



**International Holistic  
Competency Foundation**

# **International Holistic Competency Accreditation Guidelines**

**15<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

## Preface

Students, in the twenty-first century face an uncertain future, an increasingly complex world, and a rapidly changing job market. Knowledge alone is no longer sufficient; the abilities to adapt to changing circumstances, learn beyond the classroom, work effectively with others, and function as responsible citizens are essential for one to survive and succeed in today's world. Educators, researchers, education institutions, schools, employers, and education ministries and governments use different names to refer to these abilities, for example, twenty-first century skills, soft skills, transferable skills, higher order thinking skills, graduate attributes and more recently, future readiness. To highlight their complementary yet essential role in preparing students for employment, citizenship, and life in today's societies, the International Holistic Competency Foundation adopts the term "holistic competencies". The competencies are "holistic" in that they are interconnected and contribute to students' whole-person development. They are also holistic as they encompass generic skills, positive values, and attitudes that go beyond disciplines, situations, and time (Chan & Luk, 2022; Chan & Yeung, 2019).

Over the past decades, holistic competencies have become an important dimension in education outcomes (Chapman & O'Neill, 2010), often articulated as school and institutional goals, desired graduate attributes, and intended learning outcomes. Recognition of students' holistic competency development, hence, provides students, academics, parents, and future employers tangible evidence for the competencies students have acquired and the extent to which these competencies have been developed in a course of study. A well-defined, coherent reporting mechanism was however not readily available (Chan & Chen, 2022). As holistic competencies cover a broad range of skills, the assessment, documentation, and reporting approaches employed by education institutions vary. In addition, holistic competency achievement is either ignored or tends to be embedded in academic assessment and recognised by the award of an overall final grade (Bath et al., 2004; Warn & Tranter, 2001).

As an effort towards promoting competency education, the members and partners of the International Holistic Competency Foundation have developed a framework for the assessment of quality in holistic competencies in education programmes and courses. Through the International Holistic Competency Accreditation, education institutions can apply for their courses to be accredited to ensure that the courses meet a basic level of quality in competency education.

## I. Introduction

The guidelines in this document contain information pertinent to the framework for the assessment of quality in holistic competencies, the stages of the International Holistic Competency Accreditation, and the essential and optional requirements for each stage in the accreditation process. The information is intended to aid applicants in preparing their applications for accreditation and to provide reviewers with specific guidance on the assessment of courses for accreditation. A course can be within a programme, standalone courses, extra-curricular courses and activities, any course with relevant holistic competency development can be accredited as long as they fulfil the required criteria. The term “course” hereby will be used throughout the document as the umbrella term for all unless otherwise specified.

The framework in this document is a quality assurance framework for the accreditation of courses that include learning outcomes that promote students’ holistic competency development. The aims of the framework are to standardise assessments of courses for accreditation, to promote the importance of holistic competency for future readiness and to enable international recognition of students’ holistic competency achievement. The Accreditation currently covers 14 holistic competency outcomes (HCO):

- HCO01 Communication
- HCO02 Creativity
- HCO03 Critical Thinking
- HCO04 Global Competency
- HCO05 Information Literacy
- HCO06 Leadership
- HCO07 Lifelong Learning
- HCO08 Problem Solving
- HCO09 Professional Values and Ethics
- HCO10 Resilience
- HCO11 Self-Awareness
- HCO12 Teamwork Competency
- HCO13 AI Literacy
- HCO14 Digital Literacy

## II. Stages of the Holistic Competency Accreditation

The Holistic Competency Accreditation consists of two stages:

**Provisional Accreditation Stage 1:** At Stage 1, the requirements are less rigid to allow the course to develop and collect evidence of holistic competency development. The course at this stage must clearly state

- a) the holistic competency outcomes, and their alignment with the course or programme outcomes **(Area 1)**
- b) the teaching and learning activities and describe briefly how these activities develop the holistic competency to be accredited **(Area 2)**
- c) the student assessment approaches and how these are related to holistic competency development **(Area 3)**
- d) the feedback mechanism for enhancing student holistic competency development **(Area 4)**

These areas must be adequately aligned to ensure the course is coherent and supports students to benefit as much as possible from the learning experience in competency development. The specific criteria are shown in Appendix I. If a course meets the essential requirements (as shown in Table 1) at this stage, it will be awarded provisional accreditation that is valid for two years on the competency or competencies in which they have applied for. All the information must submit through the online IHCFoundation website application platform.

**Full Accreditation Stage 2:** Full accreditation must be sought in order for a course to continue to be accredited with those holistic competency or competencies in which they have applied for, additional competency can also be sought for accreditation at this stage. In order to get full accreditation, applicants must apply around six months before the end of the two-year provisional accreditation (i.e. between 18 and 21 months). In addition to the fulfilment of standard criteria in Stage 1, the course must demonstrate it has proper mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the course through

- a) Staff qualifications, experience and development (**Area 5**)
- b) Monitoring and continual enhancement (**Area 6**)

If a course meets the requirements in Stage 2 (as shown in Table 2), it will be awarded full accreditation that is valid for 3 years. All the information must submit together with relevant evidence (see Table 2) through the online IHCFoundation website application platform.

### **III. Framework for the Assessment of Quality in Holistic Competencies**

#### **Criterion Areas**

The criterion for course accreditation in holistic competency is based on the below five areas:

- (Area 1) Outcomes
- (Area 2) Teaching and learning activities
- (Area 3) Student assessment
- (Area 4) Feedback mechanism
- (Area 5) Staff qualifications, experience and development (**Only for Full Accreditation Stage 2**)
- (Area 6) Monitoring and continual enhancement (**Only for Full Accreditation Stage 2**)

Each area consists of criteria that a course needs to fulfil in order to achieve accredited status by the International Holistic Competency Foundation. Indicators are specific descriptions of how a criterion can be fulfilled. Some indicators are essential requirements that a course must fulfil; others are optional.

#### **AREA 1: OUTCOMES**

##### **Criterion 1A: The course learning outcomes for holistic competency are documented and disseminated to stakeholders**

***Indicator 1A(i):** Holistic competency outcomes are clearly specified in the course. The intended holistic competency outcomes must be from the 14 competencies currently identified by the International Holistic Competency Foundation.*

**Indicator 1A(ii):** Applicant must choose at least one holistic competency outcome from the 14 competencies as identified by the International Holistic Competency Foundation that students are expected to develop at the end of the course.

**Indicator 1A(iii):** The course learning outcomes for holistic competency are made available to staff and students.

**Criterion 1B: The course provides opportunities for holistic competency development**

**Indicator 1B(i):** The course provides opportunities for the development of the specified holistic competency as indicated in Criterion 1A.

**Criteria 1C: Holistic competency outcomes and course/programme learning outcomes must be clearly aligned**

**Indicator 1C(i):** Holistic competency outcomes must be clearly aligned with course learning outcomes

\*For programme only

**Indicator 1C(i)\*:** Holistic competency outcomes must be clearly aligned with course learning outcomes, programme learning outcomes and graduate attributes (if available).

\*A programme structure may consist of graduate attributes (also known as institutional learning outcomes, educational aims), programme learning outcomes, course learning outcomes and holistic competency outcomes.

**AREA 2: TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

**Criterion 2A: The curriculum of the course provides the necessary means for achieving the intended holistic competency outcomes**

**Indicator 2A(i):** The curriculum provides appropriate contexts for the development of holistic competencies.

**Indicator 2A(ii):** A broad variety of teaching and learning materials are used to encourage holistic competency development.

**Criterion 2B: Teaching and learning activities are suitable for achieving the intended holistic competency outcomes**

**Indicator 2B(i):** Teaching and learning activities are appropriate for the intended holistic competency outcomes.

**Indicator 2B(ii):** A variety of teaching and learning activities are employed in the course for holistic competency development.

**Criterion 2C: Holistic competency should have experiential learning elements**

*Indicator 2C(i): Students are given opportunities to experience and reflect during the development of the intended holistic competency outcomes.*

*Indicator 2C(ii): Students are given opportunities to acquire/apply competencies in real-life contexts.*

### **AREA 3: \*STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

\*Note: Assessment or grading of each competency is not necessary if clear justification between the curriculum design and the teaching and learning activities is provided.

#### **Criterion 3A: Assessment tasks that are suitable for measuring the attainment of the intended holistic competency outcomes**

*Indicator 3A(i): Assessment tasks provide appropriate contexts/opportunities for students to demonstrate the competencies developed.*

*Indicator 3A(ii): Grading methods and weightings are appropriate for the levels of student attainment for the intended holistic competency outcomes.*

#### **Criterion 3B: Assessment design facilitates improvement in holistic competencies**

*Indicator 3B(i): Assessment tasks help students advance in their holistic competency development.*

#### **Criterion 3C: Evidence of student assessment on holistic competency should be documented**

*Indicator 3C(i): Evidence of student assessment on holistic competency should be documented.*

### **AREA 4: \*FEEDBACK MECHANISM**

\*Note: Feedback can be formal and informal. For holistic competency development, some times informal feedback can be effective.

#### **Criterion 4A: Mechanism for feedback is integrated into the curriculum to enhance student development of holistic competencies**

*Indicator 4A(i): Feedback is provided at various occasions.*

*Indicator 4A(ii): Student uptake of feedback is encouraged to improve competency development.*

#### **Criterion 4B: Student feedback on holistic competency development should be documented**

*Indicator 4B(i): Student feedback on holistic competency development should be documented.*

### **AREA 5: STAFF QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Criterion 5A: Staff members have sufficient teaching experience in the development of holistic competencies**

*Indicator 5A(i): Teaching staff members have a minimum of two years' experience in teaching courses that incorporate holistic competency development.*

**Criterion 5B: Opportunities for continuous professional development in holistic competency development**

*Indicator 5B(i): Staff members engage in continuous professional development training on the teaching and learning of holistic competencies.*

*Indicator 5B(ii): Staff members participate in professional learning networks/communities in holistic competency.*

**Criterion 5C: Research and publications in holistic competencies**

*Indicator 5C(i): Staff members have participated in research, community and/or commercial projects concerning holistic competency development.*

*Indicator 5C(ii): Staff members have produced publications (web resources, reports, conference papers, journals) related to holistic competency development.*

*Indicator 5C(iii): Staff members have shared their work on holistic competency development with other stakeholders such as peers, public, NGOs, government, education institutions.*

**AREA 6: MONITORING & CONTINUAL ENHANCEMENT**

**Criterion 6A: The course undergoes quality review by external reviewers**

*Indicator 6A(i): Quality review focuses on curriculum design related to holistic competency.*

*Indicator 6A(ii): Quality review includes evidence of student learning on holistic competency.*

*Indicator 6A(iii): Quality review includes utilization of current best practices for teaching and learning in holistic competency.*

**Criterion 6B: Outcomes of the quality review processes are utilised for course enhancement to promote student holistic competency development**

*Indicator 6B(i): Monitoring and review processes lead to improvements in course learning outcomes and curriculum to enhance student competency development.*

*Indicator 6B(ii): Monitoring and review processes lead to improvements in the design of holistic competency assessment.*

**Criterion 6C: Outcomes of the quality review processes are utilised for enhancing the teaching and learning of holistic competencies**

**Indicator 6C(i):** Monitoring and review processes lead to improvements in approaches to teaching holistic competencies.

**Indicator 6C(ii):** Monitoring and review processes lead to recommendations for staff professional development.

#### IV. Essential and Optional Requirements

Essential requirements are compulsory indicators of quality that must be met for a course to be accredited by the International Holistic Competency Foundation. Optional requirements are not mandatory, but courses that fulfil these requirements in addition to essential requirements demonstrate a high level of quality in promoting students' holistic competency development.

In Stage 1, there are eleven essential indicators that must be fulfilled for a course to be given provisional accreditation.

Table 1. Stage 1 requirements.

Criteria	Essential	Optional
<b>AREA 1: OUTCOMES</b>		
Criterion 1A: The course learning outcomes for holistic competency are documented and disseminated to stakeholders		
<i>Indicator 1A(i): Holistic competency outcomes are clearly specified in the course. The intended holistic competency outcomes must be from the 14 competencies currently identified by the International Holistic Competency Foundation.</i>	✓	
<i>Indicator 1A(ii): Applicant must choose at least one holistic competency outcome from the 14 competencies as identified by the International Holistic Competency Foundation that students are expected to develop at the end of the course.</i>	✓	
<i>Indicator 1A(iii): The course learning outcomes for holistic competency are made available to staff and students.</i>	✓	
Criterion 1B: The course provides opportunities for holistic competency development		
<i>Indicator 1B(i): The course provides opportunities for the development of the specified holistic competency as indicated in Criterion 1A.</i>	✓	
Criteria 1C: Holistic competency outcomes and course/programme learning outcomes must be clearly aligned		
<i>Indicator 1C(i): Holistic competency outcomes must be clearly aligned with course learning outcomes.</i> <i>*For programme only</i> <i>Indicator 1C(i)*: Holistic competency outcomes must be clearly aligned with course learning outcomes, programme learning outcomes and graduate attributes (if available).</i> <i>*A programme structure may consist of graduate attributes (also known as institutional learning outcomes, educational aims), programme learning outcomes, course learning outcomes and holistic competency outcomes.</i>	✓	
<b>AREA 2: TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES</b>		

Criterion 2A: The curriculum of the course provides the necessary means for achieving the intended holistic competency outcomes		
<i>Indicator 2A(i): The curriculum provides appropriate contexts for the development of holistic competencies.</i>	✓	
<i>Indicator 2A(ii): A broad variety of teaching and learning materials are used to encourage holistic competency development.</i>		✓
Criterion 2B: Teaching and learning activities are suitable for achieving the intended holistic competency outcomes		
<i>Indicator 2B(i): Teaching and learning activities are appropriate for the intended holistic competency outcomes.</i>	✓	
<i>Indicator 2B(ii): A variety of teaching and learning activities are employed in the course for holistic competency development.</i>		✓
Criterion 2C: Holistic competency should have experiential learning elements		
<i>Indicator 2C(i): Students are given opportunities to experience and reflect during the development of the intended holistic competency outcomes.</i>		✓
<i>Indicator 2C(ii): Students are given opportunities to acquire/apply competencies in real-life contexts.</i>		✓
<b>AREA 3: *STUDENT ASSESSMENT</b>		
*Note: Assessment or grading of each competency is not necessary if clear justification between the curriculum design and the teaching and learning activities is provided.		
Criterion 3A: Assessment tasks that are suitable for measuring the attainment of the intended holistic competency outcomes		
<i>Indicator 3A(i): Assessment tasks provide appropriate contexts/opportunities for students to demonstrate the competencies developed.</i>	✓	
<i>Indicator 3A(ii): Grading methods and weightings are appropriate for the levels of student attainment for the intended holistic competency outcomes.</i>	✓	
Criterion 3B: Assessment design facilitates improvement in holistic competencies		
<i>Indicator 3B(i): Assessment tasks help students advance in their holistic competency development.</i>		✓
Criterion 3C: Evidence of student assessment on holistic competency should be documented		
<i>Indicator 3C(i): Evidence of student assessment on holistic competency should be documented.</i>	✓	
<b>AREA 4: *FEEDBACK MECHANISM</b>		
*Note: Feedback can be formal and informal. For holistic competency development, some times informal feedback can be effective.		
Criterion 4A: Mechanism for feedback is integrated into the curriculum to enhance student development of holistic competencies		
<i>Indicator 4A(i): Feedback is provided at various occasions.</i>	✓	
<i>Indicator 4A(ii): Student uptake of feedback is encouraged to improve competency development.</i>		✓

Criterion 4B: Student feedback on holistic competency development should be documented		
<i>Indicator 4B(i): Student feedback on holistic competency development should be documented.</i>		✓

In Stage 2, essential evidence must be provided, and at least one indicator for each criterion must be fulfilled as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Stage 2 requirements.

Evidence	Requirement
Programme/course guides or weblinks to programme learning outcomes	Essential
Course outline	Essential
Sample assessment tasks	Essential
Three samples of assessed student work demonstrating low, average, and high performance in the competency assessed	Essential
Sample feedback given on student work. Provide one sample for each type of feedback.	Essential
Staff CVs	Essential
Criteria	Requirement
<b>AREA 5: STAFF QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Criterion 5A: Staff members have sufficient teaching experience in the development of holistic competencies	
<i>Indicator 5A(i): Teaching staff members have a minimum of two years' experience in teaching courses that incorporate holistic competency development.</i>	Essential
Criterion 5B: Opportunities for continuous professional development in holistic competency development	
<i>Indicator 5B(i): Staff members engage in continuous professional development training on the teaching and learning of holistic competencies.</i>	Any one of the indicators
<i>Indicator 5B(ii): Staff members participate in professional learning networks/communities in holistic competency.</i>	
Criterion 5C: Research and publications in holistic competencies	
<i>Indicator 5C(i): Staff members have participated in research, community and/or commercial projects concerning holistic competency development.</i>	Any one of the indicators
<i>Indicator 5C(ii): Staff members have produced publications (web resources, reports, conference papers, journals) related to holistic competency development.</i>	
<i>Indicator 5C(iii): Staff members have shared their work on holistic competency development with other stakeholders such as peers, public, NGOs, government, education institutions.</i>	
<b>AREA 6: MONITORING &amp; CONTINUAL ENHANCEMENT</b>	
Criterion 6A: The course undergoes quality review by external reviewers	

<i>Indicator 6A(i): Quality review focuses on curriculum design related to holistic competency.</i>	Any one of the indicators
<i>Indicator 6A(ii): Quality review includes evidence of student learning on holistic competency.</i>	
<i>Indicator 6A(iii): Quality review includes utilization of current best practices for teaching and learning in holistic competency.</i>	
Criterion 6B: Outcomes of the quality review processes are utilised for course enhancement to promote student holistic competency development	
<i>Indicator 6B(i): Monitoring and review processes lead to improvements in course learning outcomes and curriculum to enhance student competency development.</i>	Any one of the indicators
<i>Indicator 6B(ii): Monitoring and review processes lead to improvements in the design of holistic competency assessment.</i>	
Criterion 6C: Outcomes of the quality review processes are utilised for enhancing the teaching and learning of holistic competencies	
<i>Indicator 6C(i): Monitoring and review processes lead to improvements in approaches to teaching holistic competencies.</i>	Any one of the indicators
<i>Indicator 6C(ii): Monitoring and review processes lead to recommendations for staff professional development.</i>	

## References

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