

VET in Estonia

Vocational education and training (VET) in Estonia is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Research and is crucial to ensuring a flexible and skilled workforce, capable of adapting to changes in the labour market. Professional standards in the eight-level Estonian qualifications framework are all outcomes-based and are the basis for VET curricula. Social partners are involved in VET policy development and implementation, helping respond to labour market needs. They participate in national professional councils and are involved in drafting VET-related legislation, including curricula. At school level, their representatives belong to VET institution advisory bodies.

Recognition of prior learning and work experience has improved accessibility to VET for learners from diverse education and professional backgrounds. The VET infrastructure has recently been upgraded.

VET institutions offer both initial and continuing programmes. Initial VET is offered at the second, third, fourth and fifth levels of the Estonian qualifications framework (and the European qualifications framework, EQF). Learners can choose between full-time studies (autonomous learning is less than one half of the study volume) and those where the emphasis is on self-study and contact hours are fewer (referred to as 'non-stationary' studies in the national context). Full-time studies are available as school-based tracks, with up to 70% work-based learning, and as apprenticeship. Financial assistance is available for VET learners to guarantee equal access to education regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances.

There are no minimum admission requirements at second and third levels but learners must be at least 17 years old to enrol. Curricula are designed to meet labour market needs in elementary occupations. Entry to fourth level studies usually requires completed basic education but there are exceptions ⁽²⁾ for those over 22 without basic education. Programmes at this level give learners the skills needed to perform more complicated jobs.

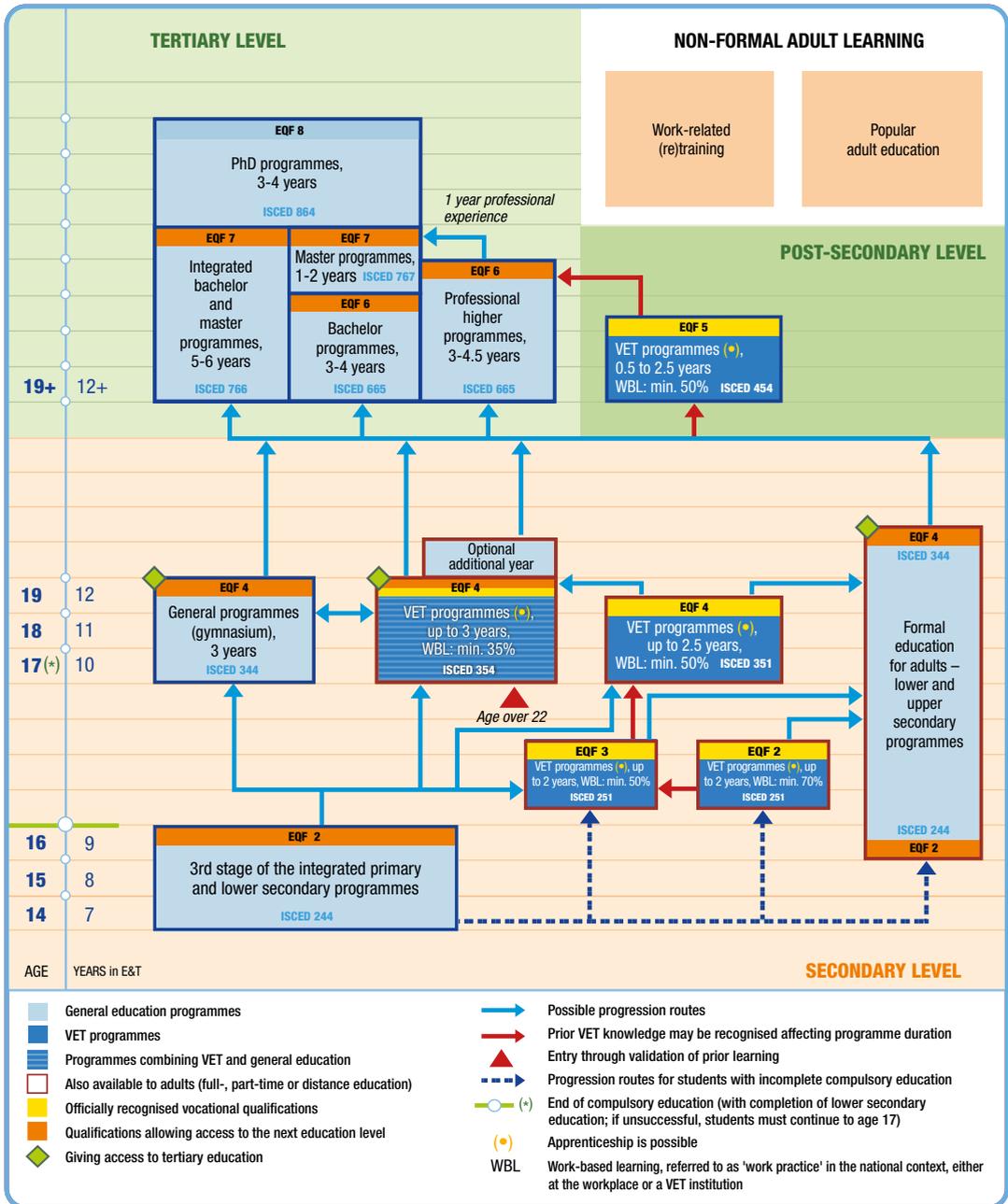
It is possible to follow vocational programmes at ISCED levels 351 and 354, the latter referred to as upper secondary vocational education. The qualification achieved in vocational secondary education gives graduates access to higher education, provided they meet entry requirements. This may require learners to pass State examinations that are compulsory for general upper secondary education graduates: an optional additional year of general education is available for vocational secondary education graduates (ISCED 354) to help prepare. Upper secondary education gives access to EQF level 5 initial VET programmes (ISCED 454). These post-secondary programmes prepare learners for technical and associate professional occupations and further studies.

Continuing VET is offered at EQF levels 4 and 5. To enrol, learners need a VET qualification or relevant competences in addition to completed upper secondary education.

Tertiary VET does not feature in Estonian legislation, though tertiary education may also comprise professional qualifications. These are accessible to all graduates of both general and vocational secondary education, as well as graduates of post-secondary VET.

Non-formal continuing VET is part of adult learning regulated by the Adult Education Act. Its forms, duration and content vary. Learners or employers usually cover the costs, though ESF-financed adult courses are free for learners. Participation in these is approximately 50% higher. Training can be provided by VET institutions appointed via public procurement.

⁽²⁾ For ISCED 354 programmes.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Estonia.



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