

VET quality assurance



Timeline



ID number 28157

Background

Vocational education and training (VET) in Estonia is regulated by the Vocational educational institutions act, which provides the basis for the establishment, maintenance, transfer, reorganisation and closure of vocational education institutions. It also provides the basis for the right to provide instruction, management, organisation of studies, State-commissioned education and financing, the rights and obligations of members of schools and State supervision over the activities of schools. In 2013, the act fundamentally changed the regulation of the vocational education system by:

- (a) defining new categories of vocational training directly linked to the Estonian qualifications framework;
- (b) promoting the extensive use of outcome-based principles in the evaluation and establishing of qualification criteria for types of vocational training, curricula and for teaching staff;
- (c) establishing the right to provide instruction;
- (d) defining and implementing the use of the new unit (Estonian vocational education credit points) for measuring study volumes.

At the end of 2018, the amendments to the Vocational Education Institutions Act were approved on the principles of financing vocational education institutions and assessing the quality of vocational education. In line with the amendments, the former VET institutions' accreditation system was replaced by a new quality assurance approach.

Objectives

The objective of the new quality assurance approach is to support continuous improvement in teaching and learning and quality assurance in VET institutions. Transforming the accreditation process into a quality assessment process aids the development of a learning-centred school culture and increases the credibility of VET.

Description

A working group was set up to review the national approach to quality assurance. The group was composed of representatives of the education ministry, employer and employee organisations, VET schools and other partners.

In 2017, the group presented a proposal concerning changes in the assessment criteria and in the procedures and principles for the quality assessment of VET. Based on the working group's proposal, and in line with the EQAVET Recommendation, amendments to the Vocational education institutions act were approved by the Parliament in December 2018.

According to the new quality assurance approach, the right to provide instruction for indefinite duration will be granted, by 31 August 2019, to curricula groups for which a school has a six-year accreditation. For schools with a three-year accreditation, a repeat assessment is carried out in the curriculum group. If successful, the institution is granted the right to provide instruction for indefinite duration. If the school does not receive this open-ended right, the right to provide instruction is terminated.

The quality assessment is organised by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education. It will take place every six years and the result of the assessment is not directly connected with the right to provide studies. Quality assessment only affects the right to study if non-compliance with the assessment criteria is significant. The process is focused more on achieving constant improvements in teaching and learning and the development of a quality culture at school.

The following measures are foreseen:

- (a) quality assessment of VET and further development of the quality model, to ensure, inter alia, the quality of work-based learning and continuing training;
- (b) developing a culture of quality assurance and cooperation under EQAVET;
- (c) participating in and supporting skills competitions and contests, network building.

2016 Design

2017 Design

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Implementation

In 2019, a regulation of the Minister for Education and Research entered into force, specifying the areas and criteria for quality assessment and the conditions for organising and conducting quality assessment in VET. VET quality assessment is an external assessment, based on an institution's internal assessment and conducted once every six years. The performance and sustainability of education, including curriculum development, learning and teaching, leading and management and the use of resources, are evaluated.

2020 Implementation

Since autumn 2019, quality assessments and reassessments of VET institutions have taken place according to the new principles. Quality assessments of curriculum groups of VET institutions are planned until 2023 (about 45-60 school curriculum groups per year).

2021 Implementation

Quality assurance activities in VET focused on quality assessments of VET curriculum groups, evaluations for granting the right to provide instruction, development of quality culture in VET (including raising the quality of education, better use of resources, targeted development of VET schools, and increasing the coherence of VET with the labour market), and WBL quality assurance. Most VET institutions have been granted the indefinite right to provide instruction. Assessment reports are available on the website of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education.

2022 Implementation

Quality assessments of VET institutions took place according to the current model. Led by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education, HAKA (former Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, EKKA), it was agreed in 2022 to update the quality assurance model, as the current curriculum group-based evaluation was fragmented and lacked a school-based dimension.

In the framework of EQAVET, Estonia took part in peer-review activities in partnership with Finland and Slovenia. Estonian VET learners continued participating in the European and World skills competitions. In 2022, Tallinn successfully hosted WorldSkills in landscape construction. The skills competitions team of the Education and Youth Board coordinated Estonia's participation in international competitions, along with TV show *Noor Meister* (third season in 2022).

2023 Design

Regular quality assessments of VET centres continued.

VET and higher education development programme PRÕM+ (a follow-up of the former PRÕM programme) was adopted by the ministry of education. Programme activities include the development of a new quality assurance model to introduce institutional accreditation for VET centres, aligning with the accreditation process used in higher education. Quality assessment is set to be expanded to cover work-based learning and continuing training in adult education institutions.

The education ministry adopted measures to modernise the format and principles of the national skills competition 'Young Master'. Skills competitions are organised as skills festivals, individual contests, or TV competitions, in collaboration with VET centres, professional associations, and employers. Principles for partnerships were agreed to be developed to engage businesses, professional associations, supporters, and other stakeholders.

2024 Design

The development of a new quality assurance model introducing institutional accreditation for VET centres was launched, led by the Estonian Quality Agency for Education HAKA.

2025 Pilot

In 2025, the development of a new quality assurance model based on institutional accreditation for VET centres continued. The model was piloted in three centres. Development work and piloting lead to further refinement of the model and formed the basis for proposals to amend the regulation on quality assessment.

Quality assessments for private adult training institutions intending to offer micro-qualifications began, and first two institutions successfully passed the evaluation.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research
- Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (until 2022)
- Estonian Quality Agency for Education

Target group

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

European and international dimensions of VET

VET internationalisation strategies

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

[Vocational educational institutions act](#)

[Regulation on the conditions and procedure for assessing the quality of vocational education and training](#)

[External assessment of VET in Estonia](#)

[VET and higher education development programme PROM+](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Developing work-based learning and practical training

Developing WBL and practical training includes the following measures:

 ESTONIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Supporting internationalisation in VET

The following measures are foreseen:

 ESTONIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Completed

Vocational education programme 2015-21

The programme was adopted in 2015. It is implemented through a single measure (Correspondence between lifelong learning opportunities and the needs of the labour market and increased participation in learning). Its main activities are:

 ESTONIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Completed

Promoting awareness and image of VET (until 2021)

The Labour market and education cooperation programme includes measures for raising the attractiveness of VET by providing information about VET opportunities, including apprenticeships, awareness raising activities such as media campaigns and national skills competitions and participation in Wor

 ESTONIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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