

# Introduction of VET subjects to compulsory education schools (My journey project)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 MALTA

## Timeline



ID number 28664

## Background

The current secondary school system shows that one-size does not fit all and it result in marginalising learners who struggle and are deemed to have failed the current provision of general education curriculum. The goals is to offer a comprehensive schooling system, made up of equitable quality learning experiences that better meet the educational needs of students with different learning styles and aspirations, and also offers to students different modes of assessment. The policy is a development linked to the Framework for the education strategy for Malta 2014-24. This reform challenges this compulsory one-size-fits-all schooling regime with a system consisting of different learning experiences.

## Objectives

The objective of this programme is to broaden and enrich the secondary school curriculum, provide initial VET certification and establish parity of esteem between IVET and general academic education.

## Description

In 2015/16, VET subjects at Malta qualifications framework (MQF) level 3 (EQF level 3) were introduced in compulsory education in all lower secondary schools: the compulsory secondary education system in Malta comprises students from age 11 to age 16 (lower secondary) and two years of upper secondary education. The introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools opens up opportunities for more learners to progress to further and higher education. This is a result of the *MyJourney: achieving through different paths* project which envisaged work-based learning integrated into vocational school-based programmes.

The areas covered are:

- (a) hospitality;

- (b) information technology;
- (c) engineering technology;
- (d) health and social care;
- (e) agri-business.

### 2015 Approved/Agreed

The introduction of VET subjects was a gradual reform; it started at a national level in 2015 following a piloting phase.

### 2016 Implementation

### 2017 Implementation

### 2018 Implementation

### 2019 Implementation

As from October 2019 (through the *MyJourney* project), students in Year 9 were offered the following nine vocational subjects (each subject relates to an applied one e.g. agribusiness- applied agribusiness, engineering-applied engineering):

- (a) agribusiness;
- (b) engineering technology;
- (c) health and social care;
- (d) hospitality;
- (e) information technology;
- (f) media literacy;
- (g) hairdressing and beauty;
- (h) retail;
- (i) textiles and fashion.

### 2020 Implementation

Advice and guidelines by the health authorities characterised the school year 2020/21. The implementation of mitigation measures affected the annual subject option exercise of students progressing from Year 8 to Year 9. The support given to students and their parents was limited mainly to online meetings and dissemination of online information. Notwithstanding these limitations, induced by the exceptional circumstances, the uptake of VET and applied subjects as electives was encouraging. Around 69% of state school Year 8 students opted to study these subjects in Year 9.

Mitigation measures included also the reduction in class size and the creation of bubbles. This affected the weekly timetabling of VET options following the implementation of blended learning. Blended learning halved the number of face-to-face lessons while the other half were delivered online, including through the online education platform Teleskola. Most of the educators rose to the challenges of blended learning and produced stimulating and interesting online lessons. Teachers of applied subjects reported that their students encountered a number of difficulties due to the higher practical component of these subjects.

### 2021 Implementation

Implementation as in previous years

### 2022 Implementation

Implementation as in previous years

### 2023 Implementation

This year marked some changes with the Secondary Education Applied Certificate

(SEAC) qualification. The Secondary Education Applied Certificate (SEAC) was a national qualification offered within Malta's secondary education system. It was administered by the MATSEC Examinations Board of the University of Malta and is designed as an applied, vocationally-oriented alternative to the traditional Secondary Education Certificate (SEC). SEAC was intended for learners who could benefit from a practical, hands-on approach to learning.

This was replaced by the AVC (Applied Vocational Certificate), which is accredited by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), within the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). Schools now offer two optional subject routes - SEC and AVC qualifications in nine subjects: Agribusiness, Creative Media, Engineering Technology, Fashion and Textiles, Health and Social Care, Hairdressing and Beauty, Hospitality, Information Technology, and Retail. The AVC qualification is designed with a focus on the specific industry's needs, preparing candidates with employability skills that can be actively applied in the workplace or further education. The concept of applied and vocational learning is intended to provide practical hands-on experiences. This approach equips candidates with the technical skills and knowledge relevant to their qualification stream, providing them with essential and suitable employability skills for the workforce.

The syllabi for the nine AVC subjects are being updated based on feedback from schools, COPE, external moderation, and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). Following DQSE's first review, best practices and recommendations for improvement were outlined. To ensure the AVC remains relevant, regular meetings are held with the National Skills Council, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of SMEs and other important stakeholders. There are self-reflective and community-related components in all subjects, alongside professional development opportunities for Education Officers and educators.

Therefore, this means that there has been a shift to further emphasise the applied concept. The AVC are directly related to the workplace. Candidates will be assessed on the theory and practical skills indicated in the respective programme syllabi, providing candidates with the opportunity to qualify with level 3, yet also with exit points at level 2 and level 1. An AVC in any of the 9 subjects is equivalent to 10 credits. These are distributed over three years. It also allows for progression to post-compulsory educational institutions. Continuous progression is supported by various post-secondary institutions, such as Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). The level attained through this accredited programme is recognised, as indicated in an internal quality assurance policy which was specifically written for the accreditation of these programmes.

### **2024 Implementation**

The AVC subjects offered at secondary school were updated further in line with DQSE's feedback and the industry's needs.

For those students who were then following a SEC route, as opposed to the AVC route, they will be following a new VET SEC model which was thoroughly discussed with several experienced stakeholders.

### **2025 Implementation**

A satisfying number of students kept choosing the VET (SEC/AVC) route as a subject choice at the secondary school level.

Continuous discussions were held to ensure that all AVC syllabi are relevant to future skills development, whilst also increase the connection to the industry. In 2025, the *Bridge with industry* initiative for VET educators was launched, an initiative aimed to strengthen the labour-market relevance and provide teachers to gain first-hand experience of current technologies, workflows, and practices, enabling them to integrate authentic, industry-relevant content into their teaching improving teaching quality, promoting VET enrolment, and addressing skills shortages in STEM and green

transition areas.

## Bodies responsible

- Ministry for Education (MFED)(until 2022)
- Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) (until 2020)

## Target group

### Other

secondary school  
learners

## Thematic categories

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning;  
adaptable/flexible training formats

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

### Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

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

## Subsystem

IVET

## Further reading

[The MyJourney information booklet](#)

[Cedefop ReferNet Malta \(2017\). Malta: introducing vocational subjects in secondary schools](#)

[Directorate for STEM and VET Programmes \(DSVP\)DSVP - accredited programmes](#)

## Related policy developments

**2020 Completed**

### The National vocational and training policy (2015)

The National vocational and training policy mapped the VET sector in Malta and identified areas for future actions.

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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

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**2021 Completed**

### Establishing the learning outcomes approach in curricula

The compulsory education system has reviewed all its curricula in terms of learning outcomes and will be introducing them as from the academic year 2019-20.

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#### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

IVET

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**2021 Discontinued**

### State and teacher union agreement to promote teacher continuous professional development (CPD)

An agreement between the education ministry and the Malta Union of Teachers was signed in December 2017, covering the years 2018-22. The agreement gives greater emphasis to continuous professional development.

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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

#### Subsystem

CVET

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#### “ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Introduction of VET subjects to compulsory education schools (My journey project): Malta. 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/28664>