The Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Special Meeting on Saturday, 17 May 2014

"Proposal to establish a Unified Information and Communications Technology Professional Recognition Framework in Hong Kong"

This is a formal response from the Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS) to the captioned Proposal.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS)

Founded in 1970, HKCS is the oldest and largest non-profit organization focused on developing Hong Kong's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) profession and industry. With over 9,000 corporate and individual members from a broad spectrum of local ICT community, HKCS strives to raise the profile and standard of the ICT profession as well as the industry as a whole.

1.1.1 ICT Professional Development

Two core missions of the HKCS are **talent cultivation**, which is to encourage our youths to understand the importance of ICT to a knowledge-based economy, to encourage them to take up ICT related courses in tertiary institutions and to adopt ICT as a career; and **professional development** for ICT professionals throughout their career, through ICT seminars/conferences and Special Interest Groups (SIG) to update their knowledge, and by establishing a quality certification scheme to recognize their professional competencies in specific areas of expertise.

1.1.2 Professional Recognition Scheme

The HKCS, as an ICT professional body, recognizes the importance of establishing a quality professional certification scheme for Hong Kong. Not only does it promote awareness of ICT in our general community, a quality scheme can also provide significant benefits at both organizational and individual levels.

Benefits to Organizations

• Raising the standard of ICT professionals recruitment
• Assuring ICT staff's professional competency
• Strengthening ICT resource pool and increasing competitiveness
• Continuous update and upgrade on ICT staff's knowledge through recertification

Benefits to Individuals

• Recognition of ICT professional status

• Value-add to personal profile

• Continuous upgrade and update on ICT knowledge and competency

• Distinct and structural roadmap for professional development and career advancement

1.2 Hong Kong Institute for IT Professional Certification (HKITPC)

With a view to implement the afore-mentioned recognition scheme and realize its associated benefits, both the ICT user community and service provider community requested support from the HKCS to establish a professional qualification standard to ease recruitment (from employer company angle) and to foster individual professional development (from employee career progress angle). To the industry as a whole, this will enhance service quality for ICT services/products which has now become part of everyday life.

In response the HKCS established the HKITPC in 2007 to develop, administer and award the first-ever professional certified title CPIT (Certified Professional in IT) in Hong Kong. As a non-profit organization, HKITPC's development has been empowered by hundreds of highly experienced ICT professionals and subject matters experts from academic institutions and professional bodies, with strong support and active participation from the employers and business communities.

1.2.1 The HKITPC has the following objectives:

• It aims to establish CPIT to become a recognized professional qualification and certified ICT practitioners to be recognized by government as well as corporates as Professionals;

• Raising and assuring the professional standard of ICT practitioners;

• Providing a yardstick for the business community on the recruitment and career advancement of their ICT staff;

• Reinforcing the quality standard of ICT for service providers in contract bidding and implementation.

1.2.2 Six CPIT Titles

With some seed funding from the Hong Kong Government and involvement of over 100 volunteering ICT experts, the HKITPC has established six CPIT titles, three at Master Level, and three at Practitioner Level:

CPIT (PD, SA, QAM) at Master Level

1. Project Director

2. Systems Architect

3. Quality Assurance Manager

CPIT (APM, InfoSec, BA) at Practitioner Level

1. Associate Project Manager

2. Information Security Officer

3. Business Analyst

1.2.3 The challenges faced by HKITPC

While all stakeholders unanimously agree on and endorse its mission, since its inception the HKITPC has faced substantial challenges to enroll a critical mass of certified professionals to sustain its operations for a number of reasons including the following:

- Pioneering ICT certification is financially challenging, with invariably a deficit business model in early years when significant expenses are incurred in promotion and administration, while it often takes years before a sustainable economy of scale can be attained;

- HKCS/HKITPC is a body of volunteers who are excellent in implementing projects (EG the creation of our CPIT titles) but not necessarily best equipped and organised for an on-going operation of such a wide scope and large magnitude;

- Up to the present moment, HK Government through OGCIO has only provided a level of seed money on project basis (non-recurrent) in the creation of the CPIT titles; and

- HKCS/HKITPC is an NGO with very limited financial capacity, while recurring funding are critical to maintaining the HKITPC operations in marketing, promotion and administration.

All in all, the sustainable success of ICT professional recognition ultimately depends upon the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, including the Government, ICT vendors and user organizations, and of course the practitioners themselves, in their recognition and promotion of, and conviction in the values of a quality certification scheme in advancing the interests of the ICT profession and hence the interests of our knowledge-based society.

Concerted leadership, efforts and resources, in particular from the Government, are keys to ensure sustainability of professional recognition to realize its agreed and recognized objectives. A constructive scenario for leadership from the Government and user organisations would be, for instance, in various tenders for ICT services to include the recognition of the CPIT qualifications of the proposed manpower resources from suppliers, thus instituting impetus for vendors and individuals to consider enrolment and certification.

2.0 The Government Proposal

2.1 The HKCS welcomes the current OGCIO endeavor initiated in 2013 to set up a Task Force on ICT Professional Development and Recognition. This is an important strategic milestone in the road to ICT professional recognition, and the HKCS commends the leadership of OGCIO in creating The Unified ICT Professional Recognition Framework in Hong Kong the deliberation of which has led to this informative proposal.

Throughout the working of the Task Force leading up to this Panel public hearing, the HKCS has been kept aware of its deliberations, and has provided relevant information in particular our work with HKITPC as well as participated in the industry consultation sessions in March and April 2014.

The HKCS is indeed appreciative that the Paper **"Establishing a Unified Information and Communications Technology Professional Recognition Framework in Hong Kong"** submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting reflects much of the pioneering thought leadership, competency QF based framework and organizational approach as experienced by HKCS/HKITPC. **The HKCS is, generally and overall, strongly supportive of the Paper.**

2.2 Similarly, strong support from the industry and user organisations can be gauged and extrapolated from a recent survey conducted by HKITPC with the HKCS CIO Board, which is composed of the CIOs in HK who are responsible for a substantial share of ICT spending in the Territory. The survey was conducted in 1st Quarter of 2014 aimed at collecting data from the CIOs for the Certified Professional of IT (CPIT) credential development, a scheme, as described earlier in this submission, of which its mission and objectives are much aligned with that of the Government's proposal.

Highlights from the Survey

➢ **90%** of respondents have already adopted or planned to sponsor or reimburse CPIT training fee for staff within 6-12 months.

➢ **80%** of respondents have already adopted or planned to include "CPIT Preferred" in their job ads within 6-12 months.

➢ **70%** of respondents planned to include "CPIT Weighting" in the tender selection.

➢ **60%** of respondents have already adopted or planned to include "CPIT Preferred" in the tender specifications within 6-12 months.

➢ **60%** of respondents have already adopted or planned to introduce incentive awards for staff who successfully acquired CPIT Certifications within 6-12 months.

➢ **60%** of respondents have already adopted or planned to sponsor or reimburse CPIT certification fee for staff within 6-12 months.

➢ **60%** of respondents agreed to organize CPIT briefing to their IT staff or HR management by HKITPC.

A Summary of the HKCS CIO Board Survey Results is in Appendix 1.

2.3 With our understanding and experience in developing and administering professional certification schemes the HKCS/HKITPC is strongly supportive of the Proposal, in particular, the key principles of the proposed Framework,

- that it should be voluntary-based
- that it should recognize the ICT professional qualification schemes (rather than individual professionals)
- that it should align with local and international ICT qualifications and competency frameworks to gain local and international recognition more easily.

We welcome the proposal to operationally set up a non-profit making, non-statutory Awarding Body for the management, operations and on-going development of the proposed Framework; and that the Government would provide funding for the start-up costs as well as the operating expenses for the first three years. We take note that the proposed organizational structure for the Awarding Body is very similar to the organizational structure of the HKITPC, though we wish to emphasis that the Assessment Committee should have the power to form ad-hoc expert panels with expertise relevant to the assessment of the particular application from a professional qualification scheme.

Finally, we stress upon the essential need for Government to take a primary and leadership role in developing, promoting and nurturing this Proposed Framework to the speedy achievement of a critical mass in the adoption of the Framework. This leadership is paramount in mobilizing and encouraging the ICT user, vendor and professional communities to work together synergistically to achieve the mission and objectives of the Proposed Framework.
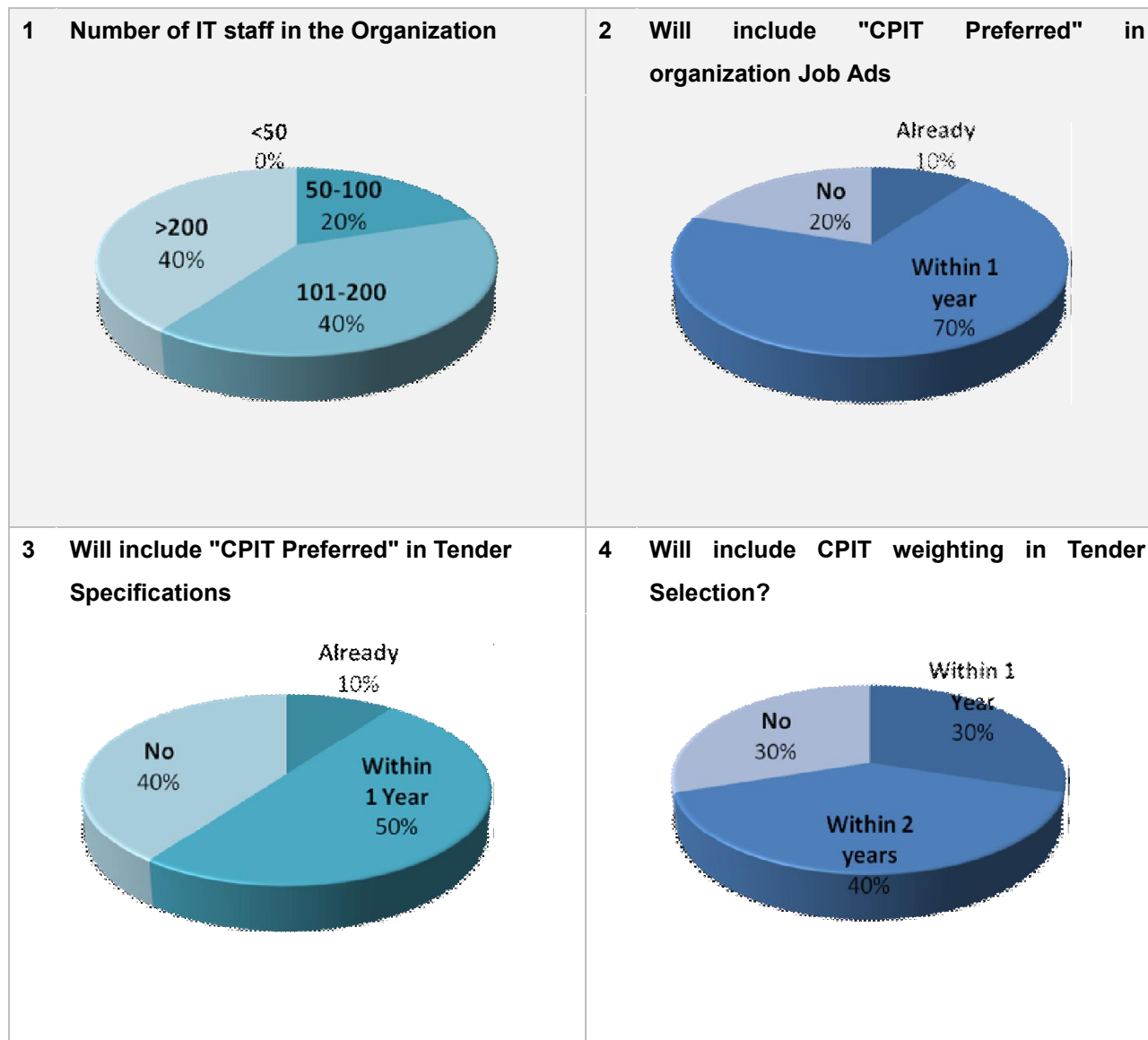
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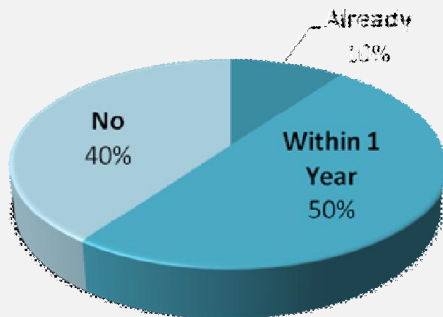
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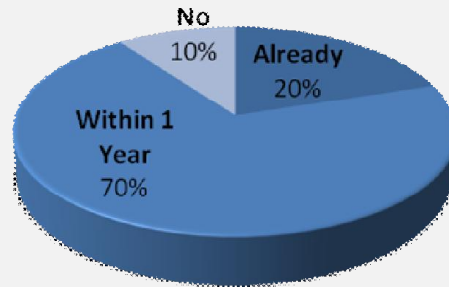**May 2014**

Appendix 1

Summary of HKCS CIO Board Survey Result

1 Number of IT staff in the Organization	2 Will include "CPIT Preferred" in organization Job Ads

3 Will include "CPIT Preferred" in Tender Specifications	4 Will include CPIT weighting in Tender Selection?

5 Will introduce incentive awards for staff successfully acquired CPIT Certifications

Already 10%
No 40%
Within 1 Year 50%

6 Will sponsor/ reimburse CPIT Training Fee for staff

No 10%
Already 20%
Within 1 Year 70%

7 Will sponsor/ reimburse CPIT Certification Fee for staff

Already 10%
No 40%
Within 1 Year 50%
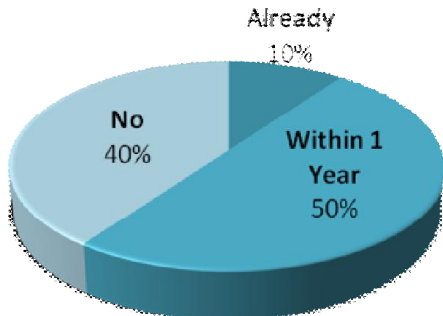
8 Would like to invite HKITPC to conduct further CPIT briefing to IT staff/HR management.

No 40%
Yes 60%