

VET in Iceland

The Icelandic vocational education and training (VET) system originates from the time when Iceland was still part of the Danish kingdom. At that time, apprentices learned from their masters by working alongside them. Gradually, schools took over parts of the training and more theoretical subjects were added. Workplace training is still of great importance and the journeyman's exam is centred on demonstrating skills learners have acquired at a workplace.

Almost all VET is offered at upper secondary level, where studies at school and workplace training form an integral part. Study programmes vary in length from one school year to four years of combined school and workplace training. Workplaces responsible for training need official certification and training agreements with both the student and the school, stipulating the objectives, time period and evaluation of the training. Most students in workplace training receive salaries, at an increasing percentage of fully qualified workers' salaries. Companies training students can apply to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for a subsidy to fund training.

Several qualifications are offered at upper secondary level (ISCED 3), some of which are preconditions for holding relevant jobs. The most common are journeyman's exams but there are also exams for healthcare professionals and captains and engineers of ships and planes. In other professions, a VET degree is not a precondition for employment but graduates enjoy preferential treatment for the jobs they are trained for.

A few VET programmes are available at post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4), including tourist guides and captains at the highest level. Certificates for all master craftsmen are also awarded at this level. These programmes last one to two years and lead to qualifications giving professional rights.

Students with severe learning difficulties are offered special programmes at mainstream upper secondary schools. Several VET pathways leading to a diploma give these students the potential to continue their education.

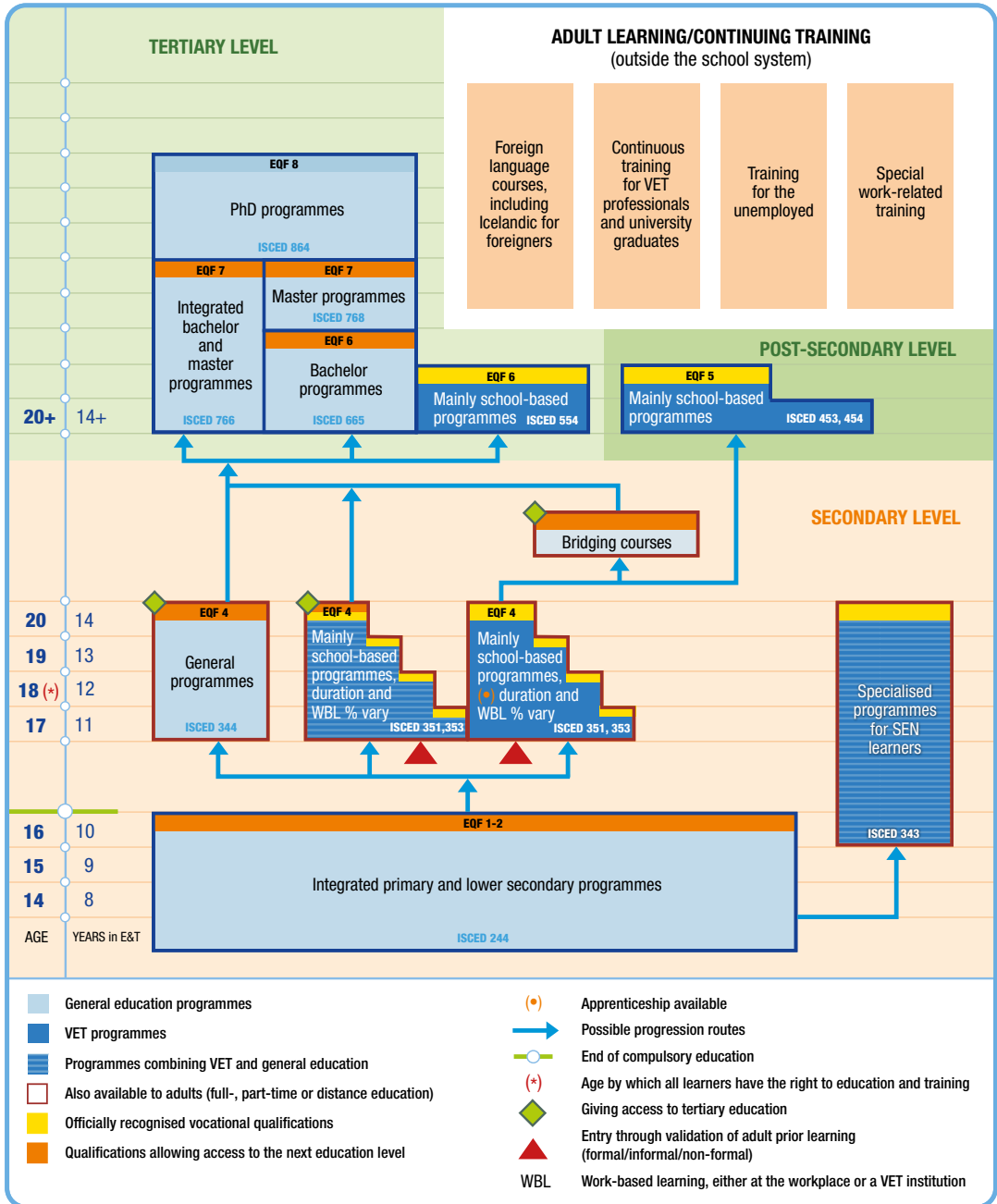
The overall emphasis of the education system is to keep its structure simple and understandable so students can move relatively easily between study programmes. They can finish upper secondary

school with a vocational and a general degree (matriculation exam), the prerequisite for higher education. VET students who have not passed the matriculation exam can attend further general education to qualify.

Courses which give study points at upper secondary schools must be approved by an official validation body, according to standards approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Upper secondary schools need to submit descriptions of new study programmes to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Approved programmes become part of the national curriculum guide. When formulating ideas for new study programmes, schools cooperate closely with occupation councils, which form the link between the ministry and the labour market.

Iceland has one of the highest lifelong learning participation rates among 25 to 64 year-olds in Europe (23.6% in 2017). Adult learning is available in upper secondary schools (day classes or special adult evening classes), 11 lifelong learning centres, training centres owned and operated by social partners for skilled workers in certain trades, and in numerous private training institutions. Two institutions owned by employer and employee organisations offer courses for journeymen and masters of trades in the latest technology. For the healthcare sector, retraining courses are offered by universities and there are specific training institutions for several professions. Labour agreements reached in 2000 established specific training funds for employees; both employees and employers pay a certain percentage of all salaries into these funds and both parties can apply for funding towards training.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Iceland.



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