

Fellowship of Trinity College London and Its Equivalence in Malaysia

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Abstract: Trinity College London currently offers eight FTCL qualifications, which are recognized at Level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework in the UK. This article seeks to explain the equivalence of the FTCL qualifications in Malaysia through an exploration of the qualifications' level, learning hours and the learning outcomes.

Keywords: Fellowship of Trinity College London; FTCL; Level 7 qualification; Master-equivalent qualification; Malaysia Qualifications Framework

Introduction

Trinity College London (TCL) ⁱ is an examination board established by Trinity College of Music ⁱⁱ in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1877, and is currently offering qualifications in the areas of Music, Speech and Drama, TESOL and English. As an examination board, TCL and all its qualifications are recognized and approved by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which is an independent government regulator of qualifications and examinations in the UK. TCL offers a range of diploma examinations at higher level, with the Fellowship of Trinity College London (FTCL) as its highest-level qualification. Currently, there are eight FTCL qualifications, in areas of Education Studies (including TESOL), Directing, Music (Composition, Theory and Performance), and Performing. The FTCL qualifications carry between 225 and 240 credits and are all recognized at Level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) ⁱⁱⁱ. This article seeks to explain the equivalence of FTCL qualifications in Malaysia.

Malaysian Qualifications Framework

The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) ^{iv} was established by the Ministry of Education Malaysia in 2004. It was launched as a streamlined effort not only to regulate private higher education, but to also govern the public and transnational higher education in Malaysia [1]. The successful implementation of the MQF is also essential because it was the Malaysian government's plan to transform the country into an international hub for higher education [2]. Likewise UK's NQF, MQF has got a total of eight levels, with three qualifications at level 7 – Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and

Master. These three qualifications differ in credits, which suggests different learning hours. In the MQF document (page 5), it is clearly stated that one credit in Malaysia is equivalent to 40 learning hours. Learning hours consist of both guided learning hours, which refers to the time where candidates are given direct guidance towards the learning aim of the qualification [3], and independent study, which usually comprises of self-study, research and time spent on fulfilling the assessment components [4]. A taught/ partially taught Master in Malaysia, which carries 40 credits, should minimally consist of 1600 learning hours. The Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate have lower credit at 30 credits (1200 learning hours) and 20 credits (800 learning hours) respectively. The MQF document also clearly states that the Master qualification is considered an academic qualification with a focus on knowledge and comprehension as well as the application and synthesizing of the knowledge in new and complex situations. On the other hand, Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate qualifications are considered more professional than academic in nature, and focus more on the training and development of a competent practitioner within a specific field.

Equivalence of FTCL in Malaysia

To establish the equivalence of the FTCL qualifications in Malaysia, one has to first look at the qualifications' standing in the UK. As mentioned, the various FTCL qualifications range between 225 credits to 240 credits at Level 7 of the NQF. To register or enroll into this qualification, it is a requirement for the candidate to have a Level 6 qualification, which is equivalent to a Bachelor degree, in a relevant field. In the UK, one credit is equivalent to ten learning hours (guided and independent). Hence, the learning hours for

the FTCL qualifications should range between 2250 hours and 2400 hours. The Ofqual register also indicates the prescribed guided learning hours of each FTCL qualification. The FTCL in Directing, for instance, has a prescribed guided learning hours of 150 hours. This means that a candidate taking this qualification requires 150 hours of guidance from an experienced or qualified instructor/ supervisor. However, being a 240 credits qualification, the FTCL in Directing still require 2400 hours of learning hours. This further suggests that the candidate will need to spend at least another 2250 hours of self directed independent study and research. Likewise the MQF, the NQF also has the same three qualifications at Level 7. The Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma qualifications should have at least 600 (60 credits) and 1200 learning hours (120 credits) respectively. The Master qualification should consist of at least 1800 learning hours (180 credits). It is therefore surmise to say that at Level 7 and with minimally 2250 learning hours, the FTCL qualifications are equivalent to a Master qualification in the UK. The equivalence is consistently indicated in TCL's website and other printed materials.

A Master qualification in Malaysia typically consists of 1600 learning hours, guided and independent combined. To be considered for enrollment into a Master degree, candidates are required to have a Bachelor degree in a relevant field. In this aspect, the FTCL qualifications meet the requirement of the Master in Malaysia in terms of its entry requirements as well as learning hours. The learning outcomes of the FTCL qualifications also exceed that of training and developing a competent practitioner required of a postgraduate diploma or certificate qualification. The FTCL qualifications are rigorous, academic qualifications, which requires the candidates to demonstrate knowledge at the forefront of the discipline. Furthermore, candidates must be able to show originality in the application and synthesis of the

knowledge through a substantial research process. Finally, the candidates must be able to apply the knowledge to solve problems in complex situations^v. These learning outcomes matches that of what was discussed in the earlier section for a Master qualification within the context of the MQF.

Conclusion

Both TCL and its qualifications (which includes the FTCL qualifications) are recognized and accredited by Ofqual, an independent UK government regulator of qualifications and assessments. The FTCL qualifications have always been a debate because of the term *Fellowship*, which does not necessarily suggest a level of qualification. However, a Fellowship usually suggests a graduate level connection to an institution (in this case, Trinity College of London). This article explores both the learning hours and the learning outcomes of the FTCL qualifications in depth to justify the equivalence of the qualifications to a Master degree in Malaysia. It is recommended, therefore, that Universities in Malaysia consider the FTCL qualifications on par with Master-level qualifications in the enrollment of candidates for doctoral studies in the areas of performing arts and English.

References

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3. Tummons J; Curriculum Studies in the Lifelong Learning Sector. Learning Matters, 2002.
4. Johnsen SK, Goree K; Independent Study for Gifted Learners. Prufrock Press Inc, 2005.

Notes

ⁱ Visit Trinity College London's website at <http://www.trinitycollege.com/>

ⁱⁱ Trinity College of Music is currently known as Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, which is formed after the merger of Trinity College of Music and Laban Dance Centre in 2005. Visit website at <http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/>

ⁱⁱⁱ The qualification information are collected from the Ofqual register, which indicates the accreditation information, qualification levels, credits, guided learning hours and assessment components.

^{iv} The Malaysian Qualifications Framework document can be assessed via the Malaysian Qualifications Agency's website: <http://www.mqa.gov.my/portal2012/default/en/mqf.cfm>

^v The learning outcomes of each FTCL qualification are listed in the syllabus of TCL's qualifications handbook, which can be downloaded for free from TCL's website.