

VET in Ireland

Most vocational education and training (VET) occurs within the State sector, although private providers also play a role. Ireland's education and training system is divided into four sectors: primary, secondary, further education and training (FET), and higher education. Until 2016, VET occurred mostly within the FET sector. However, following reform of the FET sector and a review of the apprenticeship system, higher education providers have, since late 2016, offered a limited number of apprenticeship courses, with the number of programmes and learners expected to increase in the medium term.

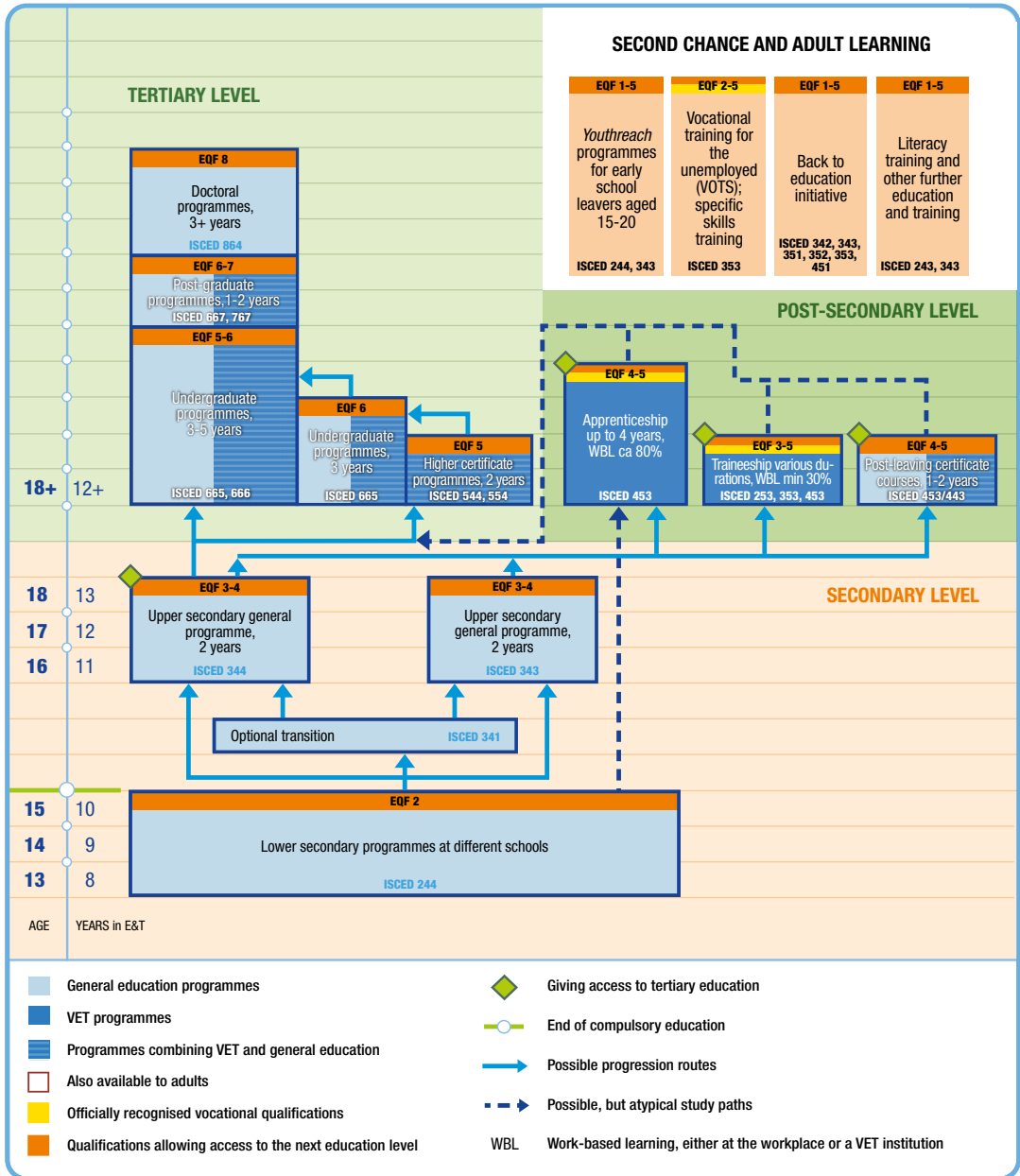
Within the FET sector, the main providers of VET are 16 education and training boards (ETBs) countrywide. Responsibility for funding, planning and coordinating FET programmes at ETBs lies with SOLAS, Ireland's Further Education and Training Authority. Other statutory providers include BIM (seafood industry training) and Teagasc (agricultural training). These bodies are publicly funded. Some programmes are jointly financed by the European Social Fund.

Within the higher education sector, VET programmes are the responsibility of the Higher Education Authority (the statutory planning and policy body for higher education). VET is provided by institutes of technology and, to a lesser extent, by universities and other higher education providers.

Most learners undertake VET courses on completion of upper secondary education. While it is possible to enter some apprenticeship training with NFQ level 3/EQF level 2 qualifications, most pupils attain upper secondary awards at NFQ level 4/5 (EQF 3/4).

VET programmes within FET include:

- apprenticeship training, combining off-the-job training (in ETBs and institutes of technology) and on-the-job training (with an employer). Training leads to awards at either NFQ level 5 or 6 (EQF 4 or 5). Traditionally, apprenticeships in the FET sector were concentrated in the construction/engineering sectors. However, new post-2016 apprenticeships have been extended to include other sectors (such as hospitality, transport, retail, ICT and finance);
 - traineeship, an occupational skills development training model designed to meet the needs of local employers. Training takes place both on- and off-the job and leads to awards spanning NFQ levels 4 to 6 (EQF 3 to 5). Partial awards are also made. Trainees may include school leavers, older learners, the employed and the unemployed;
 - post leaving certificate courses (PLCs), delivered in ETB colleges or second-level schools; they comprise general and/or vocationally oriented education. Typically, training is in areas such as technical knowledge, personal/core skills and some work experience; PLCs lead to an NFQ level 5 or 6 award (EQF 4 or 5). Partial awards are also made.
- VET at tertiary level:** apprenticeship courses in this sector were formally introduced in 2016. They combine off-the job training (including online) with on-the job training with an employer. Training occurs in a variety of sectors, including financial services, engineering, and hospitality. On completion, learners can achieve awards spanning NFQ levels 6 to 9 (EQF 5 to 7). Expansion to NFQ 10 (EQF 8) is due in 2019 in the engineering sector.
- VET programmes are also offered for second chance education and training.
- VTOS (vocational training for the unemployed) and specific skills training for the unemployed in a vocational skill (such as computer hardware maintenance) are delivered by ETBs. Full and partial awards are made, at NFQ levels 3 to 6 (EQF 2 to 5).
 - *Back to education* initiative (part-time for adults). This programme offers a mix of general and VET courses, with full and partial awards spanning NFQ levels 1 to 6 (EQF 1 to 5).
- Other education and training programmes are also provided in second chance education, with full and partial awards at NFQ levels 1 to 6 (EQF 1 to 5); they are delivered mainly by ETBs.
- *Youthreach* (for early school leavers aged 15 to 20).
 - Literacy training and other further education and training.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Ireland.



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