EQAVET

Quality Assurance in VET: Austria

This document provides an overview of quality assurance in VET in the respective country. It covers information on VET systems and how quality assurance takes place, which organisations are responsible for VET policy and any recent developments in VET policy.

VET system and quality assurance

Overview of the VET system and how quality assurance takes place

VET schools and colleges provide initial vocational education and training (IVET) programmes of differing duration and at various levels in addition to broad general education from the ninth school year. VET schools and colleges include:

- Part-time vocational schools.
- Schools and colleges for engineering, arts and crafts.
- Schools and colleges of business administration.
- Schools and colleges of management and service industries.
- Schools and colleges of tourism.
- Schools and colleges of fashion, clothing and of artistic design.
- Schools of social occupations.
- Colleges of agriculture and forestry.
- Nursery teacher training colleges and colleges of social pedagogy including special forms for people in employment and pilot projects.[1]

With the exception of part-time vocational schools (school-based training within the dual system), they can be organised in different forms with courses of differing length (1 – 5 years):

- 3 or 4 years: Full-time school from the 9th school year; IVET qualification.
- 1 or 2 years: Full-time school from the 9th school year; vocational training basis.[2]

For the school-based part of VET, a comprehensive new quality management system – QMS (Quality Management System for Schools) – is in place since 2021. QMS is the common quality management system for all schools in Austria (general education and vocational education and training). From 2004 to 2021, Austrian VET schools and colleges have used a predecessor quality management system: QIBB (VET Quality Initiative).[3]

QMS is a pedagogical quality management system focussing on teaching and learning processes. QMS supports schools in strategic target-driven development and ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. QMS further highlights the importance of cooperation in

---

[1] http://futureplatform.eu/downloads/handbookfuturefinal.pdf
[2] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/austria-u2
[3] https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ895217.pdf

schools, especially at teacher level. Thus, QMS addresses the school as an organisation as well as individuals – school leaders, teachers, and teacher teams. QMS provides a set of QM instruments and tools for different levels of use. The QMS model displays how and by whom these instruments and tools should be used (https://www.qms.at/ueber-qms/qms-modell-und-instrumente).

The Quality Framework for schools (QF) is the thematic basis for QMS and sets the common understanding of school quality.
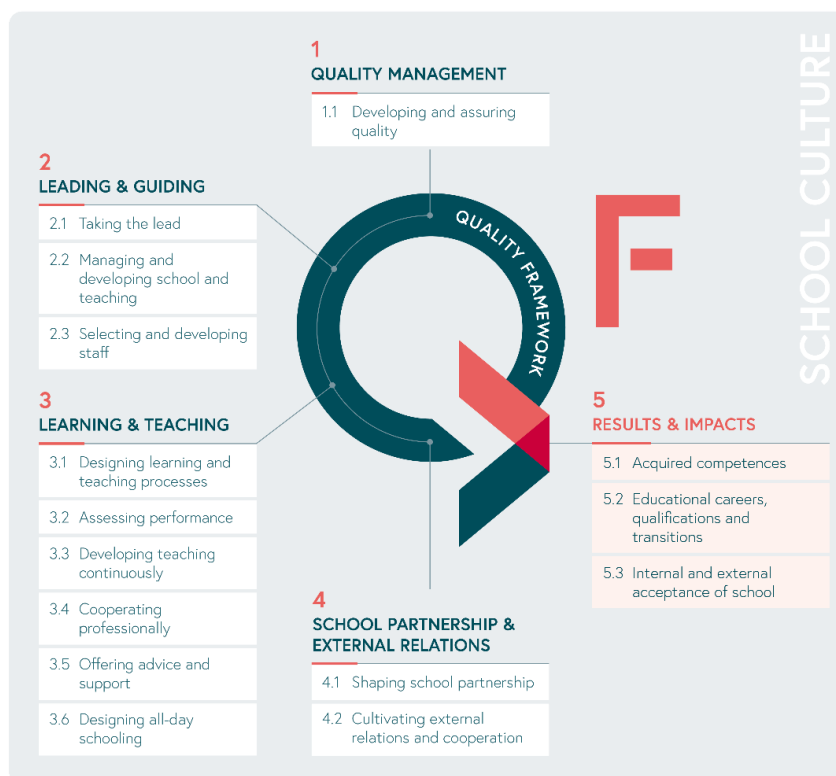
The quality cycle (PDCA cycle) is the continuous method of operation in QMS which is applied at any level (organisational as well as team and individual level) and ensures that any action is well planned, thoroughly exercised, evaluated and – if necessary - leads to improved actions.

More information about the VET system in Austria can be found on Cedefop's VET in Europe database: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/austria

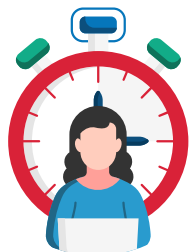|	
System-level QA arrangements	VET schools and colleges in Austria are obliged to use QMS. The Quality Framework (QF) is the thematic basis for all schools and describes school quality through a set of criteria, thus ensuring a common understanding for "What characterises a high-quality school?" All Austrian schools (including VET schools and colleges) are part of an educational region (31 regions in total). In these regions, school quality managers from the school authority are superior to the school leaders and responsible for school quality and the implementation of QMS in their region. At least every three years a review and target setting meeting between the school leader and the school quality manager takes place. The basis for this review builds the school development plan, which is the central planning and steering instrument for schools and contains all development targets as well as plans/projects for implementation and evaluation. Besides this, there will be a central data monitoring and a quality handbook (both under development). Moreover, a specific number of schools will be evaluated externally each year. The external evaluation follows a defined process and is carried out by specifically trained evaluators. It should give schools an in-depth and independent feedback on its quality management and its strengths and weaknesses. External evaluation is a new element of quality assurance for the Austrian schools. It has been fully functional since the beginning of the school year 2022/23. Schools get additional support by regional quality coordinators (Q-RK) and school development consultants. For the company-based part of the apprenticeship training (which constitutes around 80% of the training), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy is responsible for QA. "Lehrlingsstellen" (apprenticeship offices) evaluate the quality requirements and provide ongoing QA for companies that would like to provide training to their apprentices. The Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft (ibw) institute is a support structure for the apprenticeship-leave examination (LAP) and designs the exam questions and tasks. For CVET, there is a national QA scheme (Ö-Cert) that functions as an umbrella programme for regional quality assurance schemes.[4]

---

[4] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

Provider-level QA arrangements	In school-based IVET, each school has a set of tools and instruments at its disposal. QMS at school level encompasses the school development plan which is the central planning and steering instrument for schools and contains all development targets as well as plans/projects for implementation and evaluation. It is also the basis for the review and target setting meeting between the management levels (see above). Through project and process management, schools should be able to follow and fulfil the set development targets. QMS offers specific tools for project and process management. Evaluation and feedback are supported by an extensive online platform which provides schools with instruments, articles and methods of evaluation and feedback (IQES Austria: https://www.iqesonline.at). Moreover, schools get various relevant data from different sources. All instruments and the evaluation platform are thematically aligned with the quality framework (QF). Since QMS addresses not only the organisational level, but specific instruments are also designed for teacher teams and individuals. The underlying model for QMS matches the actors and their activities to one another. It describes how different actors (school and school leader, teacher teams and single teachers) set their goals and how they systematically work in projects and with processes to achieve these goals, but also how they know that they have reached them at the end (outcome and effectiveness). CVET is a rather heterogeneous sector and as a result, there is no general framework for QA at provider level. In CVET and apprenticeship training, there are no requirements for evaluation and review concerning non-state CVET providers. Although the Ö-Cert certification scheme does include some quality assurance elements, they do not correspond with the EQAVET descriptors.[5]
Which organisation(s) are responsible for VET policy?	Following the last governance reform that was started in 2017, there is now a joint DG for general and vocational education in the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF). This DG is responsible for those tasks of educational administration within the VET sector which – according to legislation – are within the BMBWF remit.[6] The competences for the company-based part of the dual system are within the spheres of the Ministry of Labour and Economy. In the field of CVET, there are no explicitly defined legal or educational policy supervisory functions for the whole sector.

---

[5] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/205aa0ac-460d-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[6] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1536&langId=en

Recent policy developments (in the last 12 months)	QMS has started in 2021 and merged the existing quality management systems of VET and general education. In the process, it was very important to learn from the experience of the former quality management systems QIBB (Quality initiative for VET, 2004-2021) and SQA (School quality in General Education, 2012-2021) and build up an improved system. The main finding of the preceded evaluation was that quality management has to address teaching and learning processes with a stronger focus and that existing team structures in schools should be taken into account. The development process of the QMS was finished during the second half of 2022 with only a few parts missing (e.g., the Q Manual). The implementation of QMS is an ongoing challenge that requires continuous training and informing of key persons. Networking activities play a central role in this phase. A formative evaluation of the process has been started.

Use of EQAVET labels	
Do you use an EQAVET label or seal to certify VET providers in your country?	No ☒
	Yes ☐