

Community Care Fund Subsidy for Persons Holding Non-local Qualifications to Conduct Qualifications Assessment Evaluation Report

Purpose

This paper sets out the evaluation results of the Community Care Fund (CCF) Assistance Programme “Subsidy for persons holding non-local qualifications to conduct qualifications assessment” (the Programme) and the arrangements for incorporating the Programme into the Government’s regular assistance programme.

Background

2. The Commission on Poverty approved in May 2017 the implementation of the Programme for three years with funding from the CCF to alleviate the financial burden of needy persons by settling their qualifications assessment fees when such persons apply for qualifications assessment for general purpose conducted by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). The Programme, implemented by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the HKCAAVQ, was subsequently launched in September 2017.

Implementation of the Programme

3. Target recipients of the Programme are persons fulfilling the following eligibility criteria:

- A. holding non-local qualifications which have not yet been assessed by the HKCAAVQ;
- B. being one of the following categories of Hong Kong residents¹:

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

- (a) holders of Hong Kong permanent identity cards; or
 - (b) 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
 - (c) 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; and
- C. being the applicants and/or their spouses who have passed the means-test establishing eligibility for assistance under any of the specified assistance schemes provided below and receiving assistance:
- (a) Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme; or
 - (b) Low-Income Working Family Allowance Scheme (renamed as Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme from April 2018 onwards); or
 - (c) Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme; or
 - (d) School Textbook Assistance (TA) Scheme (for full grant only); or
 - (e) Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS) (for full or 3/4 remission).
4. Applicants for the Programme are required to submit to the HKCAAVQ, in addition to the necessary documents for qualifications assessment, an application form for the Programme. They are also required to provide supporting documents proving their eligibility for the Programme. They need not pay the qualifications assessment fees when they are confirmed eligible for the Programme. The assessment fees for the completed cases for the Programme are settled by the EDB on a quarterly basis.
5. When the Programme commenced in September 2017, information about the Programme (including the eligibility criteria and the application procedures), the application form and the frequently-asked questions were uploaded onto the websites of the HKCAAVQ and/or the EDB. Leaflets for promoting the Programmes were prepared in Chinese, English, and six other language versions (i.e. Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, and Urdu). The leaflets and the application forms were delivered to the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department and the Regional Education Offices of the EDB for distribution to the public. The leaflets and the application forms were also delivered to non-governmental organisations serving ethnic minorities and new arrivals for distribution to the service users.

vii. visitors; or

viii. persons whose travel documents are endorsed with a condition of stay specifying “Employment is not permitted”.

6. As at end April 2020, there was a total of 152 completed cases of qualifications assessment under the Programme. The relatively small number of beneficiaries could be attributed to factors such as no strong correlation between being financially needy and holding non-local qualifications, and that persons with non-local qualifications may have possessed further local qualifications and/or accumulated working experience which result in their previous non-local academic attainment playing a less essential role in employment. According to the records in the HKCAAVQ's database, most of the beneficiaries (approximately 80%) of the Programme were assessed with an overall qualification meeting the standard of Level 4 and Level 5² (33.6% and 46.1% respectively) of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework [*Table 1 of the Appendix*].

7. The funding provision for the Programme was \$8.67 million, with a total amount of \$8.4 million for disbursement and \$0.27 million as administrative fees. As at end April 2020, the total subsidy disbursed is around \$360,000 (payment for some completed cases has not been made as qualifications assessment fees are paid to the HKCAAVQ on a quarterly basis). The total administrative expenditure is around \$257,000, including about \$250,000 for upgrading HKCAAVQ's computer system to process online applications from the Programme applicants and about \$7,000 for the production of the multilingual leaflets to promote the Programme.

Evaluation of Programme Effectiveness

8. The major objective of the Programme is to provide a subsidy for needy persons to apply for qualifications assessment conducted by the HKCAAVQ, as there have been views that some non-local qualification holders might have not applied for qualifications assessment due to financial difficulty. In fact, in a questionnaire survey³ conducted on the Programme, eight respondents out of 13 indicated that they would not pay for the qualifications assessment by themselves if they failed to meet the eligibility for the CCF subsidy [*Table 2 of the Appendix*]. Although the response rate of the questionnaire was not high, it at least indicates that a portion of the financially needy persons holding non-local qualifications would only proceed with qualifications assessment when the subsidy is granted. The CCF subsidy has been a suitable form of financial assistance for them.

9. The two-and-a-half years' experience shows that the Programme could help persons with non-local qualifications seek further study or employment that is

² The Qualifications Framework in Hong Kong is a 7-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational, professional, and continuing education sectors. Commonly used award titles for Level 4 and Level 5 are "Associate Degree" and "Bachelor's Degree" respectively. For further information of all 7 levels, please refer to the diagram following Table 1 of the *Appendix*.

³ A questionnaire is distributed to the beneficiaries around six months after the release of their qualifications assessment results. This is an anonymous survey collecting information including basic personal information of the beneficiaries, their purposes and views of conducting qualifications assessment. As at end April 2020, 109 questionnaires have been issued and 13 completed questionnaires have been returned.

commensurate with their abilities or education standard by having their non-local qualifications properly recognised. Most of the respondents to the abovementioned questionnaire survey made use of the qualifications assessment results for further study and/or employment and they considered qualifications assessment useful for such purposes [Table 3 of the Appendix]. The success rate in using the qualifications assessment results for further study or employment is also encouraging [Table 4 of the Appendix].

10. As regards the administrative procedures for the Programme, persons applying for the subsidy are not required to go through a separate means-test. Their eligibility was linked to their recipient status under any of the five specified assistance schemes they have already applied for. These five specified assistance schemes can basically cater for different categories of persons having financial needs, including working families (e.g. WFA recipients) or individuals (e.g. WITS recipients) with low income, working families with children (e.g. recipients of WFA, TA and KCFRS), and those in need of instant relief to support their living (e.g. CSSA recipients).

11. Most of the respondents to the questionnaire survey expressed that they learned about the Programme through the leaflets and the websites of HKCAAVQ and the EDB [Table 5 of the Appendix]. The provision of the Programme information and the application form online is thus considered convenient for applicants. The HKCAAVQ has been assessing the eligibility of applications under the Programme since September 2017 and has accumulated adequate experience. The arrangement of reimbursing assessment fees to the HKCAAVQ on a quarterly basis is also appropriate and smooth.

Conclusion

12. The Programme rendered appropriate assistance to persons with non-local qualifications when they applied for qualifications assessment. It has also met its objective and is in line with the aims of the CCF. The Programme will be incorporated into the Government's regular assistance programme starting from September 2020.

13. The administrative arrangements and the eligibility requirements for the applicants will remain unchanged for the regularised assistance. Further information and the application arrangements regarding the regularised assistance will be released on the websites of the HKCAAVQ and the EDB.

Education Bureau
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**Summary of Findings
(as at end April 2020)**

Part A: Total No. of Beneficiaries and their Qualifications Assessment Results

Table 1: Qualifications assessment results of 152 beneficiaries

Qualifications assessed to be pitched at:	Number of Beneficiaries (% ^)
i. Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) @:	
Level 7	1 (0.7%)
Level 6	4 (2.6%)
Level 5	70 (46.1%)
Level 4	51 (33.6%)
Level 3	10 (6.6%)
Level 2	3 (2.0%)
Level 1	0 (0%)
ii. Senior Secondary (S4-S6)	9 (5.9%)
iii. Junior Secondary (S1-S3) or below	0 (0%)
iv. Others (e.g. unrecognised or professional qualifications)	4 (2.6%)

^ Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

@ Award titles for different levels of the QF are provided as follows:



Part B – Findings of Questionnaire Survey

Questionnaires issued: **109**
Questionnaires returned: **13**

Table 2: Willingness to pay qualifications assessments fees if ineligible for CCF subsidy

Willingness to pay qualifications assessment fees	Number of Respondents
Yes	5
No	8

Table 3: Usefulness of qualifications assessment for further study/employment

Views	Number of Respondents
Useful	10
Not useful	2
No comments	1

Table 4: Results of application for further study/employment

Purposes	Number of Respondents
For application for further study	5
Application successful	3
Application unsuccessful	2
For application for employment	8
Application successful	6
Application unsuccessful	2

Table 5: Means of learning about the Programme (can choose more than 1 item)

Means	Number of Respondents
Websites of CCF and relevant departments/organisations	7
Programme leaflets	4
Friends, family members or colleagues	3
Mass media (including newspaper and radio)	1
Non-governmental organisations	0