

EQAVET Peer Review on *'The quality assurance process of developing national qualification requirements in Finland'* - Flash Report

The Finnish Peer Review

The ninth and last EQAVET Peer Review in 2022 took place online on 7 and 8 December, hosted by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). Eight EQAVET Network members from Austria, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania and The Netherlands, acted as peers. The Peer Review focused on reviewing the Finnish practice of collecting stakeholder feedback for the update and development of national qualification requirements. A quality assurance model for the process is currently under preparation and is foreseen to be implemented in spring 2023.

For EDUFI, the Finnish hosts, the aim of the peer review was to obtain external feedback on the effectiveness of the planned quality assurance process. The peer feedback, based on their knowledge and expertise with similar reforms in their countries, will feed into adjustments of the planned model, if and where needed.

Improving the feedback-based quality assurance of developing national qualification requirements

In Finland, **the process of developing and updating national qualification requirements is quality assured through 'customer' (stakeholder) feedback.** Feedback data are collected from several different sources, for example, from parties contacting EDUFI directly, through surveys and from development workshops, hearings and through a formal consultation.

EDUFI is currently developing new practices related to the collection, analysis and utilisation of feedback data to ensure that

- education and training providers, business and industry, teachers and students have sufficient opportunities to give feedback on the content of the qualification requirements and their development,
- the processing of feedback data is a systematic part of the development process of the qualification requirements at EDUFI, from the decision on whether to start a reform of the qualification requirements to when education and training providers implement education and training in accordance with the qualification requirements.

Developing and updating qualification requirements in Finland

EDUFI's qualification requirements ensure the quality of education and training as well as the equality and equity of education. The qualification requirements provide a framework for how education leading to a qualification is organised, how the student's individual studies are planned or how competence is assessed. The qualification requirements are also a key means of ensuring that the learning outcomes and vocational skills requirements of qualifications meet the needs of workplaces and provide skills for further studies. EDUFI's right to issue qualification requirements as regulations is based on the Act on Vocational Education and Training.

The Act stipulates that EDUFI shall prepare the national qualification requirements in collaboration with representatives of business and industry, with education providers and with other key stakeholders. To that end, EDUFI consults with the Business and Industry Committees responsible for the qualification requirements concerned, and with other stakeholders. There are 37 Business and Industry Committees in Finland, representing employers, employees, independent professionals as well as the education sector. EDUFI appoints the members of the Business and Industry committees for a period of three years.

The development of qualification requirements is a continuous activity. The EDUFI sector experts monitor and collect qualification-specific information on the business and industry developments in their field of expertise, to identify any changes in competence needs. If a need to update or renew individual qualification requirements is identified, a plan will be drawn up, which is the basis for the process of updating or developing the qualification requirements. When the renewed qualification requirements are completed, it is the task of the EDUFI field specific experts to ensure that the implementation of the requirements takes place smoothly in educational institutions.

The quality assurance of the qualification requirements is based on the feedback received from representatives of business and industry, the education sector, and students. Feedback data are collected through several sources, for example, from VET providers contacting EDUFI directly, through student surveys and from development workshops with the business and industry committee, through hearings and through a formal consultation.

In self-evaluations, EDUFI has found that the collection of customer feedback has not been systematic in all respects, and that the analysis of the information received has been partly inadequate. For this reason, EDUFI plans to introduce a more systematic process of collecting, analysing and utilising 'customer' feedback, so that it becomes an integral part of the qualification requirements process and serves as a quality assurance step.

EDUFI developed a model for the feedback-based quality assurance of qualification requirements in June 2022. The model was developed in cooperation with representatives of working life, representatives of education and training providers, and representatives of teachers and students. National pilots are taking place between Q4 2022 and Q1 2023. The model will be further developed, using evidence from the pilot and feedback gathered during this peer review. The aim is to implement the model in spring 2023.

Peer Discussions

During the first part of the peer review meeting, the Finnish hosts presented their approach to updating and developing new qualification requirements. They then offered an extensive opportunity for the peers to speak to all parties involved in the process in four separate 'interview' sessions:

- 1) With **EDUFI sector experts**, the peers discussed the practicalities of developing and updating qualifications and collecting 'customer' feedback.
- 2) **VET providers** outlined their role in developing and updating qualifications, and the peers asked about the collaboration arrangements with EDUFI.
- 3) With **representatives of Business and Industry**, including representatives of the Business and Industry Committees, the peers discussed the role of the committees and the concrete ways of working with EDUFI and the VET providers.
- 4) **Students and student representatives** were asked about any opportunities to give feedback on courses and qualifications, and how they use them.

At the end of the meeting, the peer reviewers shared their initial feedback on the Finnish qualification requirement process and the opportunities to give and collect 'customer' feedback, with a view to the planned reforms. They discussed that

- There is a high level of transparency and trust between EDUFI and the VET providers, and an equally high level of cooperation and knowledge sharing between EDUFI and representatives of the Business and Industry, through the Business and Industry Committees and through other forms of consultation.
- Students have many opportunities to give feedback on their day-to-day learning experiences.
- All stakeholders, especially students and employers confirmed that the content of VET qualifications matches the skills demand of the labour market, hence the identification of skills needs seems to be in line with industry developments.
- The collaboration between EDUFI and its 'customers' is described as generally very open and positive. Yet, as the culture of providing feedback is very much based on personal exchange, attention needs to be given to avoiding fragmentation and ensuring systematic data collection.
- EDUFI experts mentioned that a high amount of quantitative data and information is available which could be of use; yet those data are underutilised.
- The newly drafted process of updating and developing qualification requirements as outlined by EDUFI refers to evaluation but lacks a clearly demarcated evaluation phase.

A comprehensive feedback report will be drafted and shared with the Finnish hosts. The feedback in the peer reviewers' report will help to inform the national stakeholders on further improvements.

The EQAVET Peer Review initiative 2022 - 2023

The [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) called upon the EQAVET Network to develop a specific methodology for EQAVET peer reviews, with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level in the Member States. Over the course of 2021, with the support of DG EMPL and the EQAVET Secretariat, the EQAVET Network agreed on a joint methodology and prepared a Peer Review Manual.

The Quality Assurance National Reference Points (EQAVET NRPs) from 21 Member States have agreed to take part in the first phase of the EQAVET Network's peer review initiative. The Finnish Peer Review was the ninth and last Peer Review scheduled for 2022. Twelve further peer reviews are planned for 2023.