

Quality agreements

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 NETHERLANDS

Timeline



ID number 28437

Background

The Quality agreements measure is based on a 2014 administrative agreement (*Bestuursakkoord MBO*), concluded between the Council for upper secondary VET schools (*MBO Raad*) and the education ministry and builds on the Coalition agreement 2012 (*Bruggen slaan*), the Focus on craftsmanship 2011-15 action plan (*Actieplan focus op vakmanschap*), the National education agreement (*Nationaal onderwijsakkoord*), the Teacher agenda 2013-20 (*Lerarenagenda 2013-20*) and the Technology pact 2020 (*Techniekpact 2020*).

Description

Quality agreements centre on a (partly) performance-based funding scheme introduced in 2015. They were concluded between public upper secondary VET schools (MBO schools) and the education ministry and monitored by account managers (ministry officials). Employer organisations, the student organisation JOB, and the Professional Association of Teachers (BVMBO) have a consultative and supportive role. Based on quality agreements, public VET providers have set goals and make plans to improve quality. This is done by making additional financial resources available (the investment budget and performance-based budget) and by systematically making available information about the results of individual VET providers. The quality agreements specifically target the following six themes:

- (a) professionalisation of staff (teachers and trainers);
- (b) study value (the extent to which an MBO institution succeeds in guiding more students than before to the highest possible diploma, given their prior education);
- (c) early school leaving;
- (d) improve quality in work-based learning;
- (e) excellent craftsmanship;
- (f) intensifying language and maths education.

Quality agreements on workplace learning (*beroepspraktijkvorming*) were introduced in

March 2016 between the ministry and the Council of MBO schools (*MBO Raad*) and have been effective from 2017 onward. Within the agreements, VET schools developed a plan on how to improve the quality of work-based learning (and related guidance activities) in both school-based and dual tracks to ease the transition to the labour market. Based on their performance, schools received extra funding. The total amount allocated was EUR 58 million. In 2017 and 2018 schools were assessed against three specific criteria:

- (a) submission/approval of a realistic school plan with measurable and achievable goals;
- (b) progress made in 2017 and 2018 in achieving these goals;
- (c) participation in a peer reviewing exercise.

The coaching of new teachers was one of the aims in the quality agreements focusing on the professionalisation of teachers. The agreements also included CPD.

VET in business (*MBO in bedrijf*) was a national organisation set up to stimulate quality assurance of VET providers by advising on the implementation of bilateral quality agreements concluded between the provider and the education ministry. It monitored and supported VET providers in achieving their goals, for example by organising peer learning activities.

A mid-term evaluation of the quality agreements (published in July 2017) showed that the quality agreements provided VET schools with the opportunity to improve their quality. It was concluded that most of the VET schools achieved their goals. However, VET schools prefer to work on themes that are considered important by the institutions themselves.

2015 Implementation

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

In February 2018, a new agreement was signed between the education ministry and VET schools (MBO schools) for the period 2019-22. As part of the performance-based funding scheme in place, VET schools should elaborate quality agendas aiming to improve the quality of VET offers in line with regional needs and in close collaboration with regional stakeholders. Under the Quality agreements 2019-22 initiative, each secondary vocational education school determines its own strategy and priorities in consultation with regional partners. Schools should focus on one or more of the following topics:

- (a) improving labour market outcomes of upper secondary VET;
- (b) improving equal opportunities in education and training;
- (c) supporting young people from disadvantaged groups.

VET schools are urgently invited to pay more attention to vulnerable young people. Activities for this group should have priority in the quality plans. Schools prepared and submitted their quality agendas in October 2018.

Funding of approximately EUR 400 million is available annually for quality agreements; 25% of the budget is performance-based.

The body responsible for the Quality agreements 2019-22 initiative is no longer VET in business (*MBO in bedrijf*) as this body has been abolished. The agreements are now assessed by an independent (ad hoc) committee.

2019 Implementation

In 2019, an independent (ad hoc) commission assessed the quality agendas submitted by schools in October 2018. The commission has three main tasks:

- (a) assessing the quality agendas of the MBO schools (2018/19);
- (b) carrying out the interim (2021) assessment of the results achieved by the

schools;
(c) assessing the final results of the MBO schools (2023).

2020 Implementation

In a letter to parliament, the education minister mentioned that the COVID-19 crisis had had a major impact on the implementation of the quality agreements. Schools had to close their doors and all attention went to the transition to online education. It will be more difficult for VET schools to achieve some objectives of the quality agreements, but there are also themes where an acceleration is taking place (e.g. online education). The assessment framework of the quality agreements offers room to assess the results integrally, taking into account unforeseen (external) circumstances. A mid-term review of the implementation of the quality agendas will take place in 2021.

2021 Implementation

In November 2021, the education ministry informed the parliament about progress of the quality agreements in VET.

The ad-hoc committee set up by the ministry conducted a mid-term review of the 2019 and 2020 quality agendas and prepared a report; this confirms all VET colleges have sufficiently delivered on the promises for 2020. The education ministry and VET colleges are confident that the further implementation of the quality agendas will lead to further quality improvement in VET.

The committee stated that all VET colleges made progress but, at the same time, noticed different levels of progress per VET college. Colleges struggled most with bringing insight into the effects of the measures taken; even though the committee noticed that VET colleges handled the pandemic extremely well, in some cases it slowed the progress VET colleges made on the measures.

2022 Implementation

The *Bestuursakkoord MBO*, in which the quality agreements for 2019-2022 were described, was concluded in 2022. As part of the new working agenda (*Werkagenda MBO*), an additional funding for VET schools is introduced by the education ministry, which can be used in 2023 and aims for improving the quality of VET-education. The funding should be used to fund activities that focus on a) improving the quality of VET-education or b) extra guidance to students in 'basic VET' (*basisberoepsopleiding*). This additional funding applies until 2025.

2023 Implementation

The 'Working together on talent agenda for VET 2023-2027' (Joint agenda), was officially signed and released on February 2023 outlining the strategic plans and initiatives for the VET sector in the Netherlands for the period 2023-2027. The additional funding for VET schools outlined in the Joint Agenda remains available and is being utilised as planned, applying until 2025.

2024 Completed

Developments related to the quality agreements are now established under the framework of the joint agenda.

Bodies responsible

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

Target group

Education professionals

School leaders

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Interim evaluation of quality agreements for MBO and external accountability by MBO institutions \(2017\).](#)

[Administrative agreement MBO 2018-22](#)

[Quality of MBO courses \(Quality agreements 2019-22\)](#)

[Letter to parliament: Quality agreements, all VET colleges are ready for the next step](#)

[Progress on the Administrative agreement](#)

[Website for Commission assessment quality agreements](#)

[Policy letter to inform the parliament about the progress of quality agreements in VET](#)

[New legislation on additional funding to improve the quality of VET](#)

[Dutch Government Gazette, 13 March 2023 on Joint Agenda signed](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Agenda for VET 2023-2027 and VET Internship Pact 2023-27

The Agenda for VET Working Together on Talent is a covenant signed in 2023 by eight key VET stakeholders: the education ministry, Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), Association of Educators in VET (BVMBO), National youth organisation for VET students (JOB), Cooperation organisation

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Combating discrimination in the workplace

In 2015, within the City deals programme, the labour ministry concluded agreements with the Netherlands' five main cities: Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Leeuwarden, Zaanstad (including: their municipalities, schools, the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), employers and intermediate organisations

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Completed

Action plan for equal opportunities in education

In response to a range of surveys showing that students do not always have equal opportunities, and the trend of growing inequality, the Ministry of Education, Culture and

Science submitted to parliament in October 2016 an action plan for equal opportunities in education.

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Completed

Partnerships between VET schools and businesses

In July 2015, the 2009 apprenticeship protocol was updated. In August 2015 the responsibility for accreditation of the quality of work placements in companies was transferred from the 17 sector-based centres of expertise to SBB.

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Changing funding provisions in dual VET

The existing subsidy scheme for companies to cover the costs of offering learning places to apprentices (BBL students, and also applicable to VMBO, MBO and higher professional education – HBO VET programmes) was extended in 2017/18 to cover the costs related to learners enrolled in secondary spec

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Quality agreements: Netherlands. 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/28437>