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Evaluation and Benchmarking of the Diploma in Computer Network Technology from Harbin Vocational and Technical College

Context and scope

Harbin Vocational and Technical College commissioned Ecctis for an independent evaluation and benchmarking of its Diploma in Computer Network Technology, which was completed in June 2022.

The Diploma in Computer Network Technology is one of five programmes currently offered by the College's School of Electronics and Information Engineering and is jointly designed with a major local company.

The main aims of the benchmarking were to:
- Establish comparability in the context of the UK through reference to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), and by extension, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)[1]
- Assess the extent to which the College's underpinning quality assurance meets a set of international standards.

Key findings

The Diploma in Computer Network Technology seeks to develop students' knowledge in a range of specialist occupational modules in areas such as computer networks, computer system management, website development and construction, comprehensive wiring, network frameworks, website management, and network security. In line with national requirements, the Diploma also encompasses "public basic courses" which include topics from arts, social sciences and science domains.

The general entry requirement for the programme is the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE, popularly known as the *gaokao* 高考) – comparable to GCE A Level / RQF Level 3 in the UK – or suitable marks in one of the College's own tests.

The Diploma is a three-year full-time programme. Reflecting its vocational focus, the Diploma combines classroom-based study with project-based simulated learning and assessed professional practice in the form of an internship.

Upon completion, many students enter the workforce; however, some students will be eligible

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[1] To date, a total of 35 countries have now referenced their national education systems to the EQF.

to apply for top-up Benke (本科) / Bachelor degree programmes. These require a minimum of two years of further study, which shows that the Diploma has similar academic progression routes to that of HND, Diploma of Higher Education and other UK Level 5 awards.

The study revealed several strengths of the Diploma in Computer Network Technology, namely that it demonstrated:

- A clear focus on employability, with the aim of developing labour-market-ready graduates, able to meet the needs of the IT industry. This aim is subsequently reflected in the development and review of the programme which has benefited from input from a strong network of industry experts.

- A clear, practical focus to the programme, centred on teaching the knowledge and tasks that students will need to know and be able to perform in the workplace.

- Effective use of high-quality labs and project-based learning to help ensure a strong connection between what students learn in the classroom and what they will need to apply in the local workplace.

- A range of assessment methods, with a clear focus on testing students' practical skills, thereby aligning with the programme's aim to develop and certify work-ready graduates for the region.

- Clear processes in place for design, development and regular review, which integrates wide-ranging consultation with industry experts and consideration of market demand to ensure the ongoing relevance of the curriculum.

- An established teacher quality monitoring system which encompasses regular and unannounced teacher observations, self-reflection tasks, student and peer evaluation, and analysis of student attendance and grades.

- Roles and responsibilities for those involved in teacher management, quality monitoring and evaluation are set out in a clearly documented quality control policy.

In terms of international comparability, the Diploma in Computer Network Technology has been found comparable to Level 5 of the RQF and EQF. It has also met international quality standards in the following five areas:

- **Admission**
  There is a pre-defined and published admissions policy ensuring transparency in the admissions policy and supporting consistency in admissions decisions

- **Programme development, approval, monitoring and review**
  There is a clear process in place for the design, approval and monitoring of programmes

- **Teaching and learning**

There is a formalised process for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of delivery, relevant to the modes of study employed

- **Assessment**
  Assessment provides a sufficiently fair, valid and reliable evaluation of the intended knowledge, skills and competencies

- **Information**
  The information available to prospective students, current students and other interested stakeholders is accurate, transparent and clear for the intended audience.

Engagement

Harbin Vocational and Technical College has committed to further development and engagement encompassing:
- Review of the Talent Training Programme document to centre programme design around the intended learning outcomes
- Revision of learning outcomes across all programme modules, to ensure they are specific, measurable and feasible, form a firmer basis for assessment design and marking, and demonstrate a stronger emphasis on critical thinking (analysis, evaluation and reflection) skills
- Development of an overarching assessment framework to strengthen overall validity and rigour of assessment to enable closer alignment with international standards and expectations at RQF Level 5.
- Review of assessment criteria across modules as appropriate to better reflect knowledge and/or skills required at different grading levels
- Maintaining and ensuring adoption by all staff of the unified quality assurance handbook.

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