

Coordination of the work of occupational councils

POLICY DEVELOPMENT	PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE	 ICELAND
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Timeline



ID number 28309

Background

The 12 occupational councils have enjoyed a varying degree of professional support and some have been more active than others.

Objectives

To streamline and equalise the professional support given to the councils and thereby increase their productiveness and better coordinate their work.

Description

The occupational councils provide the education minister with guidance on vocational education at the upper secondary school level. The councils are responsible for defining job descriptions and competence requirements and provide reviews of upper secondary qualifications. The councils also keep a record of companies and workplaces that meet requirements for workplace learning. The coordination role was moved to the Directorate of Education instead of SA-Business Iceland.

The Directorate of Education believes that by taking over the services of the professional councils, it will be possible to coordinate their working methods and strengthen their role in VET. The occupational councils play an important role in defining job descriptions and competence requirements and provide reviews of upper secondary qualifications.

2019 **Approved/Agreed**

In March 2019, a special State-financed project manager took over servicing and coordinating the work of occupational councils, based at the headquarters of the main industry association (SA-Business Iceland). The new project manager will be responsible for leading the work and providing guidance and service to all the occupational councils. In this context, service means convening regular meetings and setting up meeting agendas in cooperation with the councils' chairpersons. The project manager is also responsible for receiving, preparing, and answering queries from public bodies and institutions. This is all done in close cooperation with the chairperson of each occupational council.

2020 Implementation

In early 2020, this policy changed and servicing and coordinating the work of the occupational councils was taken over by the Directorate of Education, although individual councils could decide to keep their earlier set-up, on the basis of a contract with the Directorate, until the end of 2020.

The change was due to take effect in May 2020. With the COVID-19 challenges postponing some meetings and coordination work, and with some councils happier than others with their current/previous service providers, individual councils were given the right to postpone the change until January 2021. By that time a new special project manager at the Directorate of Education, expected to commence work in autumn 2020, will have had time to make all necessary preparations.

2021 Implementation

In January 2021, all 12 occupational councils were taken over by the Directorate of Education. This plan runs as a regular practice.

The Directorate of Education keeps a record of companies and workplaces that meet requirements for workplace learning. This record is a part of the digital logbook project, which the Directorate of Education manages.

The project manager has been responsible for leading the work on revising all qualifications, under the domain of each council. This project is ongoing and expected to complete in 2022.

Some of the occupational councils have provided assistance to the Directorate of Education on revising VET curricula (curricula for electricians, maritime officers, mountain guides, fisheries technicians).

2022 Implementation

The occupational councils continue to revise job descriptions and skills requirements that are being implemented for the Digital Logbook, and this work is under constant review.

The structure of the occupational council is planned to remain unchanged until the pending abolishment of the Directorate of Education, in the autumn of 2023. This decision was based on the changes to the Icelandic education system announced in October 2022. The changes aimed to strengthen schools across the country and provide a new general framework for education, replacing the Directorate of Education. The new framework is part of the government's draft education policy until 2030, which aims to reorganise several agencies to better ensure quality and access to education for children from kindergarten to secondary school.

According to the Minister of Education and Children's Affairs, there was no comprehensive legislation on school services for nursery, primary and secondary schools and no central organisation with a defined role to implement and coordinate these services. Access to services varied both between and within school levels and municipalities, leading to inequalities. There was a need to coordinate systems to ensure a comprehensive, effective and high-quality service when students move between schools or between levels of education; and a need for greater consultation with school staff and support for schoolwork to enable resources to be made available to children and young people more quickly and efficiently.

2023 Implementation

In December 2023, a new institution was founded, replacing the former Directorate of Education. The new institution is called 'The Directorate of Education and School Services'.

2024 Implementation

The Directorate of Education and School Services opened in April 2024. It promotes excellence in education and the well-being of all children and young people. It does this through strong support and targeted services to preschools, elementary schools and secondary schools throughout the country.

The Directorate of Education and School Services administers and oversees the Occupational Councils.

The main role of the Occupational Councils is to:

- (a) provide advice to the Minister of Education on matters of vocational education at secondary school level, and give feedback on curriculum descriptions that schools seek confirmation of;
- (b) make proposals about the general objectives of the study and define the needs for skills and competences on which the course descriptions are based;
- (c) make proposals about the final goals of the study; set criteria for the division of studies at school and at the workplace and make proposals about the structure and content of tests in individual professions;
- (d) maintain a register of companies and workplaces that meet the requirements for workplace learning;
- (e) make proposals for study programme descriptions for individual study programmes.

Course descriptions in vocational training are based on job descriptions and qualification requirements defined by the Occupational Councils. The Councils also provide feedback on vocational course descriptions for which schools apply for confirmation.

The Occupational Councils continue to work closely with the Directorate of Education and School Services, by providing assistance on revising job descriptions and skills requirements and the VET curricula (e.g. curricula for electricians, maritime officers, mountain guides, fisheries technicians).

Bodies responsible

- Directorate for Education

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

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Subsystem

Further reading

[Regulation on occupational councils](#)

[About occupational councils on the Directorate of Education's website](#)

[Directorate of Education to be Abolished](#)

[Ministry of Education and Children - New institution replacing Directorate of Education: The Directorate of Education and School Services](#)

[The Directorate of Education and School Services \(2023\)](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Digital logbook for VET learners

In 2019, the Directorate of Education hired a special project manager to develop and coordinate the digital logbook for VET learners, which would serve as an important quality management tool for apprenticeships and increase the attractiveness of VET.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2023 Implementation

Strengthening VET in Iceland - VET working group's proposals

For 2015-17, the main emphasis in the education ministry was the elaboration of proposals that a specific working group delivered in 2015. The main ideas of the working group were:

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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