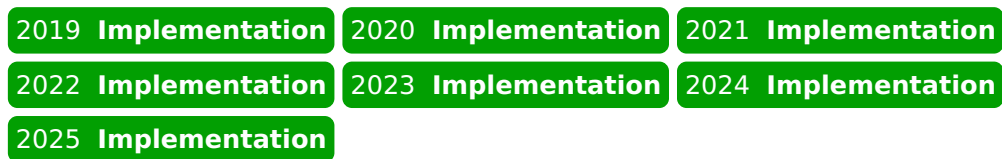


Quality framework for schools



Timeline



ID number 38685

Background

The Education Reform Act came into force in September 2017. The main goals of this law are the expansion of school autonomy, i.e. the creation of more freedom in educational, organisational and personnel decisions for each school, and – as an accompanying measure – the improvement of quality management.

However, more freedom at the location requires careful quality assurance and quality control in the background to guarantee the best education for learners. The provisions laid down in the Education Reform Act have been implemented gradually since the law came into force. One important step in this regard was taken in 2019 with the establishment of the new boards of education, which will play a major role in quality management and education control in schools.

Objectives

- (a) the establishment of a quality framework for schools that describes the essential characteristics of school quality and forms a binding, content-based foundation of the quality management system for all schools;
- (b) the quality framework is intended to contribute to a common understanding of the essential characteristics of school quality at all levels of the school system and to serve as an orientation for successful school and teaching development;
- (c) it is a basis for all essential initiatives and measures affecting the school system, such as pedagogical reform projects of the Ministry of Education, school development monitoring, education monitoring, internal and external evaluation, and many more;
- (d) the overall aim is to create the best possible conditions for education and learning.

Description

With the introduction of the Board of Education, which started its operational work in October 2019, a new administrative authority was created in which the administrative tasks of the Federal and State governments are brought together. The nine offices (one in each

province) perform uniform tasks throughout Austria that were previously constitutionally based in the offices of the State governments and organised differently from province to province.

Within the Boards of Education, a pedagogical service has been established, which is also responsible for school supervision and hence quality management. This is thus closely related to the development of a quality framework for schools.

The quality framework was implemented on 1 January 2021. This is a key step towards the implementation of the new quality management system for schools (QMS), which is to be introduced at the beginning of the school year 2021/22 and in which the two existing systems (SQA for general education schools and QIBB for VET schools) are to be merged.

The quality framework was developed by experts from the Ministry of Education together with pedagogues and experts in quality assurance.

The quality framework represents the binding basis for goal and impact-oriented school development, due to the increase in autonomy, this is a task for each school location. The quality framework serves as a guide and creates a commitment for everyone involved in the school development process:

- (a) it primarily serves to support school principals by means of clear guidelines and target images, to promote school development and to achieve corresponding effects and results;
- (b) the quality framework offers teachers clarity for the design of lessons and lesson development. It makes the criteria, by which schools and teaching should develop, visible for teachers;
- (c) the quality framework offers learners, legal guardians and non-school partners reliable reference points to be able to contribute meaningfully and for the result-oriented development of a school location.

The quality framework also contributes to a uniform understanding of school quality at all levels of the school system – both for all actors involved in school development and for all processes and instruments used:

- (a) in the context of quality management, it is the basis for the school development plan, which in turn forms the basis for the management performance reviews between the school management and the school quality manager;
- (b) it is the basis for the structure of the educational monitoring system, which systematically collects process and result data for all system levels;
- (c) it is the binding basis for all pre-skilling, upskilling and in-service training offers for teachers, school principals and school quality managers.

In terms of content, the framework defines criteria for good schools in five quality dimensions. Four of these are process dimensions: quality management, leadership, learning and teaching, school partnership and external relations. The fifth is a result dimension, in which the results to be achieved and the effects of school education are mapped. To describe relevant aspects of school quality in these dimensions, each is divided into quality areas. Each quality area is specified in terms of content by an introductory core message and quality criteria.

The quality framework forms the basis for the new quality management system for schools (QMS).

2019 Implementation

In July 2019, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research published a white paper on the governance of the school system in Austria in which quality assurance processes and the roles of the actors, in particular the Boards of Education, are described in more detail.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, the Boards of Education were fully operational and had to manage the challenging COVID-19 crisis with the accompanying distance learning and school closures, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the school sites.

2021 Implementation

On 1 January 2021, the new quality framework came into force and practical implementation began.

Parallel to its implementation, the schools were asked to reflect on the quality framework by the end of June 2021, at the latest, and to question critically its previous work against this background. For this purpose, a school internal quality assessment procedure (siQe) was developed that is to support and structure this status quo analysis; siQe consists of a tool that can be used either online or in paper form, and a guide for the school management, including suggestions for the design of the specific implementation.

From autumn 2021 (school year 2021/22), all schools switched to the new quality management system (QMS). Originally, it was supposed to be fully implemented by the end of that year. Due to the organisational and administrative workload caused by the Corona pandemic, the implementation phase was extended by the Ministry of Education by decree and all schools had to implement QMS by the end of the school year 2022/23.

2022 Implementation

Following the entry into force of the quality framework for schools, the implementation of QMS and the associated instruments began at all Austrian schools in 2022. By the end of January 2023, all schools are required to prepare a school development plan for a three-year planning period. Internal school evaluation and feedback are to be carried out regularly from the school year 2022/23. The topic, type and time of this evaluation will be defined in the school development plan. The review and target agreement meeting between school supervision and school management will be held at least once every three years.

2023 Implementation

In the school year 2023/24 a quality handbook was developed. Starting with an inventory of existing documents and processes, the handbook will be continuously updated during the school years 2024/25 to 2026/27.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the switch to the new QMS was completed in all schools. All relevant QMS tools are available for school management, teaching teams and teachers.

2025 Implementation

The first quality management phase in QMS ended at the end of the 2024/25 school year. The second phase, QMS 2.0, began in October 2025, with the start of the school year 2025/26. During QMS 2.0, schools will set new goals or revisit goals those not yet achieved and continuously work on improving quality. Three objectives will be pursued in particular over the next three years:

- (a) revising educational guiding principles as needed and rethinking how to communicate them internally (to teachers) and externally (to parents, guardians, and cooperation partners);
- (b) developing a school development plan at each location, which must be submitted to the relevant school supervisory authority by January 2026 at the latest;
- (c) creating new strategic documents and processes to be made available to all teachers.

Another focus of phase 2 is the collection and evaluation of data to be integrated into school development plans. Teachers and school administrators will develop 'data literacy', the ability to read and interpret and use data effectively for educational and school-related decision-making.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (until 2025)
- Boards of Education
- Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)

Target group

Education professionals

Teachers
School leaders

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Website of the quality management system](#)

[Detailed description of the new quality framework \(in German only\)](#)

[School internal quality assessment procedure, siQe \(in German only\)](#)

[Education Reform Act 2017 \(in German only\)](#)

[Autonomy package \(in German only\)](#)

[BMBWF: Governance of the Austrian Education System. White Book \[Steuerung des österreichischen Schulsystems. Weissbuch \] \(in German only\)](#)

[BMBWF: Decree on the quality management system \(QMS\) for schools in the school years 2021/22 and 2022/23 \[Erlass zum Qualitätsmanagementsystem für Schulen \(QMS\) in den Schuljahren 2021/22 und 2022/23\] \(in German only\)](#)

[Information on the Boards of Education](#)

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Quality framework for schools: Austria. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/38685>