

Hong Kong College of Technology

Qualification Recognition Review on Higher Diploma in Social Work

THE FINAL REPORT BY THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

Executive Summary

The Assessment Team (“AT”) appointed by the Social Workers Registration Board (“SWRB” or “the Board”) reviewed the documentation submitted by the Hong Kong College of Technology (“HKCT” or “the College”) and conducted an on-campus visit to the HKCT on 13-14 December 2023 for the Qualification Recognition Review of the Higher Diploma in Social Work (“HDSW” or “the Programme”). The Programme, with Chinese as the official medium of instruction, is offered in 2-year full-time and 3-year part-time modes. It aims to nurture students to become registered social workers at the professional entry level.

Assessment Team’s Recommendation

The Assessment Team is of the view that the HDSW qualification has met the basic requirements laid down in the *Principles, Criteria and Standards for Recognizing Qualifications in Social Work (7th & 8th editions)*; and recommends that the Board recognize the HDSW qualification awarded by the Hong Kong College of Technology, thereby qualifying its holders for registration as Registered Social Workers (RSW), for a period of four years from 2024/25 to 2027/28 with one condition attached:

- The HKCT should submit to the Board annual progress reports, which indicate the successful implementation of the transitional plan in December of 2025, 2026, 2027, and 2028.

In addition, 15 suggestions for enhancement of the Programme are proposed. The next review of the qualification is to be conducted in the 2027/28 academic year.

The HKCT should notify the Board formally in writing as soon as possible of all major changes related to the Programme, which include curriculum contents and design, for necessary endorsement.

Summary of Commendations

Apart from the recommendation on the approval of qualification recognition, the Assessment Team is pleased to commend the HKCT and the Programme on the following:

1. Appreciation by Students

The students interviewed were generally satisfied with their studies in the College. It was found that they had positive and caring relationships with their teachers and fieldwork supervisors. They mentioned that it was not difficult for them to obtain academic advice, teacher’s timely feedback on their assessments, financial assistance, and counselling support in the College.

They also reaffirmed that the adoption of Chinese as a medium of instruction had good effects on their overall learning effectiveness in various aspects, including enhancing their ability to think, assimilate knowledge, and express themselves, as well as raising their motivation, interest, and self-confidence. They cherished the learning opportunity and career development provided by the College and more than 50% of the students interviewed expressed that they would like to pursue bachelor's degree programmes.

2. *Dedication of Teaching Staff*

The teaching team consisting of part-time and full-time teaching staff has become stable since the 2019/20 academic year. The teaching staff interviewed were enthusiastic about teaching. They devised different teaching strategies to elucidate theories, methods, and concepts. They were dedicated to giving students support and responding to students' inquiries. It was noted that they were committed to helping students master the skills and knowledge necessary for professional social workers.

The teaching staff interviewed expressed that they had continued to work in the College mainly because of the close and supportive relationships among their teammates as well as their love of teaching students. They were also proud to say that the Head of the Division trusted their professionalism and gave them flexibility. They enjoyed a lot of formal and informal sharing with their teammates on teaching and learning.

3. *Committed Fieldwork Team and Supervisors*

The representatives of placement agencies appreciated the fieldwork teams' and supervisors' devotion to preparing students well for placements and cultivating students' working attitudes. It was noted that the supervisors had good relationships with different agencies. When students came across problems in fieldwork placements, they would immediately liaise with the agencies to handle the situation.

Although the AT appreciated the teaching staff's and the fieldwork placement supervisors' commitment to their work, they were advised not to work frequently beyond office hours so as to maintain their well-being and demonstrate to the HDSW students how to set a healthy boundary with clients to mitigate the likelihood of burnout and stress.

Summary of Suggestions

Quality Assurance

1. To revisit and revise the QA mechanism and procedures for moderating grades, ensuring fairness of grading, handling stakeholders' feedback, granting exemptions, and fulfilling 100-hour Pre-placement Preparation, etc.
2. To formulate a policy on how to calculate teaching staff's workloads in terms of credits and hours.

3. The College is suggested to ensure a timely reporting and consultation to the Board for any major changes to the curriculum during the validity period of the qualification recognition granted by the Board before they are implemented.

Programme Objectives

4. To revisit and revise the positioning and objectives of the programme so as to broaden students' and teachers' perspectives and expectations.

Programme Curriculum

5. To update the curriculum periodically and provide more elective modules according to policy changes and emerging social needs and based on students' interests.
6. To enhance mental health knowledge in the practice modules.
7. To update the Module Descriptions and the reading lists periodically according to societal changes and new academic and practice findings.
8. To strengthen students' mindsets and abilities in the evaluation of self, practice, and outcome achievements.
9. To create an English learning environment by providing students with formal and informal opportunities such as non-mandatory study groups and incorporating more English elements, e.g. raising both the qualitative and quantitative requirements for English assignments as well as providing more English terminologies for students' reference.
10. To revise and revisit the percentage and weighting of assessment tasks, and to provide multiple assessments and real contexts of skill lab modules.

Fieldwork Placement

11. To secure financial support and networks internally and externally for enhancing students' global exposure with international placement opportunities or overseas exchange programmes.
12. To revisit and revise the rubric of the fieldwork placement on a competency basis.

Student Support

13. To provide students with more scholarships and financial assistance.
14. To offer more counselling support to students by purchasing outsourced counselling services.

Support Facilities

15. To provide more e-learning and library resources relating to social work studies on the Ma On Shan campus for independent learning of students.

THE FINAL DECISION OF THE BOARD

The Board has resolved to accept the recommendations of the Assessment Team to recognise the qualification for a period of four years from 2024/25 to 2027/28 with 1 condition, 3 commendations and 15 suggestions for enhancement.