

Changes in examination procedures

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 **NETHERLANDS**

Timeline

2015 Implementation	2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation
2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation
2021 Implementation	2022 Completed	

ID number 28439

Description

Public and private VET providers and the Minister for Education, Culture and Science have agreed on an agenda on examination quality in Dutch VET for 2015-20. The agenda includes the validation of exams by an external body and the independence of the committee that issues VET diplomas. These arrangements will not apply to all exams, only to those that are developed through agreements in which schools do not participate.

In addition, legislative amendments were introduced primarily to ease VET learners' progress and ensure quality.

2015 Implementation

The agenda has been implemented since 2015.

2016 Implementation

A law differentiating examination requirements in languages and maths has also been proposed. Not all (VET) learners are able to meet the complete set of examination requirements in Dutch, English and mathematics. In 2016, the government drafted this law to differentiate these requirements for specific learner groups (e.g. learners in secondary pre-VET and pre-university programmes) to keep them motivated and positively challenged by offering feasible examination requirements. After public consultation completed in September 2016, the law is expected to come into force in 2020.

2017 Implementation

An amendment to the Adult Education and Vocational Education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) tightening requirements for examination boards in upper secondary VET was approved in February 2017 and came into force in September 2017.

This amendment aims at improving the quality of the work of school-based examination boards in upper secondary VET. Stricter statutory requirements for members of programme-based examination committees have been introduced to raise their competences (such as becoming more objective in their judgement, or capable of

carrying out their tasks more effectively). To improve the quality and independence of the boards, at least one teacher and one external expert should be members.

The legislation also stipulates that when a diploma or certificate cannot be awarded, the examination board must, if requested by the student, issue a declaration in which it is stated what parts of the programme have been successfully completed. Such declarations help other schools to decide on granting exemptions, and individuals to show to an employer what parts of a course they have successfully completed.

2018 Implementation

The Inspectorate of Education concluded that the quality of the current examination instruments in upper secondary VET was outstanding. VET schools and private VET school providers want to maintain this high level of quality. Therefore, on 2 July 2018, the Council for upper secondary VET schools (*MBO Raad*), the Dutch Council of training and education (the sectoral association of private VET educators, NRTO), the Association of collaborating examination providers (*ExSamen*) and the education ministry signed new agreements, in which the three routes for validated examination instruments were further anchored in the specific context of the Dutch VET system. From 1 August 2018, only examination instruments which have been developed in line with one of these three routes can be used. In the first route, an education institution may choose to include exam products for a particular qualification from a certified agency. In the second route, education institutions can develop exam products themselves within collective agreements. In the third route, education institutions can develop an exam product and validate it externally.

The new agreements are a further implementation of the exam agenda, through which VET schools became responsible for securing and maintaining the quality of their examination procedures. The agreements describe the definition of validated examination instruments and in which of the three routes they are used. In this way, VET schools, together with examination providers, contribute to maintaining the quality level of national VET diplomas.

As a result of the exam agenda, the VET sector has addressed this issue itself. Effectively, the education ministry is confident that VET schools will continue to maintain a high quality level by themselves. The MBO council will include the agreements in their code of conduct. The purpose of the agenda is considered fulfilled.

The MBO council and NRTO set up the Validated examination instruments MBO foundation (*Stichting Valide Exameninstrumenten mbo*). This foundation will secure and maintain the agreements and monitor the application of the three routes system.

2019 Implementation

The agreements on validated examination instruments are operational and run as a regular practice.

2020 Implementation

The agreements on validated examination instruments are operational and run as a regular practice.

2021 Implementation

The implementation of the proposed 2016 amendment of the law on differentiating examination requirements in languages and maths has been delayed. A new public consultation started in February 2021 and was finalised on 2 April 2021. The law is expected to amend the requirements in mathematics, and also reduce the study hours of the optional parts of the upper secondary level 4 VET programmes (MBO 4) from 960 to 720.

As of August 2021, VET schools and colleges have an obligation to issue statements

(*MBO verklaring*) of learning achievements of students who leave education without a full qualification. Learners should have completed - upon leaving education - at least, part of the training programme and achieved acceptable results for which, however, no (full) diploma or certificate can be awarded. Examination boards of VET institutions should issue such statements for all learners who are no longer enrolled at an institution, are younger than 23, and have not yet obtained a basic qualification. Examination boards may also issue such statements, to other students, if requested.

2022 Completed

The agenda on examination quality in Dutch VET for 2015-20 has been concluded. After the delay in February 2021, when the public consultation started, the new law on requirements in mathematics and reducing the study hours of the optional parts of the upper secondary level 4 VET programmes (MBO 4) from 960 to 720 has now run into force as of August 2022.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[New legislative proposal differentiating exam requirements](#)

[The proposal of this amendment](#)

[Brochure on diplomas, certificates, and statements in VET](#)

[Update on the law on requirements in mathematics](#)

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Changes in examination procedures:

Netherlands. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28439>