

Assigning Level to Qualifications under the Qualifications Framework

Policy and Principles

1. Hong Kong Qualifications Framework

- 1.1 The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) is set up by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to promote and facilitate lifelong learning.
- 1.2 The QF is a qualification architecture which orders and supports qualifications from different sectors. It consists of seven levels from the lowest Level 1 to the highest Level 7.

2. Generic Level Descriptors

- 2.1 Each level of the QF is characterized by Generic Level Descriptors (GLDs), which set out the **generic learning outcomes** of the qualifications located at that level. A copy of the GLDs is at Annex.
- 2.2 The generic learning outcomes are set out in four domains :
 - a. knowledge and intellectual abilities;
 - b. practices and processes (applied knowledge and understanding);
 - c. autonomy, accountability and working with others; and
 - d. applied skills of communication, IT and numeracy.
- 2.3 The generic learning outcomes reflect the relative depth and complexity of learning attained from a qualification, and cover the academic, vocational and professional aspects of the learning.
- 2.4 The GLDs are designed as a developmental continuum. A qualification at a higher level of the QF places a higher demand on the learners in respect of cognitive abilities and applied skills.

2.5 The GLDs are used to comparatively locate a qualification in the QF. The generic learning outcomes in the GLDs provide benchmarks for the design of learning programmes at a given level.

3. Principles for assigning QF level to a qualification

Process

3.1 Level assignment is not an exact science. It is essentially a professional judgment and should be an essential part of the quality assurance process.

3.2 Drawing from overseas QF experiences, a level assignment exercise is normally conducted as an interactive process involving staff with different expertise. Awarding bodies learn by doing and do by learning. Level assignment will become easier when evidences supporting the decision are building up gradually with the launch of the programmes.

3.3 One important source of information to be taken into account by the provider is the programme specifications which normally set out the learning objectives, the learning outcomes, and the exit requirements. These may provide useful indicators to the level of learning outcomes, and are used to measure against the generic learning outcomes as expressed in the GLDs.

Content

3.4 Providers should note that while the generic learning outcomes are expressed in four domains of the GLDs (see 2.2 above), the content of a qualification at any specific level does not necessarily have to encompass learning outcomes in all four domains of the GLDs.

3.5 Qualifications with the same QF level indicate that the qualifications are comparable in terms of their generic learning

outcomes. It does not imply that the qualifications have the same purposes or content or specific learning outcomes.

- 3.6 A level is assigned on the basis of the learning outcomes to be attained by the learners upon their completion of the programmes. The assigned level is independent of the performance of the individual learners of the programmes.
- 3.7 The level of a programme has no correlation with the length of study or the size of learning. A longer or larger programme does not necessarily imply an award at a higher level.
- 3.8 Only one level can be assigned to a qualification. A qualification with learning outcomes falling short of the requirements expressed in the GLDs for a level should be assigned one level below.

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