

Reform of upper secondary VET curricula

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 AUSTRIA

Timeline

2022 Design

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

ID number 46987

Background

To ensure the continued appeal of VET programmes, it is essential to regularly update the teaching content. Curricula establish the parameters for instructional delivery and are therefore revised periodically to align with current developments and findings. In vocational programmes, this involves anticipating the skills required by the labour market. It is not sufficient to merely update subject-specific content in the curricula. It is also important to teach transversal competences.

The key challenges are to embed current developments in the labour market, to enhance the inclusion of transversal skills, and to strengthen the European and international connectivity of qualifications.

Objectives

The objective of the reform of upper secondary VET curricula is to align them with both national education policy requirements and European trends. Digitalisation, sustainability, and internationalisation are to be addressed as interdisciplinary topics.

Specifically, a new curriculum must meet the following criteria:

- (a) reflects the requirements of the modern labour market, contributes to the development of responsible members of society, and ensures the employability and aptitude for higher academic studies of graduates;
- (b) improves the competitiveness of companies by training well-qualified specialists;
- (c) takes into account the contents of the Osnabrück Declaration, based on the respective specialisation;
- (d) offers a good basis for the creation of school profiles according to school types;
- (e) provides school-autonomous curriculum provisions within the framework of the respective programme and thus enables the curriculum to be adapted to school site-specific regional requirements and developments;
- (f) focusses on professional qualifications where this is relevant to ensure employability;
- (g) allows for pedagogical freedom and emphasises competence development;
- (h) ensures permeability into different segments of (vocational) education and training.

The new upper secondary VET curricula are to be developed by 2026.

Description

The implementation of new programme curricula is a three-step process:

- (a) creation of an implementation plan, including the formation of a project team, establishment of project management, and information of stakeholders;
- (b) realisation of the implementation plan, which involves the formation of a steering group and working groups, the gathering of information (e.g. labour market developments, research results), the development of the curriculum content with the involvement of stakeholders;
- (c) official review and entry into force.

This process is carried out by curriculum commissions, which comprise experienced teachers and other subject matter experts, and are led by representatives of the Ministry of Education.

The following section outlines the process of updating curriculum content using the Secondary college of business administration, which is one of the largest types of VET schools, as a case study.

The new curriculum was developed through an extensive, five-stage process. The principles of evidence-orientation, stringency and transparency were established as the guiding framework for the process. The involvement of all stakeholder groups (e.g. school administrators, teachers, students, graduates, parent representatives, universities, educational research institutions) was a key aspect of the process, with over 20 000 individuals participating through surveys, discussions and various feedback formats. The curriculum was developed in a phased manner, with interim results presented to stakeholders for feedback before moving on to the next phase, and in accordance with the following five steps:

The first step was to create a charter comprising general and specific educational goals and transversal competences. This was done to ensure a common understanding of the future tasks and goals of the Secondary colleges of business administration among all stakeholder groups. It was based on legal requirements, an environmental analysis, as well as surveys and discussions with all relevant stakeholders. In addition to the previous foci on employability, aptitude for higher academic studies, entrepreneurship and digitalisation, new priorities were set by concentrating on transversal skills, AI and sustainability, and taking into account the ability to shape one's own life.

Based on this, and considering the legal framework and the conditions specified by the Ministry of Education, the subjects and the number of lessons required to achieve this charter were determined. The focus on life skills, for example, led to the introduction of the new subject of 'Economic literacy'.

The next step was to develop subject curricula, which involved identifying, selecting and justifying learning objectives and content for each subject to break down the charter to subject level. To this end, two to four core competences were defined for each subject. On the one hand, these should correspond to the charter. For example, the business core competence 'Managing companies sustainably' is primarily aimed at the general educational goal of employability and the specific educational goal of entrepreneurship and sustainability. On the other hand, core competences provide a didactic structure for the subject.

Subsequently, two to three transversal competences were allocated to these core competences, which are to be given particular attention in this area. Each transversal competence is assigned to several core competences or several subjects, as it must be acquired in different contexts to be able to ensure sustainable acquisition. While additional competences may be relevant, an exhaustive categorisation is neither meaningful nor feasible. To illustrate, the core competence 'Data-based decision-making in purchasing and sales, and the execution of purchasing and sales processes including legal assessments' in the subject of 'Business administration', has been assigned the transversal competences of process orientation, independent problem solving, and communication skills. It is also

important to have digital skills, for example when creating a marketing concept using AI or optimising ordering processes. However, in business administration, the objective is not to prompt or automate business processes, but to carry out the entire process and make the necessary decisions.

In the final step, four to eight educational and teaching tasks were defined for each semester, with the objective of achieving the desired transversal and core competences. These are set out as orientation and action competences to ensure theory-led action. The aim is to avoid imparting passive knowledge to students or leading them towards act without sufficient understanding of the underlying issues. The number of competencies was limited to a maximum of eight per semester and subject, to prevent the curriculum from becoming overloaded.

2022 Design

In 2022, the development of the new curriculum for Secondary colleges of business administration and several other VET schools started.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, a number of new VET school curricula were published on the website of the education ministry and on the federal legal information system, e. g. for the College for early childhood pedagogy.

In the case of Secondary colleges of business administration, the charter (step 1), the canon of subjects (step 2), and the planned structure of the curriculum development were presented to the stakeholder groups in a first feedback phase between March and July 2023. The evaluation results were then incorporated, and the curriculum commission commenced work on the next steps.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the work on VET school curricula continued.

For example, the curriculum for Secondary colleges of business administration underwent their second feedback phase. From February to March 2024, all competences from all subject curricula in the field of economics were subjected to a second feedback round in which all stakeholder groups were able to provide detailed feedback and make suggestions for improvement.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Education professionals

Teachers
School leaders

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research: Announcements of new school curricula \(only in German\)](#)

[Article on the development of the curriculum for Secondary colleges of business administration \(only in German\)](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Green transition in VET

Various projects have already been initiated and launched in recent years that serve to achieve the stated objectives. With the National implementation plan (NIP), these activities were bundled and intensified in 2022.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Action plan for green transition in education and training

In order to set up the action plan for the green transition in education and training, the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection (BMK) together with the Vienna Public Employment Service (AMS) and the Vienna Chamber of Labour (AK) initiated the 'Just transition working group on training and furt

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/46987>