



**Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects**

# **Accreditation Policy and Procedure for Accredited Arborists**

HKILA 's Panel on Accredited Arborists

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## **PART 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 About the HKILA and Accreditation Policy for Accredited Arborists**

The Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects (HKILA) is the professional body for landscape architects promoting the highest standards in the arts and sciences of landscape architecture in Hong Kong. HKILA was established in 1988 and is incorporated under the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects Incorporation Ordinance (Chapter 1162 of the Law of Hong Kong Law) in 1996. For decades members of HKILA have been taking up the roles in landscape planning, landscape design, supervision of greening and landscaping works. We recognize the importance of ensuring proper tree management and supervision of landscape works being implemented in Hong Kong.

Since 2012, HKILA maintains a list of Accredited Arborists (formerly named Accredited Arboricultural Practitioners) to ensure the quality of local arborists. HKILA is committed also to overseeing tertiary education leading into the arboricultural industry. Graduates of an accredited Programme are eligible to follow a pathway to the HKILA's assessment to become Accredited Arborist of the HKILA.

This accreditation policy serves the purposes of evaluating an academic or educational programme in meeting the minimum core competencies set out in this policy. Accreditation status is confirmed when the HKILA's Panel on Accredited Arborists (or an Accreditation Panel set up by the HKILA's Panel on Accredited Arborists) (hereafter called The Panel) concludes the accreditation review process with recommendation to offer accreditation status to the programme for endorsement by the HKILA's council.

### **2.0 Background of HKILA's AA Scheme**

Starting from the late 2000s there has been an increasing public concern on urban trees arising from improper treatment and interference. Potential risks of failures of sizable trees resulting in damages to human and property injury were even more of a concern. Proper tree management and maintenance by well trained and qualified personnel are of vital importance in enabling the public to enjoy the benefits of urban greenery.

At the time, arboricultural practitioners in Hong Kong were not represented nor regulated by any local organizations, let alone recognized by statutory instruments. There was also lack of locally enforceable constitution, regulations, or Code of Ethics and Conduct that bind their conduct and standard of service. From time to time, HKILA received feedbacks from members and the public that the standard of arboricultural services varied substantially, some being far from satisfactory.

For the good of the industries and the general public, the HKILA set up a local accreditation system for the arboricultural industry. the accreditation system registers a list of arboricultural practitioners that are assessed to have met stipulated minimum academic, professional and experience requirements. The list was made available to the public for their reference in

procuring arboricultural services. A person on the accredited list should possess sufficient knowledge and experience to deliver arboricultural services, subject to continuous professional development, and be bound by the Code of Ethics and Conduct set by the HKILA.

With the above vision, HKILA formed an Arboricultural Practitioners Accreditation Work Group in October 2010. This work group formulated and developed framework of the accreditation system, which was then endorsed by the Council of HKILA in July 2011. The HKILA Accredited Arboricultural Practitioners Vetting Panel (hereafter called the Panel) was subsequently formed in November 2011 to administer and implement the accreditation process. Through the initial membership referral scheme (referred as the first batch), the first batch of HKILA AAP was accredited and published on our website in July 2012.

The term “arboricultural practitioner” covers different levels of people in the industry including the managers, the supervisors, the workers. As the scheme developed it is clear that the level of requirements and assessments (as detailed in the Guidance Notes to Applicants and the Assessment Interview Syllabus) are targeting those at supervisory levels on tree management or tree works implementation on site. The Panel therefore recommended in June 2018 change of the title to Accredited Arborists, which was subsequently endorsed by the Council of HKILA in July 2018. The Panel is also renamed as “Panel on Accredited Arborists”

Those successfully accredited are entitled to describe themselves as 'HKILA Accredited Arborist' and to use the abbreviated designation 'AA (HKILA)'. AA (HKILA) will be bound by the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Accredited Arborists under the scheme. Continuous Professional Development is a mandatory requirement for the renewal of accreditation.

## **PART 2 ACCREDITATION CRITERIA**

### **1.0 Minimum Requirements for Accreditation**

The programme title and degree description must incorporate or be related to arboriculture, horticulture, landscape architecture, or landscape management.

Under this policy, the Panel will only accredit programmes attaining Hong Kong Qualification Framework (QF) Level 4 or Level 5. Graduates from accredited programmes are eligible to use the title “Graduate Arborist, HKILA”, and are eligible to sit the assessment for Accredited Arborists after they have acquired the minimum post-academic qualification work experience. Please refer to the Guidance Notes to Application for Admission to be a HKILA’s Accredited Arborist for details.

The minimum years of post-academic qualification relevant work experience before a graduate can apply for admission to be an Accredited Arborist are listed below:

Graduates from a recognized programme at QF Level 3 – Minimum THREE (3) years

Graduates from accredited programme at QF Level 4 – Minimum TWO (2) years

Graduates from accredited programme at QF Level 5 – Minimum ONE (1) year

For all of the above, at least ONE (1) year must be obtained within the territory of Hong Kong within the immediate past SIX (6) years in related works prior to application.

The Panel will only accredit programmes at QF Level 4 and Level 5. Relevant programmes set at QF Level 3 do not need to go through accreditation process, graduates of QF Level 3 programmes seeking for admission as Graduate Arborists or Accredited Arborists must provide proof that the programme in question meets the QF Level, either by its accreditation status under the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualification (HKCAACQ) or other proof accepted by the Panel, and the required coverage of contents accepted by the Panel.

Programmes seeking accreditation must have an adequate coverage on the following areas:

1. Tree identification and knowledge
2. Tree risk assessment
3. Professional conduct, ethics, and liabilities
4. Occupational safety and health for arboricultural works
5. Arboricultural practice and tree care

Graduates of non-local programmes or local programmes that claimed to be at QF Level 4 or 5 but not yet accredited by HKCAAVQ shall be individually assessed by the Panel, where the burden is on the graduate to provide details of the programme including the programme content, structure, admission requirement, etc.

## PART 3 ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

### 1.0 Accreditation Process

Any programme seeking accreditation must be local programme in operation and have at least 1 cohort of graduates at the time of application. The accreditation shall have retrospective effect for who graduate from the programme(s) within 5 years prior to the accreditation exercise as long as the Institute could prove that the curriculum coverage and standard has not fallen short of the requirement within the period. The followings should also be observed:

- Graduates from an accredited programme still need to sit the oral assessment after obtaining the prescribed working experience.
- Accredited programme must have an award title that complies with the Qualifications Framework – Award Titles Scheme issued by Education Bureau 2012 or any updated version.
- Programmes after going through the process will only be accredited or not accredited, i.e. no provisional accreditation or anything of that nature.

### 2.0 Accreditation Fee and Application

There is no accreditation or administration fee for the accreditation process, Educational Institutes seeking for the accreditation status for their programme(s) shall be required to file an application letter to HKILA by email to [secretariat@hkila.com](mailto:secretariat@hkila.com) and addressed to “The Chairperson of the HKILA’s Panel of Accredited Arborists” stating the intent with supporting document of the QF Level of the programme(s) together with a document covering the following information:

- Programme objectives and learning outcomes
- Programme content and structure, teaching & learning activities (with clear description of the coverage of the required areas specified in Section 1.0 above)
- Admission requirements and student assessment
- Staffing and physical resources
- Quality assurance & management support

The application letter must be made or endorsed by the head of the Educational Institute, or the head of the Faculty/ Department offering the programme, or the programme’s disciplinary head. Upon receiving the letter and documentation from the Educational Institute an Accreditation Panel shall be formed with at least 3 members and composed of both industry practitioner(s) and academic(s). Accreditation Panel members will be chosen to avoid any potential conflicts of interest with the Educational Institute being accredited. A Chair of the Accreditation Panel will be elected and approved by the Panel on Accredited Arborists. The Educational Institute will be notified when the Accreditation Panel is formed, together with the format of the accreditation process, which will usually be online meetings with representatives of the Educational Institute. The Accreditation Panel may or may not require a site visit.

The Accreditation Panel will review the document and revert to the Educational Institute within 8 weeks (start from the date when the Accreditation Panel is formed) with one of the following three outcomes:

1. The programme is recommended to be accredited (with or without recommendations to the programme for improvement); or
2. The programme is not recommended to be accredited; or
3. Further information is required to ascertain whether or not the programme is recommended to be accredited

For the third outcome, the Accreditation Panel will review the programme upon receiving further information from the Educational Institute, which will again result in one of three outcomes above.

If the programme is recommended to be accredited, the Educational Institute may be requested to pay an accreditation fee set by HKILA before conferring the formal accreditation status. The accreditation status will only be confirmed upon receipt of the accreditation fee. The accreditation status will normally last for 5 years for a 4-year or above curriculum, 3 years for 2-year curriculum, and 2 years for a less-than-2-year curriculum. Other accreditation duration may apply under the recommendation of the Accreditation Panel.

## **PART 4 ONGOING ACCREDITATION STATUS**

Ongoing Accreditation Status is subject to the provision of an Accreditation Renewal Report, that the Educational Institute need to submit to HKILA at least 3 months before the expiry of the Accreditation. Accreditation Renewal Report should include the similar information required in the accreditation application to substantiate that the programme complies with the latest standard set out in the Accreditation Policy, including response to recommendation for improvement in the former accreditation exercise.

Upon receipt of the Accreditation Renewal Report, an Accreditation Panel will be formed to review the application. The Educational Institute will be notified when the Accreditation Panel is formed, together with the need for online meetings with representatives of the Educational Institute and/ or a site visit. The Accreditation Panel will revert to the Educational Institute within 8 weeks after the formation of the Accreditation Panel with one of the following three outcomes:

1. The programme's accreditation status is recommended to be renewed (with or without recommendations to the programme for improvement); or
2. The programme's accreditation status is not recommended to be renewed; or
3. Further information is required to ascertain whether or not the programme's accreditation status is recommended to be renewed

For the third outcome, the Accreditation Panel will review the programme upon receiving further information from the Educational Institute, which will again result in one of three outcomes above.

If the programme's accreditation status is recommended to be renewed, the Educational Institute may be requested to pay an accreditation fee set by HKILA. The renewed accreditation status will only be confirmed upon receipt of the accreditation fee. The renewed accreditation status will normally last for the same duration as its former accreditation, or other accreditation duration under the recommendation of the Accreditation Panel.

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