

Developing upper secondary education content

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 FINLAND

Timeline

2022 Approved/Agreed

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

ID number 43183

Background

Efforts have been made in VET to increase the personalisation of education and opportunities for individual choices. Legislation on VET and national qualifications requirements already make it possible to combine learning acquired in different qualifications and forms or levels of education. However, education providers are not obliged to provide all qualification units that have been specified as optional. In addition, education providers find it laborious to offer their learners training that is provided by other education providers.

Cooperation with other education providers requires agreements, invoicing, coordination of different term systems and curricula, as well as continuous cooperation in study guidance and monitoring of training progress. Within a qualification, options are sometimes narrowed down, for example, by the fact that ensuring basic professional skills, for one or another reason, requires many competences that are defined as compulsory.

VET qualifications comprise several objectives. In addition to ensuring the necessary skills for working life, they must contribute to the development of the common skills required in all fields and the capacity to study further at tertiary level. The aim is that, by 2030, at least half of young adults will complete a higher education degree, and, more often than at present, those with a vocational qualification will also continue their studies at tertiary level. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to improve the opportunities of VET graduates to enrol in higher education, for example, by strengthening their general competences (basic skills, critical thinking and learning to learn), especially for those with initial vocational qualifications.

Boundaries between the different types, levels and fields of education must be reduced by combining VET with general upper secondary education throughout Finland. The aim is also to improve the opportunities for VET learners to complete the matriculation examination and the initial vocational qualification in parallel (parallel studies to complete two or more qualifications). Achieving this objective requires developing the funding system and increasing cooperation between education providers. Both general upper secondary education and VET also need to be developed in their own forms of education, which have their own functions.

Working life and individuals need skills beyond the levels and fields of education, as new skill needs arise at the intersection of different qualifications. It is important to be able to incorporate more qualification units into vocational qualifications, including units of other vocational qualifications or higher education studies. The possibility for VET learners to incorporate higher education studies into their vocational qualification increases the

capacity for further studies and offers the opportunity to build flexible paths from VET to higher education. In addition, it strengthens the professional skills of the learner.

Employment or remaining in the labour market does not always require the completion of a full qualification, and even a small competence module may suffice. Vocational qualifications consist of extensive qualification units based on work packages. It is already possible to complete individual qualification units. However, it has been observed that the education system and qualification structure need competence modules that are smaller than the current qualification units. This will allow an individual gradually to accumulate competences according to their own needs and abilities.

Objectives

Developing upper secondary education content aims to:

- (a) make it possible to combine studies in VET, general upper secondary education and higher education more flexibly and comprehensively;
- (b) strengthen the capacity for further education, e.g., higher education in VET as well as in general upper secondary education;
- (c) meet the changing skill needs of the labour market;
- (d) increase the legal protection and equality of learners who acquire two qualifications (initial vocational qualification and matriculation examination) in parallel;
- (e) provide a clearer legal framework for the existing form of training;
- (f) improve the efficiency of the education system by reducing inappropriate overlapping or sequential training which is not needed in working life.

Description

The development comprises several actions.

The expansion of initial vocational qualifications above 180 competence points need to be enabled, given they include more general upper secondary education studies, higher education studies and/or vocational qualification units. The possibility of expansion is set to be limited by 30 competence points. The expansion of a qualification is to be recorded in the learner's personal competence development plan and funded, regardless of the type of studies (general upper secondary education or higher education) through which the initial vocational qualification is being extended. Provisions on combining the studies of an initial vocational qualification and general upper secondary education need to be clarified: for example, from the perspective of applying for education, right to study, recognition of prior learning and funding.

Further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications need to be developed in a broad working group in accordance with the Education policy report. This is so that further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications are developed as an appropriate package together with the development of upper secondary education and, particularly, initial vocational qualifications. In addition, the opportunities for an individual to complete competence modules smaller than a qualification unit and gradually accumulate competences according to personal resources and abilities, current life situation and need, are to be increased. Qualification contents will also be developed to strengthen skills related to the digital and green transition.

2022 Approved/Agreed

In 2022, the current state of play in VET was analysed to help develop operations in a challenging workforce situation and to prepare for demographic changes. The findings show that, in Finland, the age group of comprehensive education graduates is to fall sharply after 2030. This challenges the current organisational structure and ways of implementing education.

The analysis also showed the need to renew the funding system for vocational

education to become less complicated and serve all customer groups in the best possible way.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, TUTKE4 (development of qualifications and competence assessment) group's work focused on implementing micro-credentials and strengthening the basic skills of students to ensure successful transitions to further studies or working life. In addition, the group worked to draw up recommendations on how to enhance the competences related to green transition and digital transformation in vocational qualifications.

The TUTKE4 working group ended its term in 2023 and the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) started implementing the group's recommendations to increase flexibility in VET qualifications. Recommendations for increasing flexibility in VET and proposals to strengthen competence related to the digital and green transition in VET qualifications were drawn up.

In 2023, *Digital competence in vocational education - a guide to the articulation of competence* was published by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). The publication supported the development of the contents of VET from the point of view of promoting digitalisation in various industries. The guide is aimed at those working and studying in VET but also at those involved in the reform of the qualification requirements in VET.

2024 Implementation

Based on the TUTKE4 working group's final report, published in 2023, the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) continued implementing the working group's recommendations. To strengthen the competences required by digitalisation and the green transition, EDUFI started drawing up new qualification units in these topics. These units can be completed as parts of a qualification or as separate individual microcredentials. For reinforcing flexibility in further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications, EDUFI started the plans to make it possible to include into them vocational units from another VET qualification, higher education studies, or vocational units based on local competence needs. In October, the drafts of the new qualification units were published for comments.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Culture
- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Entities providing VET

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Integrating green transition and sustainability in VET curricula and programmes

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Project Development of cooperation and organisational structure in upper secondary education](#)

Related policy developments

2023 Completed

Reinforcing the 2018 VET reform

A new Act on VET was adopted in June 2017 and entered into force in January 2018. The focus of the implementation of this latest reform is on the following elements:

 FINLAND

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2018 Completed

Reform of the vocational qualifications requirements

There was a need to strengthen the learning outcomes approach of vocational qualification requirements, the modular structure of qualifications, flexibility and individualisation in learning paths and validation of prior learning.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/43183>