

Project Overview

Project Title (in English):

The Creation of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) Centralised Database of CAT Information and Articulation Arrangements with a Dedicated Search Function on the Qualifications Register

Project Title (in Chinese):

於資歷名冊上設立全新學分累積及轉移制度的中央資料庫與資歷銜接安排的專用搜尋界面

Executive Summary

In support of the implementation of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) initiative by the Education Bureau, HKCAAVQ proposes to create a CAT centralised database (CAT database) of CAT information and articulation arrangements with a dedicated search function, as an integral part of the publicly searchable Qualifications Register (QR). This CAT database will enhance not only the transparency and dissemination of credit transfer information and articulation arrangements between institutions and programmes but also the availability of CAT arrangements on the quality assured qualifications contained in the QR. This CAT database will build on the progressively developed CAT features recently incorporated on the QR and the increasing number of CAT programmes listed on the QR. HKCAAVQ will formulate and implement a realistic and practicable strategy for the collection and the assessment of CAT data and information in regular accreditation tests and through the use of standardised tools, e.g. templates and proformas.

Background

In support of the CAT initiative, HKCAAVQ as the QR Authority modified the QR database and the search functions of the QR in 2014 and again in 2015. In 2014 the QR allowed for the identification and provision of CAT information on qualifications by the providers on a voluntary basis with the addition of a specific web-link that enabled learners to retrieve additional information on CAT directly at the institution's website. Starting from 2015 the search function for CAT on the QR allowed for the indication of specific programmes with CAT arrangements. As of February 2016, a total of 986 programmes from 21 providers have indicated on the QR their CAT arrangements, (i.e. 13.0 % of total entries on the QR). This is a good indicator of the willingness of operators to provide information about their CAT arrangements for public access on the QR.

The Project

HKCAAVQ proposes to build a CAT centralised database on the QR in order to achieve synergy and economy of scale; to leverage on the "Quality" brand of the QR over time; and to maximise existing resources to avoid duplication and waste. The project aims:

- (1) To build a CAT centralised database of CAT information and articulation arrangements with a new dedicated search function.
- (2) To collect the requisite CAT information (e.g. restriction and limits on transfer of credit, information on formal articulation and credit transfer agreements between institutions) from both the self-accrediting and the HKCAAVQ-accredited operators in an effective and efficient manner via

- customised proforma and standardised templates for formulating and compiling the CAT database.
- (3) To display essential components of CAT for public retrieval, including percentages of credit transfer, qualitative and / or simple comparative quantitative data of CAT programmes / operators that can be captured and maintained in the QR. The related information and data will be collected from the operators through the use of standardised proformas with updates to be made on a regular basis.
 - (4) To allow for the free switching between the three different QR search functions (i.e. the CAT one and the existing two of qualifications and operators / appointed assessment agencies).
 - (5) To indicate CAT arrangements for RPL qualifications and the learning programmes recognising RPL for CAT; and to incorporate CAT components in the RPL search page.

Problems Identified

The CAT systems and mechanisms are embedded in the processes for student admissions on an individual programme and / or institutional basis in the higher education sector, and to a lesser extent in the vocational education and training sector. To implement the CAT initiative as a useful tool in achieving the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework's ultimate aim to support life long learning the QFS initiated the concept of building a CAT centralised database in 2014. HKCAAVQ as the QR Authority acknowledges the importance of creating such a database while at the same time recognising that it will rely on the support of operators to realise the aim; and in consultation with QFS identifies the following needs related to this project with the corresponding proposed approaches to addressing these needs:

Needs Identified 1: One-stop approach

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| 1. | To provide a one-stop approach to searching CAT information at both the programme and the institution levels. |
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Proposed Approaches

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| 1.1 | By building the CAT centralised database of CAT information and articulation arrangements with a new dedicated search function as an integral part of the QR; |
| 1.2 | By devising and implementing a feasible project schedule encompassing the collection of feedback from major stakeholders with a view to ensure the usability and relevance of the centralised CAT database with a new dedicated and interactive CAT search menu; and |
| 1.3 | (a) By maintaining effective and efficient communication and collaboration (internally within different functional areas of the HKCAAVQ Secretariat; and externally with major stakeholders, such as EDB and QFS, and operators); and
(b) By enhancing staff capabilities in vetting CAT information through staff development activities that are to be organised through collaborative efforts with the other functional areas of the HKCAAVQ Secretariat. |

Needs Identified 2: CAT information	
2.	To enhance the dissemination of student-transfer information and articulation arrangements between institutions and courses (for both subject specific and General Education) in a transparent, organised and readily available manner.
Proposed Approaches	
2.1	By consulting operators through selected representatives from both the self-accrediting and HKCAAVQ accredited sectors (e.g. PolyU, HKUST, VTC, and Caritas) and collecting their initial feedback via standardised templates on requisite information to be shown on CAT database;
2.2	By collecting and maintaining CAT information from the operators on an institutional and / or programmes basis in an effective and efficient manner through the use of standardised proforma and templates, including both the self-accrediting and the HKCAAVQ-accredited sectors;
2.3	(a) By performing periodic update of CAT data on QR by self-accrediting operators to ensure the information published on the QR is accurate and up-to-date; and (b) By assessing and reviewing CAT information of HKCAAVQ-accredited learning programmes during accreditation tests conducted by HKCAAVQ.
2.4	By streamlining the QR vetting process for CAT information provided by QR operators including the full range of qualifications and accreditation types (or the “quality assurance” statuses on the QR) while safeguarding the quality assurance of the information listed on QR; and
2.5	By disseminating the student-transfer information via the CAT centralised database in a transparent, organised, and structured manner.
Needs Identified 3: Applicability of CAT to RPL	
3.	To expand the knowledge of CAT in other forms of learning (e.g. Informal Learning / Non-Formal Learning) by including CAT arrangements for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Qualifications.
Proposed Approach	
3.1	By facilitating and providing adequate support for the indication of CAT information on the QR including (a) Expanding the CAT search interface to incorporate RPL with the use of an icon to highlight CAT arrangements associated with RPL; and (b) Enhancing the RPL search page to include CAT components.
Needs Identified 4: Review of the Existing QR Infrastructure	
4.	To ensure the existing infrastructure of the QR system hardware and software can accommodate all the system changes required in the new CAT database with a dedicated search function, a high degree of interactiveness, the demand for data processing, and the facility to generate statistical and management reports.
Proposed Approaches	

4.1	By performing a thorough review of the QR system hardware and software requirements to determine the need for upgrading the system infrastructure;
4.2	If the consequential procurement of a new system infrastructure is required, QFQR is to compile the cost estimation and the system specifications for the new system infrastructure; and
4.3	Upon the tendering process for the infrastructure upgrade, QFQR is to coordinate with the contractor on the processes for procurement, installation and User Acceptance Test.

Project Objectives and Deliverables	
Measurable Objectives	How it can be achieved
<p>1. To create a centralised database for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT):</p> <p>(a) By adding a dedicated search function for CAT on the QR; and</p> <p>(b) By capturing and displaying CAT statistics on programme and / or institutional basis.</p>	<p>1.1 Devise the user requirements in consultation with major stakeholders, including EDB, QFS and major QR operators, and review of useful websites, e.g. Articulation System Stimulating Interinstitutional Student Transfer (ASSIST) (http://web1.assist.org/web-assist/welcome.do)</p> <p><i>Note: ASSIST is an online student-transfer information system and the official repository of articulation for USA California's public colleges and universities, and provides the most accurate and up-to-date information about student transfer in California USA.</i></p> <p>1.2 Review the capacity and assess the need for infrastructure upgrade of the current QR system;</p> <p>1.3 Upgrade the system capacity of the QR;</p> <p>1.4 Collect the required CAT data from the concerned operators through the different channels / means (as required), which include standardised proformas and templates;</p>

	1.5 Make the system changes; and 1.6 Launch the new Search interface for CAT on the QR.
2. To facilitate the prompt switching between different search interfaces on the QR.	Same as 1.
3. To enhance the RPL search page with the incorporation of the CAT components.	Same as 1.

Project Deliverables

(Please list out all the deliverables to be achieved and how they can be shared with, if possible, other institutions.)

Deliverables	Sharing mechanism
1. A centralised database of CAT information and articulation arrangements with a new dedicated search function for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) on the Qualifications Register (QR)	1.1 To be accessible for public search; 1.2 To disseminate the news of the launch through: (a) QR operators briefing; (b) QR website; (c) Other EDB web sites (e.g. Concourse); (d) HKCAAVQ web site; (e) Briefing session with live demonstrations to the Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs); and (f) Email communication to QR operators.
2. A CAT database for containing CAT information on QR	2.1 To serve as a web-based tool in support of EDB's implementation of the CAT initiative. 2.2 Same as 1.2.
3. To promote and publicise the benefits of the CAT centralised database with a new dedicated CAT search interface on QR	Same as 1.2.

Upon completion of the project the enhanced features can be (1) accessible via the HKQR web links; and (2) the web links or the CAT data can be used as useful link and be posted in HKCAAVQ web site / relevant EDB web sites respectively, e.g. the Concourse. At the same time, news announcements will be published on all the relevant web sites for publicity and promotional purposes.

Beneficiaries		
Expected type and number of beneficiaries of the project:		
	Type	Estimated Number
1	Operators	Around 240 currently registered on the QR
2	Learners	Applicable to all QR users from the general public
3	Employers	Particularly those human resource managers for recruitment and staff development purposes
4	Staff of HKCAAVQ Secretariat	Around 90
<p>(1) Learners, Employers and Operators</p> <p>The CAT database will enhance the transparency and dissemination of credit transfer information and articulation arrangements between institutions. As a consequence it will improve and increase student mobility by providing information in the QR to assist learners to make informed decisions in pursuit of lifelong learning. In similar vein, employers can make informed and objective decisions in staff recruitment and promotion, and staff development.</p> <p>As of 12 February 2016, there are 242 operators on the QR offering a total of 6,902 learning programmes with “Current” and “Prospective” registration statuses.</p> <p>Cumulative hit rate since 5 May 2008: 1,503,236 counts; Cumulative hit rate since 13 February 2015: 328,370 counts.</p> <p>(2) Staff of HKCAAVQ Secretariat</p> <p>Professional staff of the HKCAAVQ can make use of the CAT information published on the QR website to facilitate their accreditation and qualification assessment activities.</p>		

Implementation Schedule.		
Estimated start date of the project (month/year)		November 2016
Estimated end date of the project (month/year)		October 2018
Project duration (months)		24
Month	Key milestones	
	In terms of project activities and deliverables	In terms of monitoring and evaluation

0 ^{Note1}	<p><u>Project Planning (Scope, schedule and budgets) before project commencement:</u></p> <p>(a) To devise Project Scope and Deliverables. That is: to identify functions and features to be included /modified, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Addition of a new dedicated search function for “Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)” on the QR;(ii) System Capability of Data Processing and Maintenance;(iii) System Capability of Generating Management and Statistical Reports; and(iv) Major new functions to be implemented in both the QR Public and Internal Interfaces. <p>(b) Contractor and QFQR to review the capacity and assess the need for infrastructure upgrade of the current QR system.</p> <p><i>(Note: In anticipation of a need for a system upgrade in QR system hardware and software, additional cost and manpower will be taken into account in the total cost of the project)</i></p> <p>(c) To devise the budgets Involved;</p> <p>(d) To devise the project schedule;</p> <p>(e) To assess the Risks of the Project;</p> <p>(f) To consult operators on requisite information to be shown on CAT database through selected representatives from both the self-accrediting and HKCAAVQ accredited sectors (e.g. PolyU, HKUST,</p>	<p>The Project Team will monitor and evaluate the project progress to ensure:</p> <p>The QR system capacity is sufficient for building the CAT database.</p> <p>The project scope, schedule and budget are feasible, achievable and realistic in consultation with the project advisory group.</p> <p>The whole project planning is performed holistically in consultation with EDB / QFS, and major stakeholders.</p>
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	<p>VTC, and Caritas) and collect their initial feedback with the use of standardised proformas and templates; and</p> <p>(g) To form the project advisory group comprising of the following parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) DED(Vocational), HKCAAVQ; (ii) Head and Register, QF&QR, HKCAAVQ; (iii) QFS; and (iv) Four representatives with two from the self-accrediting sector and two VET operators from the non-self-accrediting sector (e.g. PolyU, HKUST, VTC, and Caritas) 	
<p><i>Note 1: The time duration for some of the preparatory work (e.g. review on the need on QR system infrastructure upgrade) mentioned in Month 0 might need to extend to Month 1-6 depending on the work complexity.</i></p>		
<p>1-6</p>	<p>To source and select an appropriate (i) system contractor for the project; and (ii) vendor for QR system infrastructure upgrade.</p> <p>QFQR to perform an infrastructure upgrade for the current QR system.</p> <p>QFQR to employ a full-time professional staff (i.e. Project Manager, at the rank of Assistant Registrar) to project manage and assist in the overall coordination and implementation of the entire project.</p>	<p>The Project Team will monitor and evaluate the project progress to ensure:</p> <p>The recruitment of project staff and tendering process of contractor is completed according to the work schedule.</p> <p>All concerned parties are well informed with the user requirements, work progress and milestones.</p>
<p>7-12</p>	<p>QFQR to arrange a kick-off meeting and status report meetings (on a regular and needs basis) with the contractor to review the user requirements.</p> <p>Contractor to produce the functional specifications and design screenshots.</p>	<p>The Project Team will monitor and evaluate the project progress to ensure:</p> <p>The provision of a platform for the effective communication and exchange of views between QFQR and major stakeholders / contractor.</p>

	<p>QFQR to consult EDB/ QFS and other major stakeholders on the functional specifications and the design screenshots.</p> <p>QFQR to consolidate and analyse and incorporate as appropriate the comments and feedback received from stakeholders.</p> <p>QFQR to effectively and in a timely manner to respond to the recommendations from major stakeholders to the contractor for revision of the functional specifications and design screenshots.</p> <p>Contractor to produce the prototype of the database in accordance with the finalised design and specifications.</p>	<p>To achieve the project milestones stipulated in the Work Breakdown Structure.</p> <p>The contractor is able to deliver the requirements in accordance with the project specifications and project schedule.</p>
<p>13-18</p>	<p>QFQR to collect the requisite CAT information from operators (e.g. restriction and limits on transfer of credit, information on formal articulation and credit transfer agreements between institutions) with the use of standardised proformas and templates for formulating and compiling the CAT database.</p> <p>QFQR to form the focus group for the preview of the prototype.</p> <p>QFQR to gather and analyse the comments and feedback from the focus group on the usability of the prototype. (Note: <i>Anticipated duration for collecting feedback from focus groups: three weeks</i>)</p> <p>QFQR to consult EDB and QFS on changes to be made on the prototype based on the recommendations from the focus group.</p> <p>Contractor to finalise the prototype for QFQR</p>	<p>The Project Team will monitor and evaluate the project progress to ensure:</p> <p>The provision of information from operators on an effective and timely manner.</p> <p>The information contained in the CAT database is accurate and up-to-date.</p> <p>Focus group are well informed the objectives and capable of providing constructive feedback for the final fine-tuning of the prototype.</p> <p>Functionality of the new features of the CAT database and the successful completion of the UAT with all test scenarios.</p>

	to perform the User Acceptance Test (UAT).	
19-24	<p>QFQR to arrange for the production deployment with contractor upon the clearance of all identified issues in the UAT.</p> <p>QFQR to inform all stakeholders on the production deployment of the CAT database and arrange series of publicity / promotional activities.</p>	<p>The Project Team will monitor and evaluate the project progress to ensure:</p> <p>All the features of the system enhancements are deployed accurately, holistically and in totality with all the relevant features incorporated to and properly functioning in the QR.</p> <p>All the stakeholders are duly informed on the implementation of the new CAT search interface.</p>

Publicity Plan

(1) To collaborate with EDB in organising CAT Information Days.

(2) Annual QR Operators Briefings from 2017 – 2018.

HKCAAVQ will be committed to arranging and organising the related publicity / promotional activities preferably in collaboration with the QFS and EDB. However, some of these publicity activities (e.g. annual QR Operators Briefing) will most likely extend beyond the project schedule (say at the end of November 2018) to be operationally effective and efficient to meet the annual schedules of the operators, and in particular those from the Post-secondary Education sector. In such cases, the entire relative costs for the publicity activities that are to be conducted after the project period will be absorbed by HKCAAVQ (as required).

Cash Flow and Budget				
Project Expenditure				
	Amount in HK\$			
Period	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Manpower	504,480 (42,040 / month with increment of 5% per year)	529,704	0	1,034,184
Equipment / Facilities	310,000 (System upgrade)	0	0	310,000
Services	495,788	605,962	0	1,101,750 (New CAT features)
General Expenses	0	0	0	0
Others (e.g. auditor's fee)	0	0	0	0
Total	1,310,268	1,135,666	0	2,445,934
Project Income (if any, e.g. fees received)				
	Amount in HK\$			
Period	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Total				
Grant Sought under the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme			\$2,445,934	
Funding from the Applicant			Salary expenditures for three months of an Assistant Registrar from Aug – Oct 2016 in Stage 0	
Funding from Other Sources			0	
Total Project Value			\$2,445,934	
Post	Duties			
Project Manager (at the rank of Assistant Registrar in HKCAAVQ's full time staffing structure)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation of the project charter in cooperation with team members 2. Responsibility for the day to day management of the project including achieving objectives, outcomes and that timelines are met 3. Management of the project team including allocation of tasks among team members 			

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Supporting team members in managing tasks5. Conducting regular team meetings6. Regular reporting to the Project Board and Project Management Office7. Participating in project evaluation |
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Project Sustainability

The vetting work for CAT information regarding the data collection and regular updating of QR entry will be absorbed by the regular staff costs of HKCAAVQ, i.e. as the core business of QFQR with the collaborative efforts of the two Accreditation Functional Areas of AAA and VAD in assessing and reviewing CAT information during accreditation tests of HKCAAVQ-accredited operators.