

Evaluation and Benchmarking of the Diploma in Food Inspection and Testing Technology from Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology

Context and scope

Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology commissioned Ecctis for an independent evaluation and benchmarking of its Diploma in Food Inspection and Testing Technology, which was completed in October 2023.

The Diploma in Food Inspection and Testing Technology is one of 56 programmes delivered by the College including programmes in marketing, cloud computing, e-commerce, accounting, and business administration.

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 Food Inspection and Testing Technology seeks to develop students' knowledge in food processing, food management, and food inspection. 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 equating to approximately 2240 hours' guided learning time. Reflecting its vocational focus, the Diploma combines classroom-based study with practical-based simulated learning and a 368-hour internship and capstone project in which students can develop their practical skills and assess their learning within the workplace.

¹ To date, a total of 36 countries have now referenced their national education systems to the EQF.

Upon completion, many students enter the workforce;² however, some students will be eligible 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 Food Inspection and Testing Technology, namely that it demonstrated:

- The Diploma emphasises practical components, which allow for students to consolidate and apply theoretical learning. The practical component of the Diploma is regarded as one of the most successful teaching tools by both teaching staff and students.
- The College has extensive laboratory facilities where students have the chance to experiment and learn up-to-date techniques for food inspection (such as chromatography techniques and other relevant methods used in the field of food inspection and technology).
- The Diploma offers students the chance to improve occupational skills through the modules and training that they offer, which is enriched by collaboration with other professional institutions.
- The orientation of student enrolment strategy to regional social and economic needs ensures that there are sufficient employment opportunities for students when they graduate.
- The combination of annual staff evaluation and promotion of personal development fosters a commitment to improvement.

In terms of international comparability, the Diploma in Food Inspection and Testing 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**

² The employment rate of graduates is typically 99%.

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

Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology has committed to further development and engagement encompassing:

- Writing new learning outcomes at programme and module level, ensuring these are specific; measurable; and that an indicative 60% of the programme targets a higher level of knowledge and critical thinking skills.
- Developing a programme assessment framework/plan. Adopting assessment and marking approaches that sufficiently test critical thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation.
- Ensuring that there is a clear policy on programme assessment plans and linked to secondary marking. Assessments should be developed so that they are clearly linked to intended learning outcomes. There should be clear limits on the use and weighting of attendance as part of the assessment.
- Maintaining and ensuring adoption by all staff of the unified quality assurance handbook.

Ecctis is a gold-standard provider of services in international education, training, and skills, and in the development and recognition of globally portable qualifications. We are an internationally trusted and respected reference point for qualifications and skills standards.

We are UK-based and operate worldwide, with a global network and client base spanning 62 countries and 5 continents. We have a 20-year track record in international consultancy and development.

Ecctis provides official UK national agency services on behalf of the UK Government in qualifications, skills, and migration – including UK ENIC, formerly UK NARIC.

UK ENIC is the UK National Information Centre for global qualifications and skills. Following the UK's leaving the EU, the former UK NARIC recognition agency function changes from a NARIC (which is an EU-only title) to an ENIC (the wider European title for national recognition agencies) in order to meet the UK's continuing treaty obligations under the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#).

Since 2019, through our China representatives and Beijing office Nalike we have conducted qualification benchmarking in China and fostered educational links between China and other countries, to support the internationalisation efforts of China's higher vocational colleges.