee by the Education Bureau concerning the policy and administration of the Fund.

In discharging its functions, the Steering Committee may set up sub-committees, conduct studies, engage professional services and co-opt members as and when necessary.

**Proposed Support Schemes for
Qualifications Framework Development**

1. *Accreditation Grant Scheme*

Scope	The scheme aims to encourage education and training providers to seek accreditation at the institutional and programme levels under the Qualifications Framework (QF), and assist mature providers in seeking self-accrediting status in specified programme areas. Accreditation grant will be provided for the following activities – • Initial Evaluation • Institutional Review and Periodic Review • Programme Validation and Re-validation • Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) (covering both first-time and subsequent exercises; the latter takes the form of Periodic Review)
Eligibility	• Providers and qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) • Programmes/qualifications concerned must be registered in the Qualifications Register (QR)

Level of Subsidy		Courses subsidised by EDB (then EMB)[9]	Non-profit-making providers	Other providers
	Initial Evaluation / Institutional Review fees	100%	100%	50%
	Programme Validation / Programme Re-validation fees			
	• Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)-based or Specification of Generic (Foundation) Competencies (SGC)-based programmes	100%	100%	50%
	• Other programmes	100%	70%	35%
	PAA/Periodic Review fees	N/A	70%	35%

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[9]   These courses including "Skills Upgrading Scheme" (which is now renamed "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus") and the "Employees Retraining Scheme" (which is now renamed "Manpower Development Scheme").

2. *RPL Support Scheme*

Scope	The scheme covers the fees for accreditation of RPL assessment agencies, one-off start-up grant for the actual expenditure incurred by the agencies in setting up the assessment mechanism, subsidy for each new application of RPL cluster processed by the agencies and reimbursement to practitioners who have successfully applied for RPL assessment.			
	Accreditation grant to RPL assessment agencies	*Start-up grant to RPL assessment agencies*	*Subsidy to RPL assessment agencies*	*Reimbursement of RPL assessment fees*
Eligibility	• First time and subsequent accreditations • Successful accreditation by HKCAAVQ • Appointed by the Secretary for Education (SED)	• Successful accreditation by HKCAAVQ (first-time accreditation) • Appointed by SED	Appointed by SED	Practitioners successfully completed the RPL assessments
Level of Subsidy	50% of accreditation fee	Up to $300,000 per agency for the actual expenditure incurred in setting up the assessment mechanism	$500 for each new application of RPL cluster processed	100% of RPL assessment fees. To be reimbursed in two stages: • Successfully completed RPL assessments - 75% of RPL assessment fees • Completed a QF-recognised training course afterwards - remaining 25% of RPL assessment fees

3. *Programme Development Grant Scheme*

Scope	The scheme provides a one-off grant for education and training providers to develop SCS-based or SGC-based courses.	
	SCS-based	*SGC-based*
Eligibility	• Newly developed and operating SCS-based courses • 12 QF credits or above • Qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited • Must be registered in QR	• Newly developed and operating SGC-based courses • 6 QF credits or above • Qualifications concerned must be successfully accredited • Must be registered in QR
Level of Subsidy	• For courses with 12-35 QF credits - $30,000 each • For courses with 36 QF credits or above - $50,000 each	• For courses with 6-17 QF credits - $20,000 each • For courses with 18 QF credits or above - $40,000 each

4. *QR Subsidy Scheme*

Scope	The scheme covers the registration and hosting fees of the qualifications/programmes onto QR, and provides an annual maintenance fee of QR to the QR Authority.	
	Subsidy of the registration and hosting fees	*Maintenance fee of QR*
Eligibility	All qualifications and their associated programmes registered in QR	QR Authority
Level of Subsidy	100% for both registration fees and hosting fees	$3 million per year