

# Transparency of master craftsperson qualifications

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

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## Timeline



ID number 27984

## Background

The policy development is based on the European guidelines for quality assurance in higher vocational education and training developed in the framework of the Erasmus+ project QA HiVETnet by project partners from Belgium, Germany, Greece, France and Austria with the participation of the European craft and SME employers' organisation (UEAPME). From a longer-term perspective, the initiative is part of efforts to develop a higher VET strategy.

While master craftsperson qualifications are basically the legal responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Digitalisation and Economic Affairs (BMDW), on the basis of the Trade Regulations Act (GewO) the respective professional associations of the Economic Chamber (WKO) are responsible for the content of the curricula and the examinations. The master craftsman examinations are organised and conducted by the master craftsperson examination centres located at the WKO offices within the Economic Chambers' federal state branches. Consequently, the Economic Chamber holds significant responsibility for ensuring the quality development of the master craftsperson qualification.

## Objectives

The objective of the transparency of master craftsperson qualifications is to:

- (a) ensure compatibility with both the national qualifications framework (NQF) and the trade regulations (GewO);
- (b) improve the visibility, comparability and credibility of master craftsperson qualifications;
- (c) improve support for the mobility of their holders.

## Description

The policy development refers to a comprehensive process for aligning master craftsperson qualifications to the requirements of the NQF. The concept includes the definition of learning outcomes, the preparation of training documents, the development of guidelines

for the design of examinations, the preparation of examiners and the provision of information to potential candidates and companies. The approach is intended to ensure compatibility with both the NQF and the trade regulations (GewO).

The 2017 amendment of the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (GewO) contains specifications for the design of examination regulations for master craftsman and proof of competence examinations, such as in the case of the master craftsman or proof of competence examinations, candidates must prove that they have the learning outcomes necessary for practising the respective craft/trade, which they need to present in the form of knowledge, skills and competences.

Parallel to this, the NQF Act and the NQF handbook, which is available for download from the national coordination point (NCP), provide a number of specifications so that qualifications can be assigned to an NQF level. Following the amendment of the trade regulations (GewO), and in preparation for a submission of the master craftsman qualification to the NQF, the development of a comprehensive quality assurance and development process was piloted in 2017 and initial competence-oriented qualification descriptions and examination regulations (proof of competence examination) were developed in this pilot phase. In 2018, the assignment of master craftsman qualifications to the NQF took place at level 6 and the development of the quality assurance and development process continued. The development of transparent, competence-oriented qualification descriptions and examination regulations was transferred to a regular operation. Since then, the individual master craftsman qualifications have been modernised step by step accordingly.

#### **2017 Pilot**

#### **2018 Implementation**

#### **2019 Implementation**

To meet the requirements of the 2017 amendment to the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (GewO), a comprehensive quality assurance and development process was started for all master craftsman and proof of competence examinations in 2019.

This included the development of:

- (a) qualification standards for each craft/regulated trade (description of the occupation in the form of learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competences);
- (b) examination regulations that conform to the GewO amendment and are suitable for the NQF;
- (c) competence-oriented examination tasks that meet the requirements of the examination regulations and the desired NQF level;
- (d) and implementation of further quality assurance measures, such as the development of handbooks and training courses for examiners;
- (e) sample tasks for preparatory courses.

#### **2020 Implementation**

In 2020, quality development and assurance work continued. All parts of the governance structure took measures in their respective areas of competence to ensure or further improve the quality of master craftsman and proof of competence examinations. For example, the professional organisations of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, which are responsible for the preparation of examination regulations, further developed an existing guideline for the preparation of regulations to proceed in a coordinated and quality-assured manner. The nine master craftsman examination units that organise and conduct the examinations also coordinated and improved their procedures.

#### **2021 Implementation**

In 2021, quality efforts continued. In a series of meetings between stakeholders,

approaches were agreed upon and concrete measures were set to improve quality across the entire life cycle of qualifications, from demand planning and regulatory work to the organisation of an examination and its evaluation. 36 revised examination regulations for master craftsperson and proof of competence examinations were newly issued in 2021.

### **2022 Implementation**

In 2022, the revision of the examination regulations continued. In total, 12 revised master craftsperson examination regulations and 5 revised proof of competence examinations were issued. Currently, it is also being discussed to financially support these qualification examinations through a bonus/premium system.

In addition, the preparatory work for the assignment of the proof of competence examination to the NQF was started.

### **2023 Implementation**

The revision of the examination regulations continued in 2023 with 18 revised master craftsperson examination regulations and three revised proof of competence examinations being issued.

In September, the proof of competence examination was assigned to NQF level 6.

Besides, in 2023 the results of a graduate survey, conducted in 2022, were published. The study was commissioned by the Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) and aimed to analyse the master craftsperson and proof of competence examinations in Austria. The results show that, these examinations meet the high requirements made on them to a large extent in terms of specialist competence and managerial skills while the social recognition of these qualifications still shows room for development and improvement.

### **2024 Implementation**

In 2024, more examination regulations were revised and issued: 7 revised master craftsperson examination regulations and two revised proof of competence examinations.

In October, the proof of competence examination for master builder was assigned to NQF level 7.

As of 1st January 2024, the examination fees for master craftsperson and proof of competence examinations (first or second attempt) were eliminated. Learners who took the exam in 2023 and paid the exam fees could request a refund. The regional Economic Chamber's offices responsible for conducting the exams were reimbursed for these costs through public funds.

### **2025 Implementation**

In 2025, quality assurance remained a key issue in the context of master craftsperson and proof of competence examinations. Among other things, the general examination directive, which covers rules for conducting examinations in all subject areas, was amended. The amendment is expected to come into force at the beginning of 2026. One significant change concerns the administration of digital examinations, as these will play a greater role in the future.

The administration of the examination process (from registration to recording and issuing certificates) has also been further digitised to standardise procedures and make them more efficient. In addition, further examination regulations have been adapted in terms of content (especially the specification of learning outcomes) and examinations have been designed to be competence-oriented and appropriate to the NQF level to which they are allocated.

## Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) (until 2022)
- Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)

## Target group

### Learners

Adult learners

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

### Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

## 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

CVET

## Further reading

[Information about the master craftsperson qualification on the ibw website - research report \(only in German\)](#)

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[Information on the master craftsperson qualification on the ibw website - short version in English](#)

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[Information about the amendment of the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act \(GewO\) - in German only](#)

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[Information about the amendment of the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act \(GewO\) 2020 on the registrable master craftsperson's title \(in German only\)](#)

## Related policy developments

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### 2025 Implementation

#### Establishing a higher VET field

To realise parity of esteem and increase the visibility and public perception of higher VET qualifications, a discussion on the establishment of a defined educational field for higher VET qualifications was started in 2019 within educational policy.

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##### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

##### Subsystem

CVET

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### 2025 Implementation

#### Implementation of the national qualifications framework

The NQF development and implementation process is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

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##### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

##### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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