

EDB promulgates criteria for qualifying as Universities of Applied Sciences

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (February 2) promulgated the criteria for qualifying as Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and invited eligible self-financing post-secondary institutions to submit applications. The EDB accepts applications all year round.

The EDB has appointed the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) as a consultant to draw up the criteria for qualifying as UAS, with reference to experiences in other places, including Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Mainland China, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, covering aspects such as governance, management, quality assurance, learning environment and learner support, as well as industry collaboration and recognition.

Generally speaking, self-financing post-secondary institutions should fulfil the following requirements to be qualified to make an application for becoming a UAS:

1. Having obtained a university title; and
2. Possessing the vision, commitment, capabilities and experience in operating an institution that embodies the key features of UAS, including:
 - (a) the vision, maturity and capability in providing high-level vocational and professional education and training (VPET) programmes pitching at Levels 5 to 7 under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, blending theory and practice with substantial workplace learning and assessment, having flexibilities in curriculum design, admission and delivery mode, and having recognition and support from industries and professions; and
 - (b) the experience in providing applied degree programme(s) at least in one area of applied sciences for which it has attained the programme area accreditation or self-accrediting status, and the commitment to developing and providing more applied degree programmes.

Applications from eligible institutions to the EDB should include a self-evaluation against the criteria for qualifying as a UAS for the purpose of undergoing an Institutional Review by the HKCAAVQ. The relevant criteria and application procedures are set out in the Manual for Institutional Review for UAS at the HKCAAVQ website (www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/accreditation/institutional_review/). The EDB will take into account the outcome of the Institutional Review and any other relevant factors when considering the application.

An EDB spokesman said, "As announced in the Chief Executive's 2023

Policy Address, the EDB has been pressing ahead with the establishment of UAS to raise the status of VPET at the degree level, providing an alternative pathway to success for young people who aspire to pursue a career in professional skills sectors. UAS aims to nurture students with applied skills and knowledge through providing applied degree programmes with an applied focus blending theory and practice, and closely collaborating with the industries and incorporating substantial internship and work-based learning opportunities in their programmes."

To bolster the development of UAS and encourage institutions to offer more applied degree programmes, the EDB will provide, among others, the following financial and related support:

1. Priority will be accorded to eligible programmes of UAS for inclusion under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) and eligible applications from UAS when considering applications for relevant support measures, including the EDB's Quality Enhancement Support Scheme and Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education;
2. Additional subsidies of \$5,000 for non-laboratory-based programmes and \$8,000 for laboratory-based programmes will be provided to full-time students enrolling in applied degree programmes under the SSSDP that have undergone the relevant accreditation; and
3. A start-up fund has been set aside to support UAS and prospective post-secondary institutions to form an alliance of UAS for joint promotion, including collaboration with UAS on the Mainland and overseas, initiating collaboration and research about applied education at the post-secondary level, and organising joint promotion activities, in order to enhance the status of VPET in society and among parents and students.