

## VET in Malta

Overall responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) in Malta lies with the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). The Ministry for Tourism is in charge of VET for the tourism sector. The two main State providers – the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) – are self-accrediting higher VET institutions offering VET qualifications at EQF levels 1 to 7 free of charge. The number of private VET providers has been increasing.

The 2014-24 education strategy highlights the increasing role of VET in providing education pathways to address learners' employability skills. Complementing the strategy, a new Education Act was drafted. MCAST and the ITS will each have its own dedicated legislative framework.

VET is available from compulsory, lower secondary level (locally called secondary education) onwards. From 2015 all compulsory education students aged 14 to 16 have the added option to choose two VET subjects from a wide selection of elective subjects. The VET areas offered are agribusiness, hospitality, IT, health/social care and engineering. After leaving compulsory education, one in three 17-year-olds chooses VET.

The Maltese qualifications framework (MQF) sets the overall parameters for VET programmes at EQF levels 1 to 5 in terms of distribution of key competences (decreasing with level), sector skills and theory (both increasing with level). The following VET programmes are available:

- for learners without a qualification: introduction and foundation certificate programmes including work experience leading to EQF levels 1 or 2, giving access to programmes at the next EQF level in the same field;
- two-year college-based programmes leading to EQF level 3 for foundation certificate holders and those with an EQF level 2 compulsory education qualification. They include different forms of work-based learning (WBL) and give access to programmes at the next level;
- one- to two-year apprenticeship schemes leading to EQF level 3, following foundation programmes. Contracts between learners,

employers and MCAST govern the schemes. The amount of workplace learning varies by field of study and is set by the college. Apprentices receive remuneration for the on-the-job training from employers and a stipend from the government. The act regulating work-based learning and apprenticeship became law in March 2018;

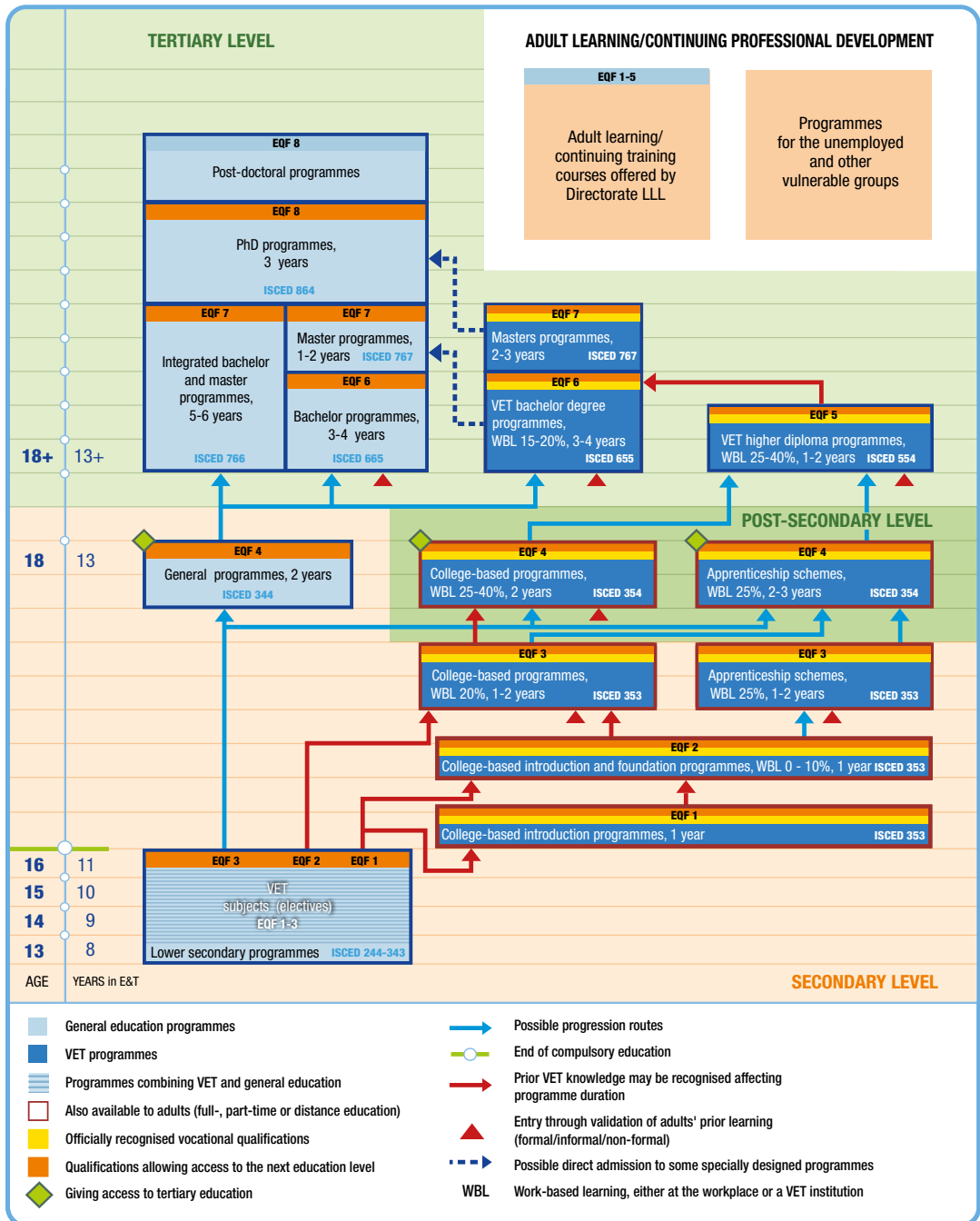
- EQF level 4 programmes (either college-based, two years; or apprenticeship schemes, two to three years) for learners with a general or VET EQF level 3 qualification;
- two-year college-based programmes leading to a VET higher diploma (EQF level 5).

Higher VET also includes three- to four-year bachelor programmes leading to EQF level 6, which open up progression opportunities to academic master programmes. Holders of VET higher certificates can enter the third year of VET bachelor programmes. From September 2017, the ITS has also been offering vocational bachelor degrees in tourism and hospitality-related areas. ITS students with an EQF level 5 qualification can also pursue a bachelor degree in tourism at the University of Malta. VET degree programmes are also provided by the university's Faculty of Health Sciences.

Continuing VET is mainly provided by MEDE's Directorate for research, lifelong learning and employability, MCAST and the ITS. Most courses are part-time and take place in the evening. Some of the awards they lead to are not full qualifications, while others lead to a full degree at EQF levels 6 and 7. Pegging CVET courses to the MQF allows them to be rated at EQF levels 1 to 7, valuing all learning.

Adult learning is mainly provided by MEDE's Directorate for research, lifelong learning and employability, MCAST and the university. The latter two admit individuals as regular students based on the maturity clause<sup>(5)</sup>. Besides targeting the unemployed, Jobplus (PES) is increasingly refocusing courses towards reskilling and upskilling employees to meet the demand for new skills in emerging economic sectors and to improve their employability and career prospects.

<sup>(5)</sup> In the case of MCAST, the maturity clause applies to adults applying for full-time or part-time full vocational qualifications but not for accredited awards (i.e. not full vocational qualifications) or hobby courses.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

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