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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE  
**IRELAND**

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**SYSTEM DESCRIPTION**



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# Table of contents

- Chapter 1. Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET
- Chapter 2. Main challenges and policy responses
- Chapter 3. External factors influencing VET
  - 3.1. Demographics
  - 3.2. Economics
  - 3.3. Labour market
- Chapter 4. Education attainment
  - 4.1. Share of high, medium and low level qualifications
  - 4.2. VET learner share of the total VET population
  - 4.3. VET learners by level
  - 4.4. Female share
  - 4.5. Early leavers from education and training
  - 4.6. Participation in lifelong learning
  - 4.7. VET learners by age
- Chapter 5. VET within education and training system
- Chapter 6. Apprenticeship
- Chapter 7. VET governance
- Chapter 8. VET financing mechanisms
- Chapter 9. Teachers and trainers
  - 9.1. VET teacher types
  - 9.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers
- Chapter 10. Shaping VET qualifications
  - 10.1. Anticipating skill needs
  - 10.2. Designing qualifications
- Chapter 11. Quality assurance
- Chapter 12. Validation of prior learning
- Chapter 13. Incentives for learners
- Chapter 14. Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision
- Chapter 15. Guidance and counselling
- Vocational education and training system chart
- VET programme types
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 4-5, ISCED 443/453
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 3-5, ISCED 253, 353, 453
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 4-5, ISCED 453.
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 544, 554.
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 665
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 5- 6, ISCED 665, 666.
  - Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 6-7, ISCED 667,767
- References

## CHAPTER 1.

# Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

VET in Ireland comprises the following main features:

- most VET is offered by the State, although private providers also play a role;
- there are four sectors within the education system: (primary, secondary, further education and training (FET) and higher education. VET occurs mostly within the FET sector, meaning that it is offered mostly at post-secondary level;
- in 2016, a reform of the apprenticeship system led to the provision of apprenticeships within higher education. VET at tertiary level was introduced in 2016 in the form of apprenticeships;
- vocational programmes are also offered for second chance education and training (in the form of vocational training for the unemployed).

Distinctive features ([1]):

VET in Ireland is not usually offered within the second level system (neither lower secondary (NFQ 3, EQF 2, ISCED 244) nor upper secondary (NFQ 4/5, EQF3/4 ISCED 343/344). Therefore, most learners are aged at least 16 or over; since the majority of new entrants to VET have already completed upper secondary education, they tend to be at least 18 years of age.

Until the reform in 2016, almost all apprenticeships were in the construction and, to a lesser extent, engineering sectors. The number of occupations now available for apprenticeship training has since grown and includes areas such as ICT, finance and hospitality.

Employer consultation and labour market intelligence played a key role in informing the development of new VET programmes with a view to addressing identified skills needs, including occupations in short supply, in Ireland's economy.

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[1] As there's no edition of a spotlight on *vocational education and training in Ireland* for 2017, distinctive features are provided by ReferNet Ireland.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Main challenges and policy responses

The attractiveness of VET: traditionally, the number of VET learners in Ireland has been small, which is due in part to the fact that the preference for many learners on leaving compulsory education is for higher education. While major policy documents (e.g. National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Further Education and Training Strategy, both published by the Department of Education and Skills) outline ambitions to address and increase the standing of VET in Ireland, such changes take time to implement as they often involve shifts in culture and values.

Participation in lifelong learning: although improving, the lifelong learning rate in Ireland (at 13%) remains lower than the EU 2020 target of 15%. Particular challenges, which are not unique to Ireland, include encouraging participation among older workers and those with low education attainment. Those with lower secondary education attainment or below, had a lifelong learning participation rate of 4%, compared to 26% for those with postgraduate qualifications (i.e. ISCED level 6/EQF 7-8). Similarly, those aged 55-64 had a participation rate of 9% compared to 19% for those aged 25-34.

New programmes in the FET system (not including apprenticeship) aim to attract learners into employment in low skill occupations/sectors and to engage in learning activities aimed at upskilling/reskilling (e.g. Skills to Advance programme), although the full impact of these new programmes has yet to be reflected in the data.

Data from VET in Ireland Spotlight (2017) ([2])

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[2] As there's no edition of a spotlight on vocational education and training in Ireland for 2017, information on main challenges and policy responses is provided by ReferNet Ireland.

## CHAPTER 3.

# External factors influencing VET

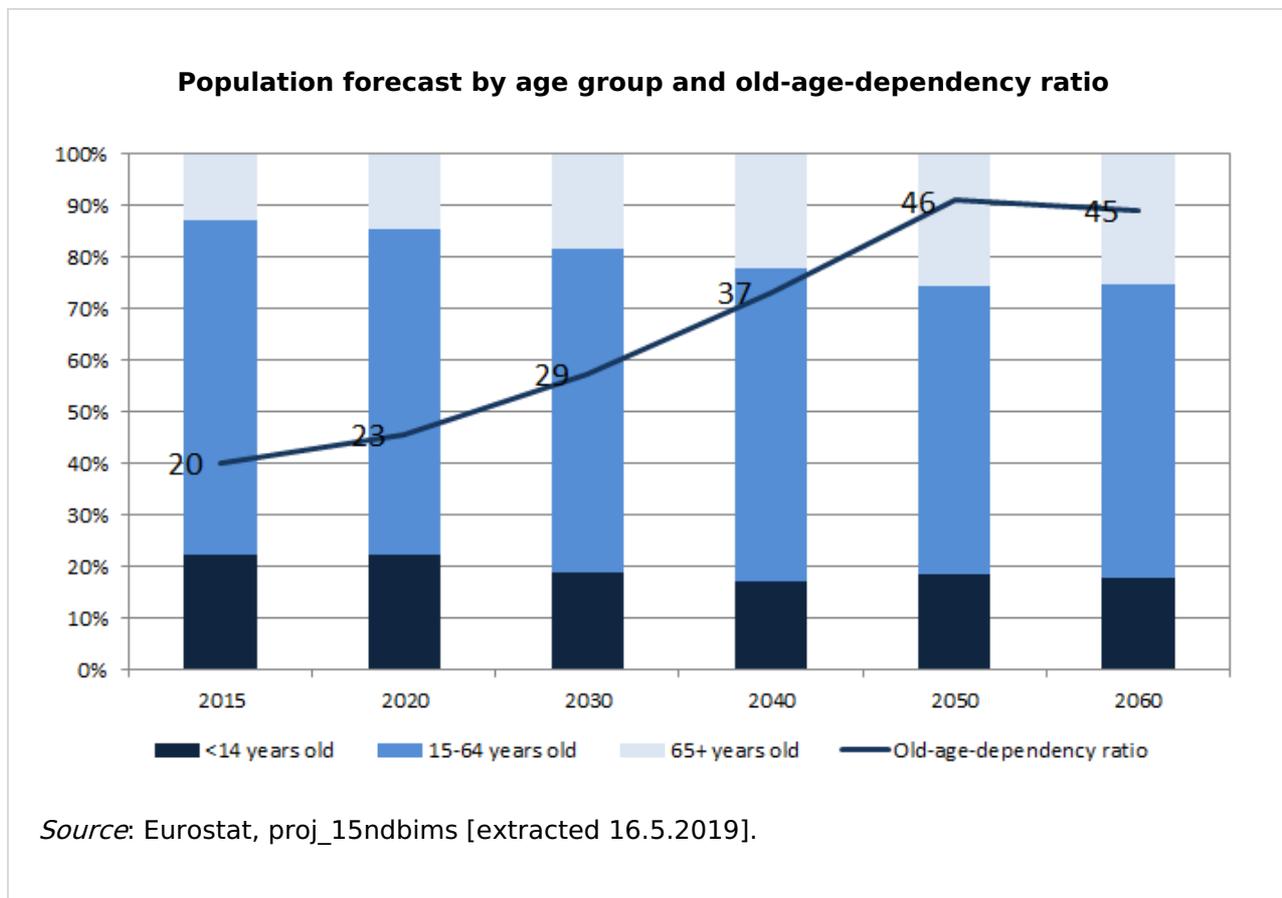
### 3.1. Demographics

Population in 2018: 4 830 392 ([3])

It increased by 4.8% since 2013 ([4]). This is due to an increase in inward migration, as well as a growth in the number of births in recent years (which was greater than the number of deaths).

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing.

The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 20 in 2015 to 45 in 2060 ([5]).



The cohort of those aged 5 to 19 increased from 2012 to 2017 due mainly to an increase in the number of births in recent years. As many learners enter the VET system from the age of 18 onwards, it is likely that the increase in this cohort will impact on the number of upper secondary school completers entering the VET system, and increase the demand for places across all sectors of the education and training system, including VET.

Not applicable

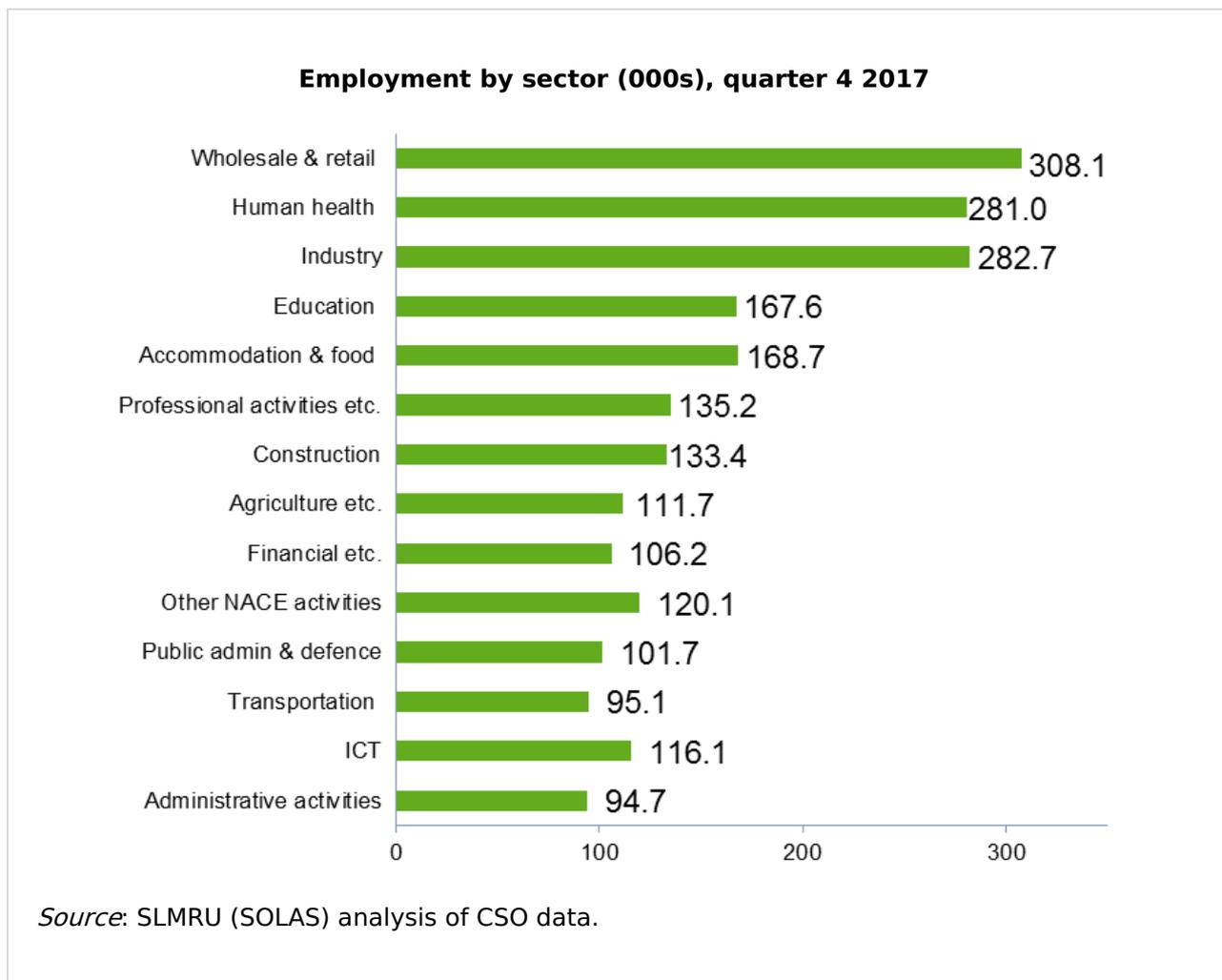
### 3.2. Economics

In Ireland, 99% of enterprises are micro enterprises (fewer than 10 employees). However, in terms

of the number of persons engaged, 27% are in micro enterprises, 22% are in small enterprises, 20% are in medium enterprises, and 32% are in large enterprises ([6]).

The main economic sectors in terms of employment are:

- wholesale and retail;
- human health;
- industry;
- education;
- accommodation and food;
- professional activities, etc.;
- construction;
- agriculture;
- public administration and defence;
- transportation;
- ICT;
- administrative activities.



These sectors are not linked to VET qualifications.

The main sectors associated with VET qualifications are construction, industry, and more recently and to a lesser extent, ICT, transportation, accommodation and food (i.e. hospitality), and finance.

### 3.3. Labour market

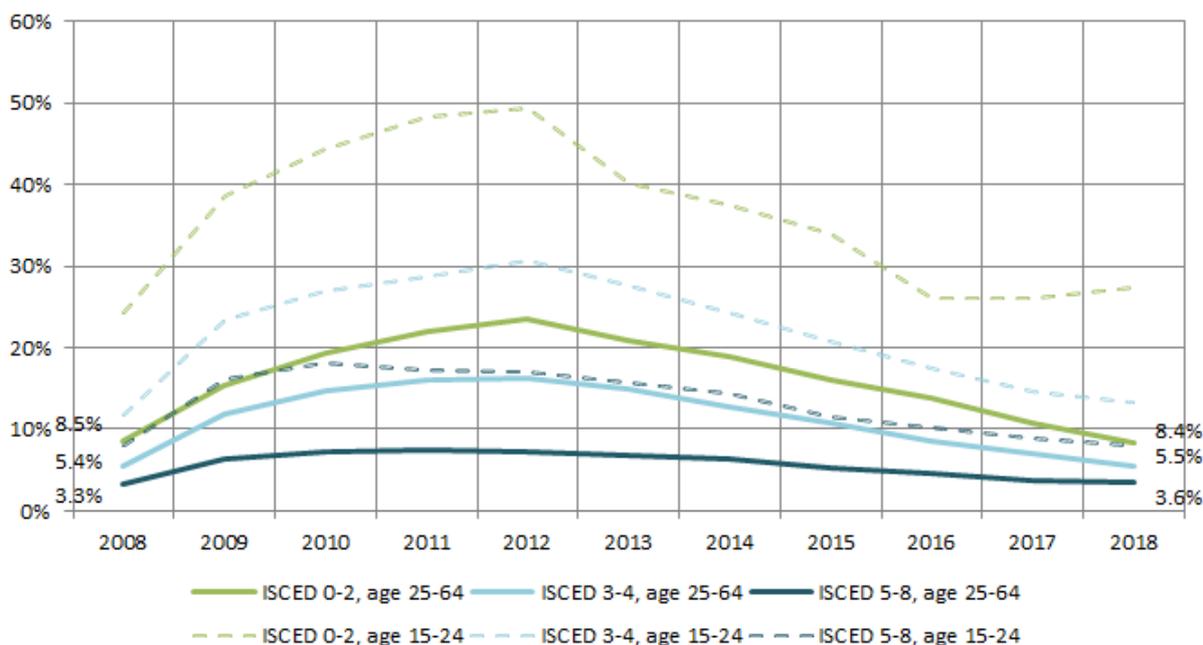
In terms of labour market regulation ([7]), Ireland’s regulatory framework has more in common with other flexible labour markets such as those of the United Kingdom or Denmark than with labour markets such as France and Germany. There are comparatively few occupations for which a VET qualification is a prerequisite for employment (notable exceptions include electrician, gas installer). Based on a set of labour regulation indicators (e.g. hiring, working hours, redundancy rules and costs), Ireland was ranked in 2018 by the Lithuanian Free Market Institute (LFMI) ([8]) employment flexibility index as one of the most flexible labour markets in the EU. This is illustrated in a number of indicators, including, among others, the fact that in Ireland:

- there are no restrictions on the duration of fixed-term contracts, except for minimum wage contracts;
- there is no restriction on overtime, night work and work on a weekly holiday;
- there are no restrictions on redundancy rules; although redundancy dismissals are allowed by law, there is a requirement to notify and consult a third party before dismissing a group of nine redundant employees.

Ireland however has a minimum statutory minimum wage.

Total unemployment ([9]) (2018): 4.7% (6% in EU-28); it decreased by 0.6 percentage points since 2008 ([10]).

**Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2008-18**



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

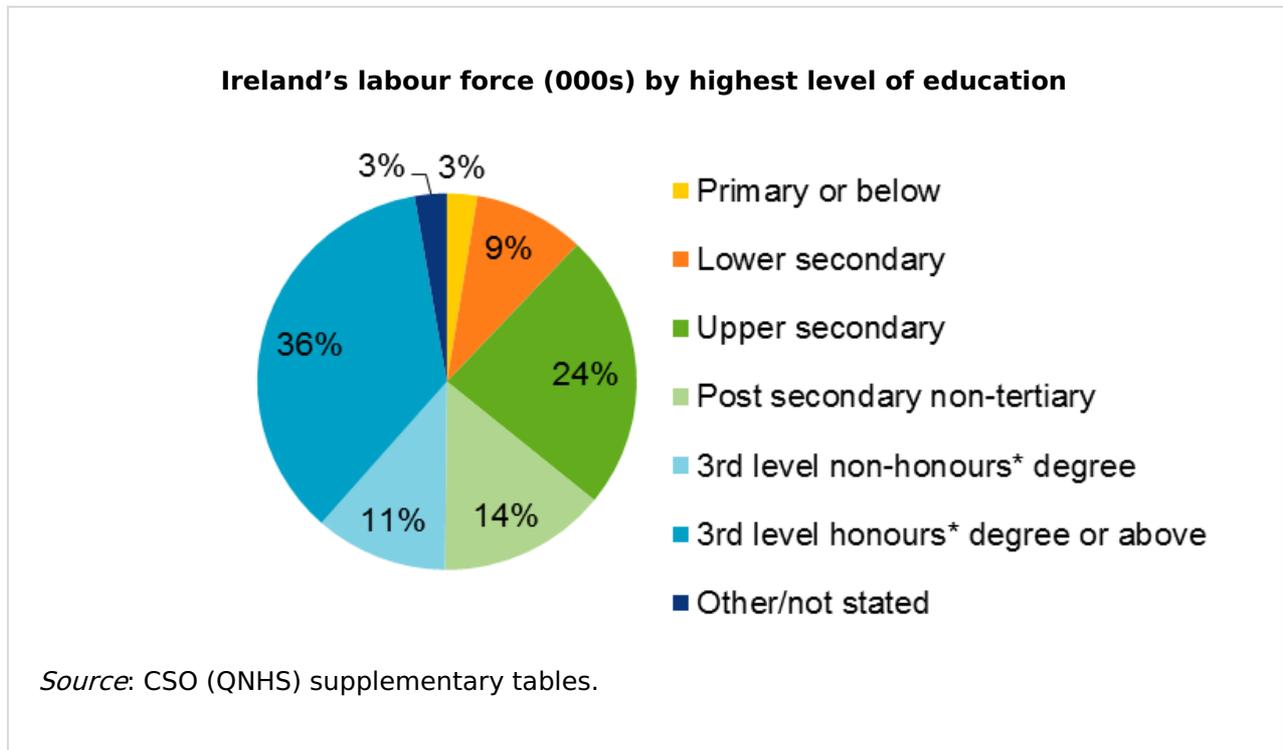
ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

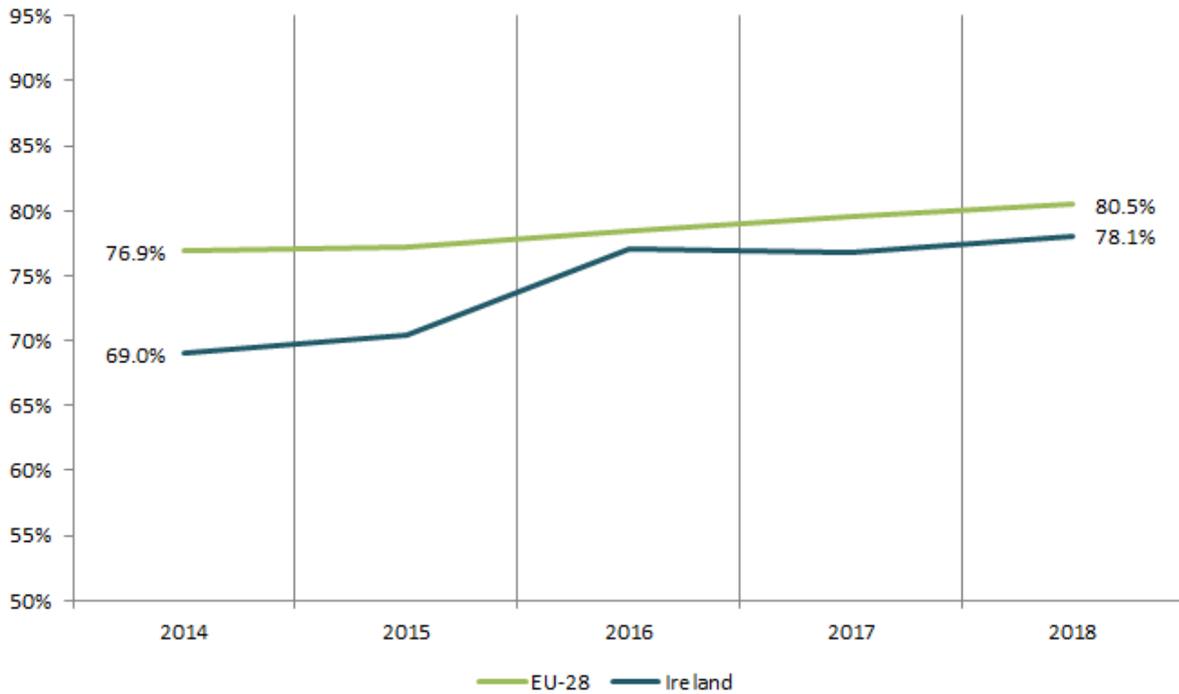
Source: Eurostat, lfsa\_urgaed [extracted 16.5.2019].

At 14%, those with post-secondary non-tertiary education attainment (where most VET graduates are classified) are one of the smallest groups in Ireland's labour force, as the figure below demonstrates ([11]). Almost half (47%) of the labour force holds a tertiary (or third) level qualification (NFQ 6-10/EQF5-8, ISCED 544-864).



Employment rate of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates increased from 69.0% in 2014 to 78.1% in 2018.

### Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

The increase (+9.1 pp) in employment of 20-34 year-old upper secondary/post-secondary graduates in 2014-18 was higher compared to the increase in employment of all 20-34 year-old graduates (+5.3 pp) in the same period in Ireland ([12]).

[3] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].

[4] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].

[5] Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64 ). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).

[6] Central Statistics Office: business demography (latest data: 2016):

<https://cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/bd/businessdemography2016/>

[7] In terms of the FET sector as a whole (general and VET), 84% of employers have indicated that they are happy with the quality of FET graduates. Source: HEA; SOLAS; QQI (2019). *Irish national employer survey: final report, January 2019*.

<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/01/21-01-19-J8961-Irish-National-Employer-Survey-Final-Report.pdf>

[9] Percentage of active population, 25 to 74 years old.

[10] Eurostat table une\_rt\_a [extracted 20.5.2019].

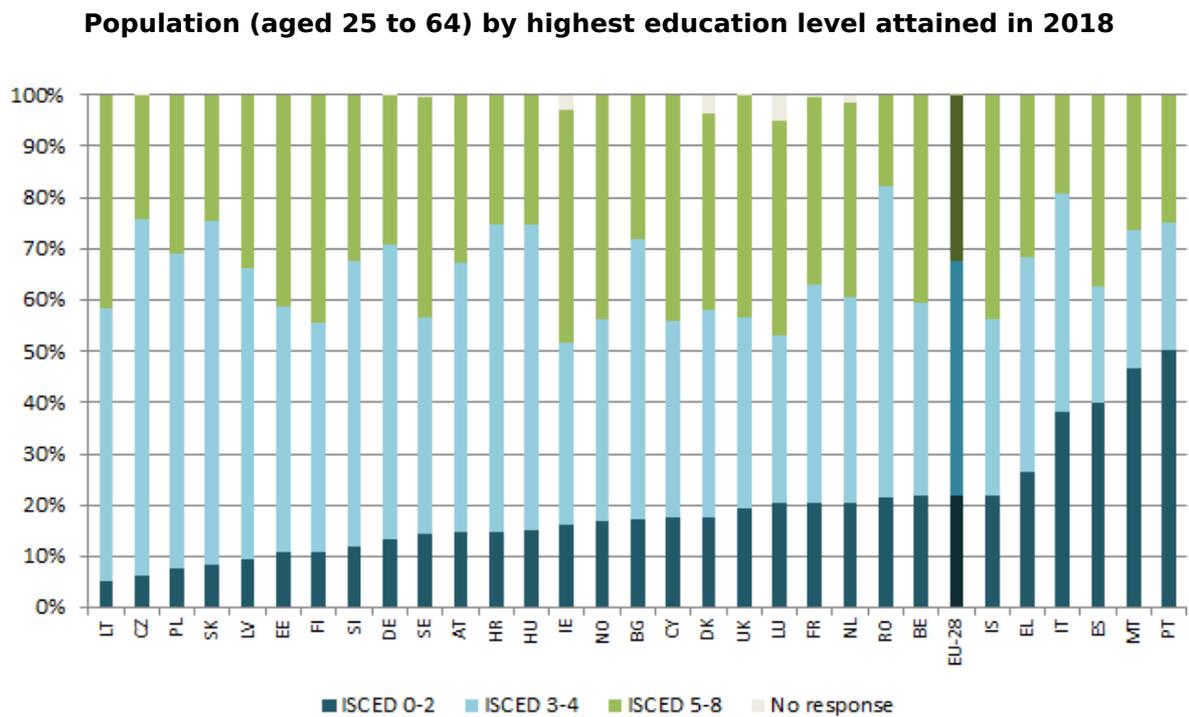
- [11] Source: CSO (QNHS) supplementary tables. In Ireland, there are two types of bachelor degree: an honours bachelor degree (NFQ 8) or an ordinary bachelor degree (NFQ 7). Both honours and ordinary bachelor degrees have been referenced to the European qualifications framework at EQF level 6.
- [12] NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series. ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

## CHAPTER 4.

# Education attainment

### 4.1. Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Education is highly valued in Ireland. The share of population aged up to 64 with higher education (45.6%) is higher than in most EU member states and above the EU-28 average. The share of those with a low qualification, or without a qualification, is 16.3%, placing Ireland almost in the middle of EU Member States in this category.



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. Low reliability for 'No response' in Czechia, Iceland, Latvia, and Poland.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, lfsa\_pgaed [extracted 16.5.2019].

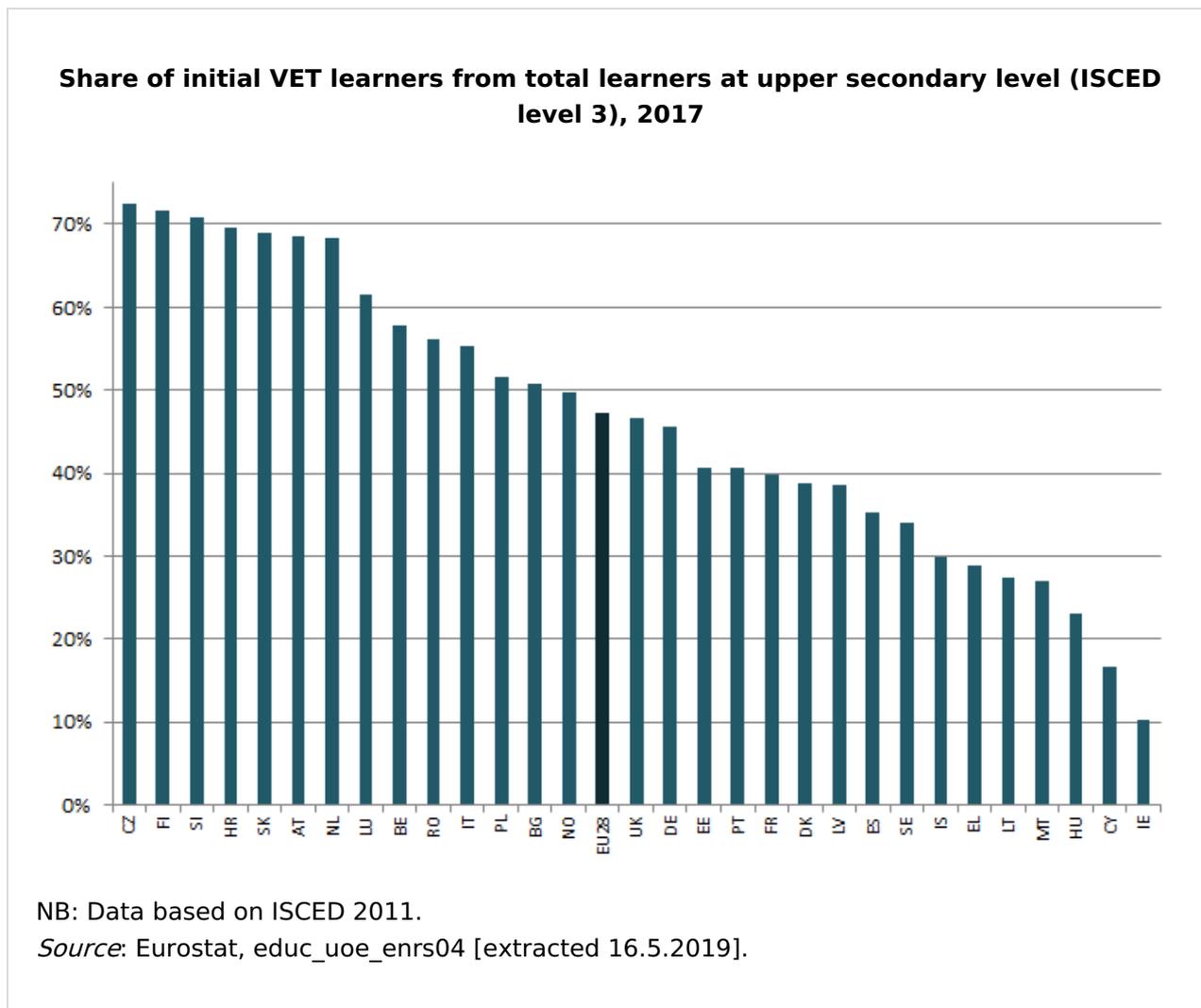
### 4.3. VET learners by level

#### Share of learners in VET by level in 2017

lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
not applicable	10.3%	100%

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ\_uae\_enrs01, educ\_uae\_enrs04 and educ\_uae\_enrs07 [extracted 16.5.2019].



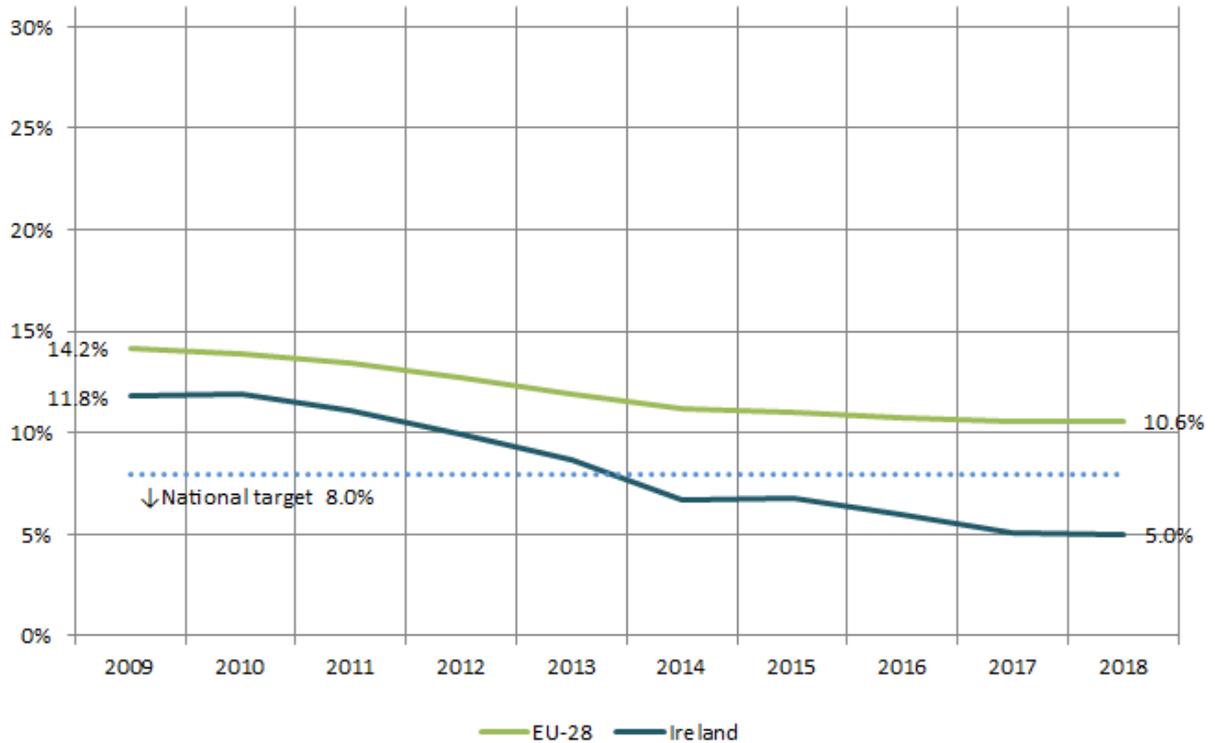
#### 4.4. Female share

Information not available

#### 4.5. Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 11.8% in 2009 to 5% in 2018. This places Ireland below the EU-28 average of 10.6% and marks a success as this percentage is also below the national objective for 2020 (no more than 8%).

### Early leavers from education and training in 2009-18



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training; break in series.

Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_14 [extracted 16.5.2019] and European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en) [accessed 14.11.2018].

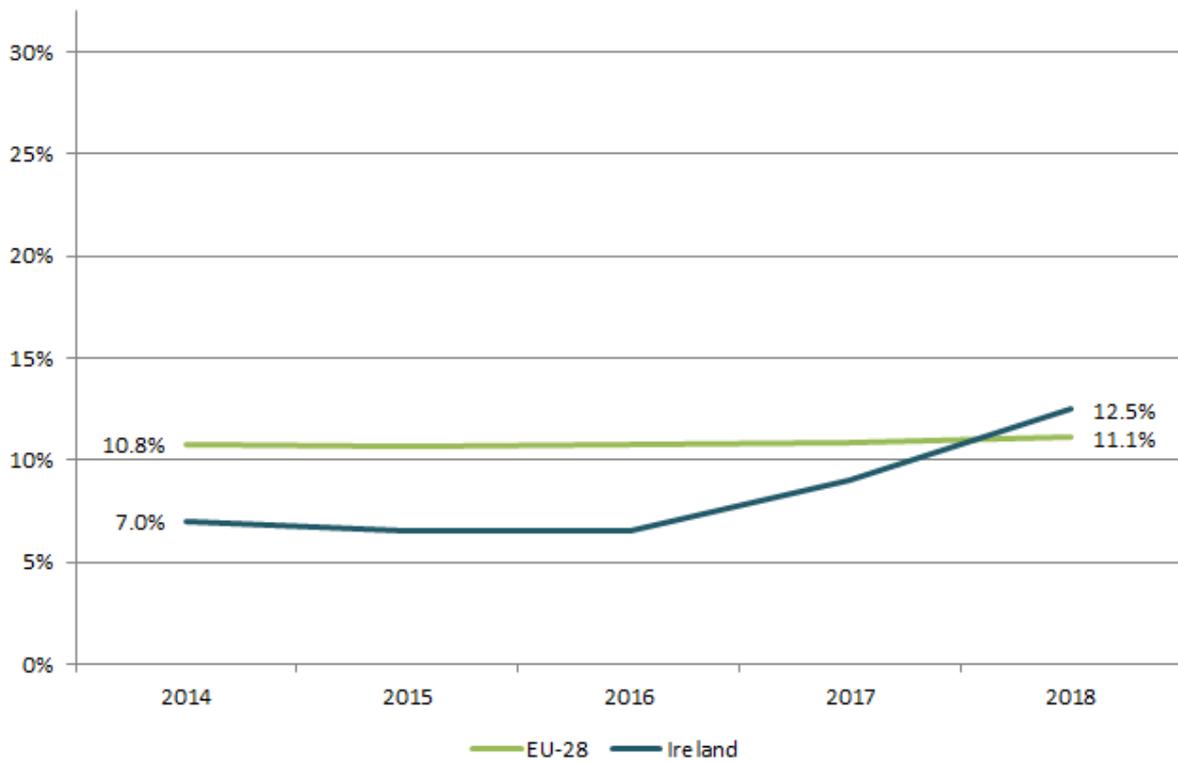
Dropout rate from VET (%)

Information not available

#### 4.6. Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education.

### Participation in lifelong learning in 2014-18



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training; break in series.

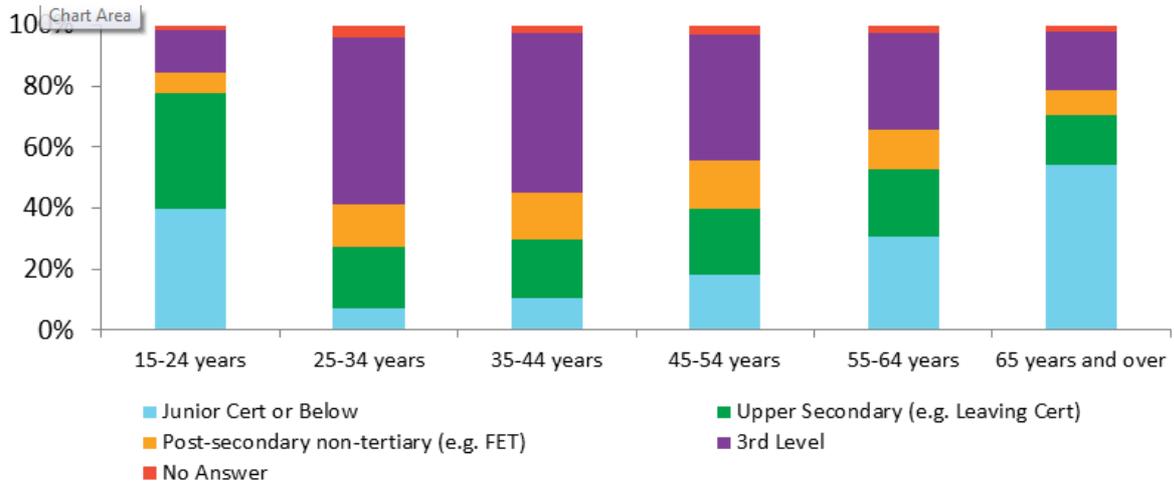
Source: Eurostat, trng\_lfse\_01 [extracted 16.5.2019].

Participation in lifelong learning has increased since 2014 (7.0%). In 2018, it is above the EU-28 average by 1.4 percentage points (12.5% Ireland, 11.1% EU-28).

#### 4.7. VET learners by age

Information on VET learners, as distinct from other further education and training learners, is not available. However, the share of post-secondary non-tertiary learners in the population is slightly larger in the younger age cohorts.

**Population (15+) by age group and education attainment level, quarter 3 2018.**



Source: SLMRU analysis of labour force survey data.

## CHAPTER 5.

# VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- primary education;
- secondary education, divided into lower secondary education (EQF2) and upper secondary (EQF 3-4);
- further education and training (FET) non-tertiary education;
- tertiary education.

Primary education is compulsory from the age of 6 years, although the vast majority of pupils enrol between the ages of 4 and 5 years. It consists of an eight year cycle: junior infants, senior infants, and first to sixth classes. Most learners have completed primary education by the age of 12.

Secondary education usually lasts five to six years and is divided into lower secondary education (3 years) and upper secondary (2 years). Some pupils may also undertake the Transition Year Programme: a one-year programme that acts as a bridge between lower and upper secondary education.

Lower secondary education: the junior cycle is a generally oriented programme of approximately three years' duration and leads to the Junior Certificate examination, which students usually take at the age of 15 or 16.

Upper secondary: the senior cycle (i.e. upper secondary education) takes two years and leads to the leaving certificate examination which students usually sit at the age of 17 or 18.

Further education and training in Ireland comprises post-secondary non-tertiary education, as well as second chance education/training. The sector is characterised by a high degree of diversity in terms of the type of programme, level and learner:

- further education and training programmes can be general, vocational or mixed;
- they lead to awards across several levels on the EQF (levels 1-5 on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), or levels 1-6 on Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ));
- target groups include young people who have recently completed upper secondary education, adult learners, early school leavers, the employed, the unemployed, asylum seekers, learners with special needs;
- post leaving certificate (PLC) programmes are aimed primarily at those completing upper secondary education, but are also open to older learners; programmes are often general in nature, but also include VET programmes such as motor technology;
- second chance learning opportunities within the further education and training sector.

Over a half of those who complete upper secondary school transfer directly to third level education on completing upper secondary education ([13]). Students can opt for higher education in a university, institute of technology or college of education (EQF levels 5-6, ISCED levels 544-554, 665). There are also a small number of private, independent providers of tertiary (or third) level education (mostly business and related disciplines).

Undergraduate higher education courses are of various durations, ranging from two years for a higher certificate (NFQ 6; EQF 5, ISCED 665) to three/four years for an honours bachelor degree (NFQ 8; EQF 6; ISCED 666). Some programmes, such as medicine or architecture, require up to five years. Postgraduate programmes range from one year (e.g. taught masters (NFQ 9; EQF 7;

ISCED 667)) to three years or more for doctoral programmes (NFQ 10; EQF 8; ISCED 864).

VET is provided primarily within the further education and training sector (comprising post-secondary non-tertiary and second chance education). However, since 2016, the apprenticeship system has been expanded and includes new programmes which are delivered not only within the further education and training sector, but also in tertiary level institutions. Graduates, however, have yet to emerge from these programmes.

Like the apprenticeship system, the traineeship system has undergone substantial change in recent years in Ireland. Traineeships, unlike apprenticeships, are not regulated by law (there is no occupation profile); they tend to be developed in response to local employers' needs, and curriculum content may vary according to local demand. Traineeships must have a work-based learning component of at least 30%.

Most of the development of the traineeship system has been the result of recognising the need to develop the skills of the employed, as outlined in the national skills strategy. Consequently, while most traineeships programmes had previously been available only to the unemployed, they have, since 2017, also been open to school leavers and the employed. There are no age restrictions for trainees, and they are free of charge to participants. Some unemployed trainees may also receive a training allowance.

Specific skills training courses allow people who have lost their job to learn new job-related skills. The courses on offer vary from year to year with different levels of certification. The training content and occupational standards are based on the consultation process involving employers. Certification achieved on course completion ranges from levels 3-5 on the national framework of qualifications (or levels 2-4 on the EQF). The courses differ from traineeships in that they tend to be shorter (four to five months), with a shorter on-the-job phase; in addition, the employer does not play a role in recruitment.

Post leaving certificate courses are aimed at learners who have completed the leaving certificate examination at the end of upper secondary education. They are full-time courses which last between one and two years. These courses provide integrated general education, vocational training and work experience for young people; however, post leaving certificate courses are also an option for mature learners (in 2015, 47% of those enrolled on post leaving certificate programmes in 2015 were aged 21 or over). They provide, therefore, important lifelong learning opportunities for adult learners.

While some post leaving certificate courses are vocational in nature (e.g. training in beauty therapy, healthcare, security studies), others are general (e.g. general studies, art, design, etc.). Most post leaving certificate courses have a work experience component, although there is no prescribed minimum duration for most courses.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) courses consist of a range of full-time courses (EQF 2-5, ISCED 353) designed to meet the education and training needs of unemployed people aged 21 or over. It is offered by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) throughout the country. Participation in vocational training opportunities scheme courses is in two modes as follows:

- as a 'core' vocational training opportunities scheme; students participate in a group of up to twenty other vocational training opportunities scheme students in a vocational training opportunities scheme centre or adult education centre;
- as a 'dispersed' vocational training opportunities scheme; students participate in a group of students, some of whom may be vocational training opportunities scheme students and some of whom will be studying through other schemes/programmes (e.g. post leaving

certificate course).

Vocational training opportunities scheme programmes offer a wide choice of subjects and learning activities. Certification is available at a range of levels.

Traditionally, programmes at tertiary level are not officially designated as being VET or General, although many programmes at higher education level are designed to qualify learners for work in specific occupations (e.g. teacher, architect, doctor, engineer). In this regard, tertiary education in Ireland does lead to VET related qualifications. However, in 2016, for the first time in Ireland, an apprenticeship programme became available at higher education level (insurance studies). Learners must hold an upper secondary education qualification and be in employment. Nonetheless, apprenticeship training at tertiary level is currently not a typical feature of the sector.

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[13] Department of Education and Skills: annual statistical reports 2016.  
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/>

## CHAPTER 6.

# Apprenticeship

Until 2016, formal apprenticeship training was restricted to 27 trades, mostly concentrated in the construction and engineering sectors. However, following a review of the apprenticeship system by the education ministry in 2013, a decision was made to expand the apprenticeship system to other sectors of the economy. The qualifications, duration and economic sectors of the new apprenticeships differ somewhat to the earlier apprenticeships, and, as a result, formal apprenticeship training falls into two programme types: (a) pre-2016 craft apprenticeship and (b) post-2016 apprenticeship.

In both apprenticeship programme types, apprentices are considered to be part of the employed population and pay the appropriate level of employment insurance. They sign an employment contract with the employer and, therefore, have the legal status (and associated rights and responsibilities) of employees.

A national apprenticeship council oversees apprenticeship in Ireland. SOLAS (Ireland's further education and training (FET) authority) is the lead agency responsible for apprenticeship on behalf of the government. It collaborates with the Higher Education Authority (responsible for tertiary education), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (industry and education) and training providers across both the FET and third level education system. It is the responsibility of SOLAS to maintain a national register of employers approved to take on apprentices and a national register of apprentices.

The national apprenticeship system is funded through the national training fund and from the exchequer.

In 2016, Ireland's national skills strategy 2025 set a target to significantly expand the apprenticeship system, both in terms of the numbers of learners and the occupations and sectors in which apprenticeships would be available. The action plan to expand apprenticeship outlines the plan to increase the number of apprenticeship places over the period 2016-20 to 31 000 (up from approximately 12 000), and to increase the number of apprenticeship programmes to more than 70 (up from 27). These increases are expected to be rolled out incrementally to 2020.

### **Pre-2016 craft apprenticeship**

The apprenticeship system in Ireland is governed by the 1967 Industrial Training Act and is organised by SOLAS (FET funding and planning authority) in cooperation with the education ministry, employers and unions. The pre-2016 craft-based apprenticeship programmes normally consist of seven phases: three off-the-job and four on-the-job. Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 take place with the employer, while Phases 2, 4 and 6 take place at an education and training board (phase 2) or an institute of technology (phases 4 and 6). The total duration of off-the-job phases is approximately 40 weeks. The employer pays the apprentice for the on-the-job phases, while the State pays a training allowance to apprentices during the off-the-job phases. On completion of apprenticeship training, a qualified apprentice receives a craft certificate (NFQ 6 or EQF 5, ISCED 544, 554).

For pre-2016 craft apprenticeship training, the formal minimum entry requirement in Ireland is the junior certificate or equivalent (NFQ 3 or EQF 2) qualification. In practice, however, the vast majority (three-quarters) of new apprentices hold higher levels of education, typically a leaving certificate (NFQ level 4/5 or EQF level 3/4). Learners who do not meet the minimum education entry requirements may be registered as apprentices by an employer if they have either successfully completed an approved pre-apprenticeship course or if they are over 16 years old

and have at least three years' approved work experience. Some apprenticeships also require applicants to pass a SOLAS-approved colour vision test (e.g. electrical apprenticeship, painter and decorator apprenticeship).

In order to register as an apprentice, a learner must first secure employment in the trade s/he wishes to undertake.

### **Post-2016 apprenticeship**

Since the expansion of the apprenticeship system in 2016, several new apprenticeship programmes have become available. As of August 2018, there were 23 additional formal apprenticeship programmes being run, many of which are delivered at tertiary level institutions; they span a range of sectors, including hospitality (e.g. chef de partie), finance (e.g. insurance practice) and engineering (e.g. polymer processing technology). These new apprenticeships must be a minimum of two years in duration; they lead to awards spanning levels 5-8 on the national framework for qualifications (EQF levels 4-6).

In addition, there are a number of apprenticeships at various stages of development; the proposed national framework for qualifications levels for these apprenticeships range from national framework for qualifications levels 5-10 (EQF levels 4-8), and have proposed durations of two to four years. They include retail practice, arboriculture and HGV driver.

The employer pays the apprentice for the duration of the apprenticeship.

For post-2016 apprenticeships, the entry requirements vary, depending on the specific apprenticeship programme, although a leaving certificate is generally the minimum requirement. For entry to apprenticeship programmes at third level, learners often need to meet certain academic requirements (e.g. for the insurance practice apprenticeship, learners must hold minimum grades in at least six subjects (including mathematics and English or Irish)).

Generally an apprentice does not pay fees. However, a student contribution is levied on all students (including apprentices) attending institutes of technology (i.e. phases 4 and 6 of apprenticeship training). The maximum rate of the student contribution for the academic year 2016/17 was EUR 3 000, although in practice the amount was typically lower than this. (Student contributions only apply to learners on apprenticeship programmes delivered at an institute of technology; some apprenticeships, such as accounting technician or commis chef are not delivered at an institute of technology, and so are not subject to the student contribution.)

In order to register as an apprentice, a learner must first secure employment in the trade s/he wishes to undertake. Apprentices are not eligible for a student grant.

The number of apprentices was extremely low during the economic recession but has now increased to 15 500 (in 2018) compared to the 3 273 observed earlier in the decade, (Q 16 on the website).

Additionally, apprenticeship is not considered a second chance route (Q 10 on the website), although it is not a typical education route for most of those graduating from upper secondary education.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the European database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches>

## CHAPTER 7.

# VET governance

Responsibility for taking decisions and implementing further education and training, which includes most VET provision in Ireland, lies with SOLAS, a government agency, in conjunction with 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs), who are the VET providers. Both SOLAS and the education and training boards are agencies of the education ministry. This remit was established under the Further Education and Training Act 2013, which was signed into law in July 2013 ([14]). The Act required SOLAS to submit a five-year strategy for further education and training provision in Ireland. The further education and training strategy ([15]) guides the provision of further education and training in Ireland (including VET, such as apprenticeship and upskilling initiatives for the employed,).

The further education and training strategy complements other government strategies such as the National Skill Strategy ([16]) and the Action Plan for Jobs ([17]).

Since 2016, and the reform of apprenticeship, Ireland's higher education authority also plays a role in the oversight of VET programmes that are delivered in higher education institutions (namely institutes of technology).

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[14] <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/25/enacted/en/print.html>

## CHAPTER 8.

# VET financing mechanisms

In 2018, the further education and training services plan provided for a total budget allocation of EUR 647.6 million to the further education and training authority (SOLAS) for the provision of further education and training programmes. Included within the funding allocated for further education and training is the funding for VET programmes. The funding is received from two main sources, the Exchequer and the national training fund. Most of the funding is allocated through SOLAS to the education and training boards. Of the EUR 647.6 million allocated to SOLAS, EUR 366.8 million comes from Exchequer funding and EUR 277.5 million comes from the national training fund; the remaining EUR 3.3 million comes from SOLAS-generated income.

- EUR per student per year
- % from GDP
- % from government spending
- historical trends

Information not available

## CHAPTER 9.

# Teachers and trainers

### 9.1. VET teacher types

Given the diverse nature of further education and training and VET programmes offered to learners in Ireland, there are several categories of teaching and training professionals working in VET.

In general, VET teacher/trainer categories are distinguished by the programmes they deliver, their technical and pedagogical qualifications required, and the funding mechanisms.

- Teachers work in education and training boards in schools or colleges of further education that deliver post leaving certificate courses and/or vocational training opportunities scheme programmes. Although further education and training teachers deliver their programmes (including VET) at ISCED level 4 (leading to awards at national framework of qualifications levels 5-6 and European qualifications framework levels 4-5), they are registered with the teaching council as second level teachers. To register, teachers must hold an honours bachelor degree (at national framework of qualifications level 8; European qualifications framework level 6; ISCED 665, 666) and an approved initial teacher education qualification (postgraduate diploma at national framework of qualifications levels 8 or 9 (European qualifications framework levels 6 or 7); alternatively, a teacher may hold a concurrent degree qualification in post-primary initial teacher education (national framework of qualifications level 8; European qualifications framework level 6), which combines the study of one or more curricular subjects with teacher education studies.
- Apprenticeship instructors work in education and training boards in training centres which deliver the first off-the-job phase of apprenticeship (phase 2). At present, there is no requirement for instructors on classroom based apprenticeship programmes to hold a pedagogical qualification, but they must hold a craft certificate (national framework of qualifications level 6; European qualifications framework level 5), plus 5 years experience.
- Apprenticeship lecturers work in institutes of technology, which are third level institutions, delivering training on the remaining two phases (4 and 7) of the apprenticeship programme. Apprenticeship lecturers must hold a degree (national framework of qualifications levels 7-8; European qualifications framework level 6) or equivalent in the subject area, or hold a craft certificate (European qualifications framework level 5) and have three years' postgraduate experience.
- Work based tutors are employed, in both private and public sectors, in craft occupations. They are responsible for overseeing the work and training of apprentices during the on-the-job phases of the apprenticeship programme (phases 1, 3, 5 and 7).

Employers must employ a suitably qualified and relevant craftsperson who has been approved by the further education and training authority (SOLAS) to act as:

- workplace assessor. The assessor must have completed the SOLAS assessor and verifier programme provided by the education and training boards. This course lasts approximately one day and is not aligned with the national framework of qualifications;
- workplace tutor. The tutor must be competent and qualified (a holder of a national craft certificate (European qualifications framework level 5) to train apprentices.

The tutor and assessor can be the same person provided they hold the relevant qualification.

Tutors/trainers work on VET programmes or on general learning programmes in education and

training boards. They deliver training (other than apprenticeship) or education (e.g. adult literacy), often on programmes aimed at the unemployed (e.g. specific skills training or other VET programmes), or early school leavers (general education).

For other types of VET training in the further education and training sector the qualifications and professional standards of trainers vary. In general, programmes leading to a Quality and Qualifications Ireland award require a subject matter qualification (usually one level higher than that of the course being taught), a pedagogical qualification (usually at third level) and 5 years' industry experience. For all other training, such as computing or accounting, trainer profiles tend to vary depending on the awarding body, the subject matter being taught and the provider. However pedagogical qualifications are increasingly in demand for these types of courses.

Trainers in other types of training programmes are generally required to hold a technical qualification at a level that is one step above the programme being delivered. In addition, they must also hold a minimum amount of relevant work experience. Increasingly, however, there is a demand for these trainers to hold a pedagogical qualification.

Other trainers work in a variety of further education and training settings, including education and training boards, Skillnets ([18]) (mostly providing training, although not exclusively, to the employed) and private sector providers.

## 9.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

With the exception of apprenticeships, continuing professional development (CPD) for further education and training professionals in Ireland has, until recently, been taking place mostly on an ad-hoc basis and has lacked a strategic focus at national level.

This situation is expected to change in the future as the further education and training strategy ([19]) has emphasised the importance of a 'clear and consistent professional and competency skill roadmap for those entering into and those (already) involved in the further education and training sector in its broadest sense'. The strategy also recognises the need for a continuing professional development requirement for those employed in the further education and training sector in addition to the professional qualifications. The Skills Profile ([20]) will also help address the information deficit on continuing professional development participation in further education and training.

The continuing professional development strategy will be developed by SOLAS in an evidence-based manner.

Evidence will be drawn from both primary and secondary sources, nationally and internationally, and will be both qualitative and quantitative in nature. In addition to the data from the skills profile reports, it is expected that other sources of data will be analysed as part of the continuing professional development strategy development process, including sector activity information, as well as reports on labour market and future skills needs. A key element of the development process is extensive consultation with key further education and training sector stakeholders to develop a comprehensive view of further education and training professional development issues from a wide perspective.

The continuing professional development strategy will be the first agreed articulation of national policy for the professional development of staff in the newly integrated further education and training sector.

More information is available in the Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective on teachers and trainers ([21]).

- [18] Skillnet Ireland is a national agency dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of workforce learning in Ireland. The organisation was established in 1999 and works with businesses and their employees to address their current and future skills needs by providing high quality, subsidised training through a series of enterprise-led training networks which operate across a range of sectors and regions. Skillnet Ireland receives public funding through the National Training Fund (NTF) (a dedicated fund to support the training of those in employment, and those seeking employment). In addition to NTF funding, Skillnet Ireland channels funding into its training programmes via matching funding provided by its network member enterprises. Skillnets training interventions comprise mostly short courses (days rather than weeks or months). More information available at: <https://www.skillnetireland.ie/>
- [20] The Skills Profile is an IT-based tool designed to capture information that will facilitate the on-going review of skills and qualification profile of personnel in the sector. It is anticipated that the outputs from the skills profile project will assist SOLAS and its education and training boards' (ETBs) partners in developing an overall Continuous professional development strategy and appropriate responses to identified priority needs to assist with future workforce and personnel development planning.
- [21] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/teachers-and-trainers>

## CHAPTER 10.

# Shaping VET qualifications

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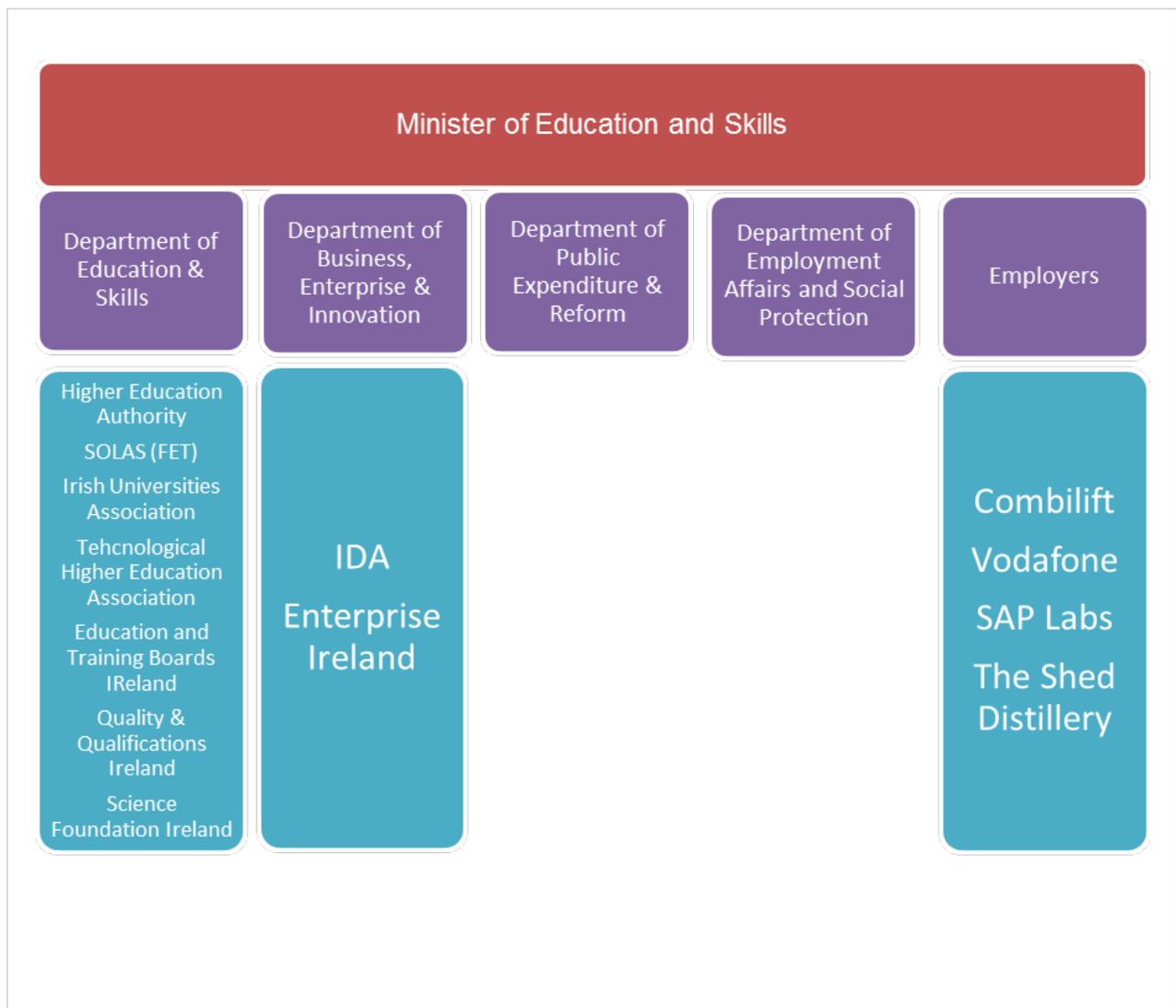
### 10.1. Anticipating skill needs

Following publication of the national skills strategy 2025 (in 2016), the system for the identification of skills needs in Ireland was reconfigured. Skills needs identification is now overseen by a National Skills Council, which was established in 2017. The National Skills Council is chaired by Ireland's Minister for Education and Skills and is made up of representatives (usually senior civil servants or chief executive officers) from a number of government departments (ministries), their agencies and employers.

More specifically the National Skills Council includes representatives from the following:

- Department of education and skills;
- Department of business, enterprise and innovation;
- Department of public expenditure and reform;
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection;
- employers.

The figure below depicts the composition of the National Skills Council ([22]).



The National Skills Council oversees the process of skills needs identification in Ireland. It is informed by the work of:

- an expert group on future skills needs, which provides advice on sectoral developments in terms of employment;
- regional skills fora: a network of nine fora that forms a direct link between education and training providers and employers at local level;
- The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU), which monitors the supply and demand for skills and occupational labour. Every year, the skills and labour market research unit publishes the national skills bulletin, a summary of the various supply and demand indicators for skills and labour in Ireland ([23]). The national skills bulletin also provides a list of the occupations for which a shortage has been identified, distinguishing between a skills shortage, a labour shortage, or a possible future (within the next five years) shortage. Every five years (or when the data permits), the skills and labour market research unit carries out a medium-term forecasting project, which looks at the demand for skills at occupational level ([24]).

See also Cedefop’s skills forecast ([25]) and European skills index ([26]).

## 10.2. Designing qualifications

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 ([27]), the government established Quality and Qualifications Ireland ([28]). Quality and Qualifications Ireland operates under the Department of Education and Skills. It is both an awarding and a quality assurance body. While the remit of Quality and Qualifications Ireland extends to both general and vocational education and training awards, it plays a key role in setting standards and qualifications in VET (a significant share of VET-related awards are made by Quality and Qualifications Ireland).

The specific statutory functions of Quality and Qualifications Ireland include, for example:

- establishing the standards of knowledge, skills or competences to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by Quality and Qualifications Ireland, or by an education and training provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated;
- making awards or delegating authority to make an award where it considers it appropriate; reviewing and monitoring the operation of the authority so delegated.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland sets standards for further education and training awards (including VET) and tertiary education awards made outside the university sector ([29]).

Quality and Qualifications Ireland awards' standards are determined within the National Framework of Qualifications, which comprises a grid of indicators, award-type descriptors and other policies, criteria, standards and guidelines that may be issued to support it. Quality and Qualifications Ireland determines awards' standards for the education and training awards that it makes itself and that are made by providers to whom it has delegated authority to make an award. Such standards are determined to be consistent with the national framework of qualifications award types.

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[22] Source: SOLAS.

[23] <http://www.solas.ie/SkillsToAdvance/Documents/National%20Skills%20Bulletin%202018.pdf>

[24] <http://www.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/OccupationalEmploymentForecasts2013.pdf>

[25] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/skills-forecast>

[26] <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/indicators/european-skills-index>

[27] Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012:  
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/print.html>

[28] <https://www.qqi.ie/>

[29] The awards at tertiary level are made to learners at a variety of tertiary institutions including private independent colleges. Third level institutions such as most institutes of technology have received delegated authority from Quality and Qualifications Ireland make their own awards. Universities and Dublin Institute of Technology act as their own awarding bodies.

## CHAPTER 11.

# Quality assurance

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland is required to develop and publish guidelines for providers for the quality assurance of their programmes and services. Providers are required by legislation to have regard to Quality and Qualifications Ireland guidelines in developing their own procedures for quality assurance. In some instances, such as programme validation, providers' quality assurance procedures must be approved by Quality and Qualifications Ireland as fit for purpose.

Therefore, providers are responsible for assuring the quality of their own programmes with reference to the guidelines and criteria issued by Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Given the variety of providers in Ireland, Quality and Qualifications Ireland has developed guidelines for a number of sectors, including the further education and training sector. Quality and Qualifications Ireland guidelines for further education and training providers are directed to the EQAVET Framework, the European initiative for quality assurance in VET, designed to provide tools for the management of quality in vocational education and training. Quality and Qualifications Ireland is an active contributor to EQAVET's work on a European level and these guidelines are designed to complement EQAVET guidelines.

Programme validation is a key quality assurance process that Quality and Qualifications Ireland uses to approve new programmes proposed by providers of education and training. Validation in this context means that a programme meets minimum standards in terms of learning outcomes and national framework of qualifications levels. Programme validation, therefore, can assure providers and learners that successful completion of a programme validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland will lead to a specific national framework of qualifications awards.

Programme validation is a two-stage process:

- approval of the provider's ability to quality assure its programmes;
- validation by Quality and Qualifications Ireland of a specific programme(s). Quality and Qualifications Ireland does this by appointing independent expert(s) to compare provider proposals against the requirements of the particular national framework of qualifications award(s).

If the proposed programme meets Quality and Qualifications Ireland criteria, it can be validated for up to five years. If the criteria are not met then the programme cannot be offered as proposed.

## CHAPTER 12.

# Validation of prior learning

Under an EU Council recommendation ([30]), Member States should have arrangements in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning no later than 2018. Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland is required to establish policies on recognition of prior learning within the policies and criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP).

While the legal basis for the development of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies was established in the Qualifications Act 1999, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) published principles and operational guidelines in 2005 ([31]). Recognition of prior learning policy is currently being revised by Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Quality and Qualifications Ireland has consulted widely with relevant stakeholders to achieve a more cohesive approach to delivering recognition of prior learning nationally. Quality and Qualifications Ireland aims to develop comprehensive policy and operational procedures in line with legislation on the basis of national collaboration, consideration of the current arrangements and identification of best practice nationally and internationally.

For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database ([32]).

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[31] <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Principles%20and%20Operational%20Guidelines%20for%20RPL%202005.pdf>

[32] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/european-database-on-validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

## CHAPTER 13.

# Incentives for learners

### **Funding**

In common with other sections of the Irish education sector, the provision of public vocational and education training is largely funded by the Exchequer and consequently VET programmes are provided free or at a minimal charge. As an example, the post leaving certificate programme is an important element of VET provision to young people who have completed their leaving certificate and to adults returning to education.

Since the 2011/12 academic year, students on post leaving certificate courses have paid a participant contribution of EUR 200 (prior to this, students did not have to pay any fees). There may be other minimal costs, i.e. registration and exam fees, which may vary according to the different colleges. Certain categories of post leaving certificate students are exempted from this participant contribution: for example, learners who qualify for a student grant do not have to pay the participant contribution. Colleges offering post leaving certificate courses may, however, levy a 'course charge' to cover such expenses as books, uniforms, student services, professional registration fees and examination fees.

The cost of taking up further education and training courses is much less expensive than attending higher education courses in Ireland.

### **Grants, allowances, support**

There are numerous grants and incentives available to support individuals intending to take up courses in the further education and training sector:

- the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is available to carers, people with disabilities, unemployed people and lone parents. This allowance provides these individuals with the opportunity to study at second level (both lower secondary (NFQ 3/EQF 2, ISCED 244) and upper secondary (NFQ 4/5, EQF 3/4, ISCED 343, 344) or further (NFQ 1-6/EQF 1-5) and tertiary (third level) (NFQ 6-10, EQF 5-8, ISCED 544-864) education, while keeping their existing social welfare payments;
- the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) is targeted at people over the age of 16 who have not completed their leaving certificate and allows participants to combine family and work with a part-time further education programme;
- the CETS (Childcare Employment and Training Support) scheme provides subsidised childcare places for some applicants to further education and training courses including VET (specific skills training, vocational training opportunities scheme, and traineeships).

### **Other initiatives available to trainees include:**

- a training allowance which may be paid for the duration of the course;
- an accommodation allowance should the individual live away from home in order to attend the course;
- a travel allowance should the trainee live more than three miles from the education and training board ([33]).

### **Positive employability outcomes**

The first goal in the corporate plan 2017-19 of the further education and training authority

(SOLAS) is for further education and training provision to align with labour market and learners' employability and lifelong learning needs. By striving to ensure positive employability outcomes for those undertaking further education and training (including VET) programmes, SOLAS aims to increase the attractiveness of further education and training among school leavers and other learners in Ireland. To this end, monitoring learner outcomes from further education and training courses is a key function of SOLAS. This data, along with local labour market intelligence (also provided by SOLAS), informs the further education and training planning agreements SOLAS makes with education and training boards as the basis for receipt of funding. These activities help to ensure that courses provided by education and training boards are up-to-date and in conjunction with employers' needs and that learners from VET-oriented courses will be job ready. Currently, most monitoring is carried out through regular surveys. However, administrative data sets will be increasingly used to monitor learner outcomes. Initial steps were taken in pilot programmes in 2016, with further work currently ongoing.

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[33] The allowances paid depend on a number of factors including the programme type. Depending on the programme, the allowances paid to trainees can be the equivalent of the payment made to the unemployed. Travel and accommodation allowances depend on the programme and the distance the learner lives from the training centre (e.g. EUR 32.60 per week for somebody living at a distance of 64 kilometres or more. An accommodation allowance is typically EUR 69.90 per week.

## CHAPTER 14.

# Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

### **Further education and training development framework for employees**

In October 2018, the further education and training authority (SOLAS) published its further education and training employee development framework, which aims to upskill and reskill vulnerable workers. Further education and training provision for these workers includes digital skills training, technical, socio-emotional and cognitive training. The target cohorts are older workers, those with low education attainment (less than national framework of qualifications level 5/European qualifications framework level 4), those working in vulnerable occupations/sectors (e.g. elementary and operatives working in some low tech manufacturing). Currently, briefing sessions are being held at education and training board level, with efforts concentrating on developing education and training board capacity, rolling out a promotional campaign and monitoring metrics. This is a dedicated initiative, with dedicated funding allocated to it, and builds on existing programmes by embedding the policy in this area ([34]).

The policy also supports small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in investing in their workforces. While responsibility for skills development of employees will continue to remain with employers, this policy aims to complement existing employer-based and State initiatives through targeted support and investment by government. It is planned that, by 2021, over 40 000 workers will be engaging in State-supported upskilling; 4 500 SMEs (small and medium enterprises) will be supported through this initiative.

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[34] Enterprises don't receive any direct funding. The funding goes to the provider.

## CHAPTER 15.

# Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling takes different forms throughout the VET sector. Learners generally access courses and services through self-referral or having been referred to courses and services through the department of social protection. For example, with regard to post leaving certificate courses, school leavers or adults generally choose the course and apply directly by letter or online to the school or college offering that course. In some instances they will be called for an interview before final selection. Post leaving certificate courses' participants may receive in-house education and career guidance on the issue of vocational area choice, on progression to work and progression through a special links programme to an institute of technology.

For young learners who join the youthreach programme on leaving school at the age of 16 (or younger), counselling and psychological services are available as well as a guidance service, in recognition of the social and personal challenges experienced by many youthreach participants. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) has a role in the support and development of guidance in youthreach and similar programmes. The remit of the national centre for guidance in education, which is an agency of the education ministry, is to develop and support quality guidance provision in the education sector as part of lifelong learning in accordance with national and international best practice. The national centre for guidance in education has collaborated with the youthreach programme in the development of the web wheel model ([35]), a core element of which includes the use of mentoring techniques to develop and guide one-to-one relationships between students and staff. This process uses a specific profiling tool, the wheel, to assess student needs, to structure and guide the mentoring conversations and to review and monitor progress.

SOLAS is working with the national centre for guidance in education to coordinate the adult education guidance initiative within the education and training boards, which provides nationwide guidance for learners before and after they participate in vocational training opportunities schemes programmes.

The institutes of technology provide higher education and some VET and further education and training programmes. The majority of the institutes of technology offer a careers service to students. The main provision is targeted at final year students and recent graduates, though some careers services have started to provide careers education in the curriculum of undergraduate courses. The careers advisory/appointments office provides information on education and employment opportunities. Universities and the institutes of technology are not statutorily required to offer careers services and the provision can differ across the sector. At present many of the careers services are involved in programmes promoting student retention in higher education and training.

With regard to apprenticeship, each person must first obtain employment as an apprentice in their chosen trade. The employer must be approved to train apprentices and must register the person with SOLAS as an apprentice within two weeks of recruitment. The registered apprentice is then called for training by SOLAS.

Further education and training practitioners require reskilling throughout their careers to meet the changing needs of learners in further education and training. There are a number of organisations and agencies that are already providing development opportunities to further education and training practitioners: the further education and support service in programme development and quality assurance; the national centre for guidance in education for further education and training guidance personnel; the National Learning Network and the Association for Higher Education

Access and Disability (AHEAD) for disability awareness, etc.

Please see:

- guidance and outreach Ireland national report ([36]);
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit ([37]);
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices ([A1]).

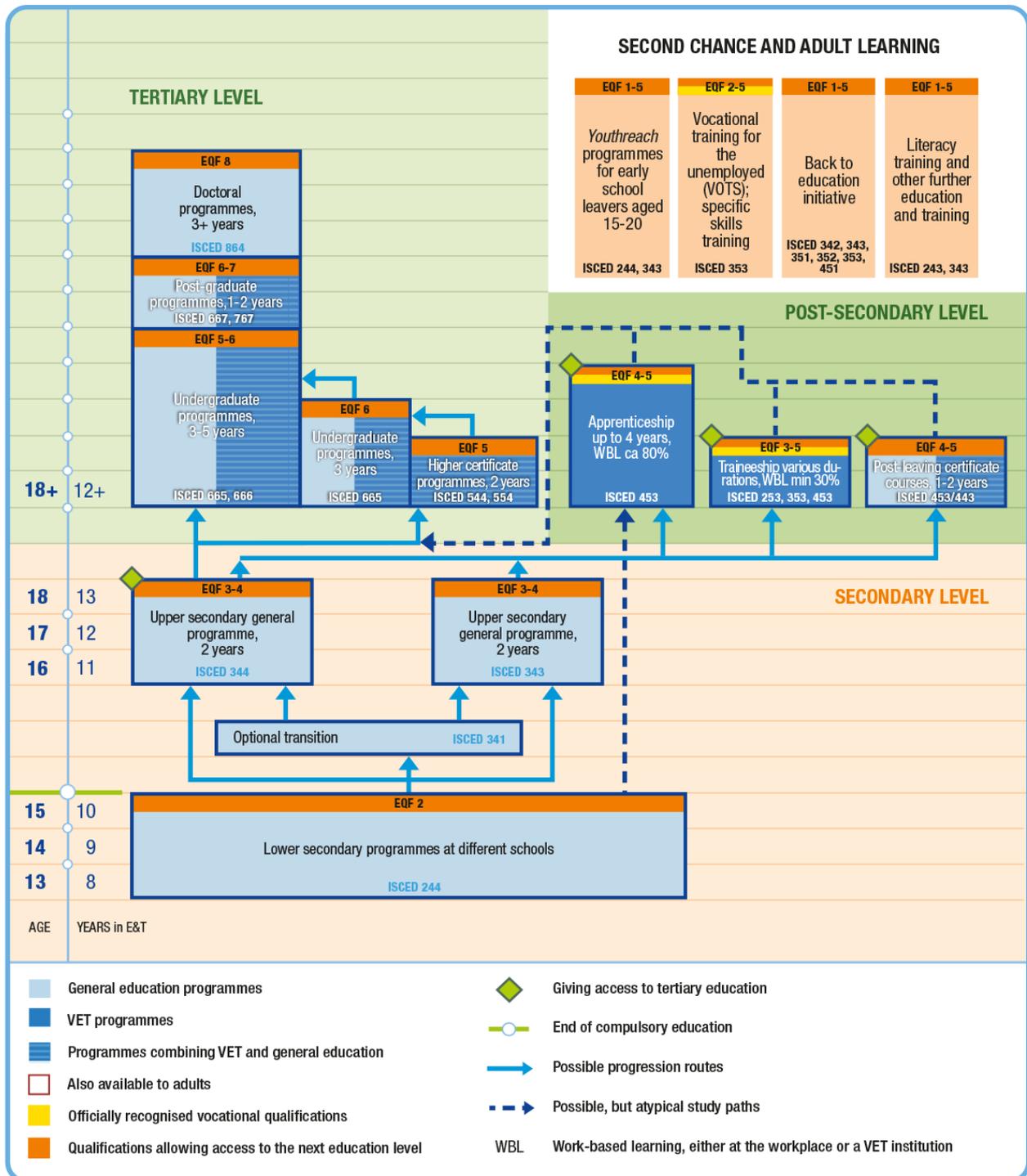
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[35] More information on the WebWheel model can be found at the Youthreach website:  
<http://www.youthreach.ie/web-wheel/>

[36] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives/guidance-outreach>

[37] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/resources-guidance/toolkit/where-can-you-find-more-information-in-your-country-and-elsewhere>

# Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.  
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Ireland, 2019.

# VET programme types

EQF 4-5	
Post-leaving certificate courses, 1-2 years ISCED 443/453	
<b>Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 4-5, ISCED 443/453</b>	
<b>EQF level</b>	4-5
<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	443/453
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	not applicable
<b>Usual completion grade</b>	12+
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+
<b>Usual completion age</b>	Not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	2 (up to)
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗
<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✔
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✔
	In so far as part of the course content is VET in nature, it is considered initial education.
<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✗
<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✔
<b>ECVET or other credits</b>	Not applicable ([38])
<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school-based learning;</li> <li>• component of work-based learning is small, usually with no minimum duration required; it is usually carried out in the context of work experience with a local employer.</li> </ul>
<b>Main providers</b>	Information not available
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	<30% ([39])
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	No formal requirements Work experience, when part of the curriculum, typically occurs with a company.
<b>Main target groups</b>	Young people who have completed the upper secondary cycle, adults.  The main target group for post leaving certificate courses is

learners who have completed the leaving certificate, which is the examination held at the end of upper secondary education. The aim is to provide education/training in a range of subject areas (e.g. business, art, healthcare, social care, among others).

However, older learners may also enrol on post leaving certificate courses.

<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	The usual requirement is that the applicant holds a leaving certificate qualification or equivalent (i.e. qualifications at levels EQF3/4). Adults without a leaving certificate may access these courses if they have sufficient work experience.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	On completion of a post leaving certificate programme, learners undergo a number of assessments (continuous assessment and written examination). For programmes that lead to an awards made by Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the assessments are based on learning outcomes. Not all programmes lead to an award made by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (industry certification or other awarding bodies may be used).
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	The certification received depends on the course followed. Usually, courses lead to awards that have been placed at level 4 or 5 on the EQF and they are recognised for progression and employment opportunities. Progression can be to other further education and training courses, or indeed to third level colleges either in Ireland or the UK.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Teachers' aides ([40])
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Those who complete a post leaving certificate course may progress to tertiary education (though a very small number of learners decides to do so). Primarily, the post leaving certificate courses aim to prepare learners to enter the labour market.
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	According to an evaluation of the post leaving certificate sector published in 2018 ([41]) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33% of post leaving certificate course completers progressed to employment (a breakdown of VET versus general learning is not possible);</li> <li>• Almost 21% progressed to further studies within the further education and training (FET) system;</li> <li>• 27% progressed to higher education;</li> <li>• 12% were unemployed.</li> </ul>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	✗
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓ Most of these courses are general or a mix of general and VET.
<b>Key competences</b>	✓ Key competences are part of the assessment procedure.
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	✓
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the</b>	Information not available

**total number of VET  
learners**

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[38] Credits accumulated, if any, on the basis of certifying bodies, which can vary.

[39] For post leaving certificate courses with a work-based learning component.

[40] As described in national context.

[41] [http://www.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/PLC/ESRI\\_PLC\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/PLC/ESRI_PLC_evaluation.pdf)

### EQF 3-5

Traineeship  
various durations,  
WBL min. 30%  
ISCED 253, 353, 453

## Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 3-5, ISCED 253, 353, 453

<b>EQF level</b>	3-5	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	253, 353, 453
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	not applicable	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	not applicable
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+	<b>Usual completion age</b>	not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	from 6 months to 2 years		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✗ In the past, traineeships were part of second chance education/training and open only to the employed. Since 2016 they are also open to school leavers, the employed and adult learners.
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

- on- the-job training
- school based learning

**Main providers**

- Schools (Education and Training Board's training centre)
- enterprises

**Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies** >=30%

**Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)**

- in-company practice

**Main target groups** Unemployed, employed, school leavers (either young people or adults).

**Entry requirements for learners** A qualification at EQF level 2 is usually the minimum. In addition for those opting for qualifications at childcare and/or healthcare

<b>(qualification/education level, age)</b>	sectors (especially when they will be dealing with children or adults with disabilities) a police vetting ([42]) is also required.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	Assessment is via exams and continuous assessment methods. They are typically based on learning outcomes.
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Learners may receive a full or partial award (with partial awards being recognised as part fulfilment of the requirements for a full award). Awards span levels 3-5 on the EQF.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Healthcare support assistant ([43])
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Those who complete a traineeship can enter the labour market or progress to further studies within the further education and training system.
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	Information not available
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	Information not available
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	✓ For traineeships that lead to awards on the national framework of qualifications (made by Quality Qualifications Ireland), a learning outcomes approach is applied.
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

[42] The police vetting process is about criminal history checks and other relevant information on potential and current employees, volunteers and vocational trainees to approved agencies that provide care to children and vulnerable members of society.

[43] As described in national context.

**EQF 4-5**

Apprenticeship  
up to 4 years,  
WBL ca. 80%  
ISCED 453.

**Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 4-5, ISCED 453.**

<b>EQF level</b>	4-5	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	453
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Not applicable	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Not applicable
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	4 (up to)		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓
	In the initial phases. However, any part of the training that takes place in a higher education institution will incur fees.		

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

- Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**
- school-based learning; (contact studies either at an education/training provider or a higher education institution)
  - in-company practice (practical training in a company).

- Main providers**
- Enterprises
  - schools (education and training boards' training Centre or an institute of technology)

**Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies** >=80%

- Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)**
- practical training at a college of further education and training
  - in-company practice

**Main target groups** Programmes are available for young people and also for adults. Since apprentices are part of the employed, they must be at least 16 years of age. There is no formal upper age limit.

**Entry requirements for** There are two types of programmes at this level (box):

<b>learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre-2106 craft apprenticeship training for which the formal minimum entry requirement is the junior certificate or equivalent (EQF 2 qualification). In practice, however, the vast majority (three quarters) of new apprentices hold higher levels of education, typically a Leaving Certificate (EQF level 3/4);</li> <li>• post 2016 apprenticeship for which the entry requirements vary, depending on the specific apprenticeship programme, although a leaving certificate (EQF level 3/4) is generally the minimum.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	To complete apprenticeship training, apprentices are assessed at various stages of the programme, both on and off the job. They are based on learning outcomes and include a practical component.
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Learners who complete the traditional pre-2016 type apprenticeships receive a craft certificate. For the post 2016 apprenticeship, there are different possibilities depending on the apprenticeship. Once learners begin to emerge from these programmes, they may receive: a level 5 certificate, an advanced certificate, a higher certificate, an ordinary degree, an honours bachelor degree or a masters degree.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	<p>Pre-2016 apprenticeships: carpentry and joinery, electrical, instrumentation, plastering([44])</p> <p>post-2016 apprenticeship: accounting technician, insurance practice, ICT associate network engineer, retail practice, arboriculture, and HGV driver([45]);</p>
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Learners completing programmes in VET typically have a number of options: they may continue their studies in VET, progress to tertiary level education (in an institute of technology) or enter the labour market).
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	All apprentices must hold an employment contract prior to commencing the apprenticeship programme. Therefore destination is by default to employment.
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	Information not available
<b>General education subjects</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>General subjects such as mathematics are taught for some apprenticeships, although not all.</p>
<b>Key competences</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>Competences such as digital skills are taught.</p>
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>All apprenticeship awards are on the national framework of qualifications, so a learning outcomes approach is applied.</p>
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

[44] As described in national context.

[45] As described in national context.

**EQF 5**

Higher certificate programme,  
2 years  
ISCED 544, 554

**Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 544, 554.**

<b>EQF level</b>	5	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	544, 554
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Not applicable	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Not applicable
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	2		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓  In so far as VET is offered at this level (it's a very small component), it is part of initial VET.	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓  All students, unless in receipt of a means tested grant, must pay fees.	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓
<b>ECVET or other credits</b>	Usually 120 ECTs are earned on completion of the two years ([46]).		
<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School based learning</li> </ul>		
<b>Main providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools (institutes of technology, universities, colleges of education)</li> </ul>		
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Information not available		
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	Information not available		
<b>Main target groups</b>	The main target group are school leavers, but increasingly older learners are being encouraged to take up opportunities at this level.		
<b>Entry requirements for learners</b>	Upper secondary certificate		

<b>(qualification/education level, age)</b>	For some lifelong learning focussed programmes, however, formal education requirements may differ and work experience may be sufficient.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	To complete programmes at this level, learners need to pass a final examination (part of the grade may be earned through continuous assessment). Assessment is typically based on learning outcomes.
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Learners receive a higher certificate on completion of their studies.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Higher certificate in business studies, marketing associate professional ([47])
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Progression to the next level (EQF 6) of tertiary education. Learners may also enter the labour market.
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	Information not available
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	✗
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	Information not available
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	✓
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

[46] Credits are decided individually by the higher education institutions.

[47] As described in national context.

**EQF 6**

Undergraduate  
Programmes,  
3 years  
ISCED 665

**Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 665**

<b>EQF level</b>	6	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	665
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Not applicable	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Not applicable
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	3		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓  Not all programmes at this level are VET, but some engineering/science, can be considered to be VET, and in this instance, they would be IVET.	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✗  All learners in tertiary education, unless in receipt of a means-tested grant, must pay fees.	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓
<b>ECVET or other credits</b>	Typically 180 credits (ECTS) ([48])		
<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school-based learning</li> </ul>		
<b>Main providers</b>	Schools (Institutes of technology, universities, colleges of education)		
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Information not available		
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	Information not available		
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.		

<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	A leaving certificate award is the minimum entry requirement.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	To complete programmes at this level, learners need to pass a final examination (part of the grade may be earned through continuous assessment). Assessment is typically based on learning outcomes.
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Learners receive a diploma (undergraduate).
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Ordinary bachelor degree in business studies ([49]).
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Those who complete VET can enter the labour market or continue their studies to EQF level 6 (honours degree).
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	Information not available
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	✗
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	✓
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

[48] Credits are decided individually by the higher education institutions.

[49] As described in national context.

**EQF 5-6**

Undergraduate  
programmes,  
3-5 years  
ISCED 665, 666

### Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 5- 6, ISCED 665, 666.

<b>EQF level</b>	5-6	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	665, 666
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Not applicable	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Not applicable
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	3-5		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✗ Third level fees apply to all learners, with the exception of those in receipt of a means-tested grant	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓
<b>ECVET or other credits</b>	180 – 240 ECTS, depending on the programme ([50]).		
<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mostly school based learning</li> </ul>		
<b>Main providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• universities;</li> <li>• institutes of technology</li> <li>• colleges of education</li> </ul>		
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Information not available		
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	Information not available		
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are predominantly targeted at young people, but are available to adults also.		
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	A leaving certificate award is the minimum requirement.		

<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	To complete VET programmes at this level, learners need pass a final examination (which may also include continuous assessment component as part of the final grade)
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Learners receive an honours bachelor degree.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Bachelor of arts (hons) degree), bachelor of science (hons) degree ([51]).
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Those who complete education/training at this level can enter the labour market or continue their studies at EQF 7.
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	75% of graduates in 2017 had either started or were about to start a job, although this share varies by field of learning ([52]), 18% were engaged in further study,4% were employed,3% were engaged in other activities.
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	Information not available
<b>General education subjects</b>	Information not available
<b>Key competences</b>	Information not available
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	Information not available
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

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[50] Credits are decided individually by the higher education institutions.

[51] As described in national context.

[52] As reported in: Higher Education Authority (2017). *Graduate outcomes survey: class of 2017*. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/02/HEA-Graduate-Outcomes-Survey.pdf>

**EQF 6-7**

Post-graduate  
programmes,  
1-2 years  
ISCED 667,767

**Initial VET programmes leading to EQF levels 6-7, ISCED 667,767**

<b>EQF level</b>	6-7	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	667,767
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Not applicable	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Not applicable
<b>Usual entry age</b>	18+	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Not applicable
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	2 (up to)		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✗ learners must pay fees in most instances	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓
<b>ECVET or other credits</b>	60-120 ECTS credits depending on the programme ([53])		
<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	Information not available		
<b>Main providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools (universities, institutes of technology, colleges of education)</li> </ul>		
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Information not available		
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	Information not available		
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.		
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	The minimum requirement for entry to postgraduate education is an honours bachelor degree (EQF 6) or equivalent.		
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	To complete a VET programme at this level, learners need to pass a final examination (part of the final grade may be composed of continuous assessment). Also, depending on the programme, submission of a thesis may also be required.		

<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Depending on the programme a learner may receive a higher diploma, a postgraduate certificate, a postgraduate diploma or a masters degree.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Master's in education ([54])
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Those who complete education and training at this level may enter the labour market or continue their studies at the same or higher level (EQF 7 or EQF 8).
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	86% of graduates in 2017 had either started or were about to start a job, although this share varies by field of learning([55]), 4% were engaged in further study,5% were employed,5% were engaged in other activities.
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	✓
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	✓
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

[53] Credits are decided individually by the higher education institutions.

[54] As described in national context.

[55] As reported in: Higher Education Authority (2017). *Graduate outcomes survey: class of 2017*. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/02/HEA-Graduate-Outcomes-Survey.pdf>

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