EQAVET+ INDICATIVE DESCRIPTORS:
EQAVET NETWORK PAPER ON COMPLEMENTING EQAVET

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to support members of the EQAVET Network and those with an interest in the quality assurance of vocational education and training (VET). It was prepared in 2016 by an EQAVET working group of national representatives and European stakeholders. It was produced in line with the first article of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Framework for VET (the EQAVET Framework) which called for Member States to further develop the quality criteria and indicative descriptors. This EQAVET Network paper does not imply any legal impact and does not change the Recommendation.

This paper responds to the needs of the Network's members; to discussions between the EQAVET Network's Secretariat and members of the EQAVET Network; and to the independent evaluation and report from the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of EQAVET in 2013. The paper takes account of the findings from the EQAVET Secretariat's survey[1] on the implementation of the Recommendation and builds on the experiences of Member States in implementing quality assurance systems based on the EQAVET Framework.

Discussions within the EQAVET Network as well as the 2013 evaluation highlight a number of areas where additional clarity would be useful. Members of the EQAVET Network have looked closely at the Recommendation and the evaluations and have agreed that this additional text will help those who are working with a quality assurance framework which is aligned to the EQAVET Framework. The following seven priority areas were discussed and agreed at the EQAVET Annual Forum in June 2015. This paper addresses quality assurance relating to:

- apprenticeship/work-based learning provision and in-company training;
- the processes of defining, describing and assessing learning outcomes;
- qualification design, assessment and certification;
- the pedagogical processes associated with learning outcomes;
- the teachers' and trainers' role in the quality assurance process;
- procedures which are used in the validation of non-formal and informal learning in line with EQF/NQFs;
- planning and improving the review phase of the quality assurance cycle.

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[1] http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/statistics.aspx

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CONTEXT

Since the introduction of the EQAVET Recommendation there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of work-based learning; learning outcomes; pedagogy which focuses on meeting the needs of individual learners; and the opportunity for learners to demonstrate their achievement through a wider range of learning contexts including the recognition of achievement through non-formal and informal learning. In this changing environment, and within the context of the 2015 Riga Conclusions[2] the EQAVET Network believes more work is needed to ensure these developments are embedded in the EQAVET-aligned approaches being used at both the system and VET provider levels.

The EQAVET Recommendation provides a toolbox which can be applied to the quality assurance of all levels and types of VET (e.g. school-based provision; work-based learning; apprenticeships and alternance schemes; training in school-based settings which replicate a working environment; in-company training; informal and non-formal learning; publicly and privately funded VET; self-funded VET; and ICT-based VET). The flexibility in the EQAVET Recommendation, and the universal nature of the quality assurance cycle, enables Member States to develop quality assurance approaches which meet their own needs.

While valuing this flexibility, the EQAVET Network believes there is a need to say more about how to quality assure those aspects of VET identified in paragraph 3. The EQAVET Network believes it is particularly important to be more explicit about the importance of quality assuring work-based learning; the development and use of learning outcomes; and the pedagogic approaches which are used to support VET learners. This paper comments on how to apply each stage of the quality assurance cycle to these aspects of training/learning.

The Network believes that this paper will complement the EQAVET Recommendation and help Member States to further strengthen their quality assurance approaches in line with the EQAVET Recommendation. The additions have been integrated in the text of the Recommendation for information purposes only. To ensure clarity between the Recommendation and the complementary text from the EQAVET Network, all the additions are written in red and highlighted.

The Network invites the EQAVET National Reference Points and other users of the EQAVET Recommendation to use this paper to support quality assurance in their context and taking account of their circumstances.

THE EQAVET+ INDICATIVE DESCRIPTORS

These indicative descriptors aim to support Member States, as they deem appropriate, when implementing the EQAVET Framework. As set out in the Recommendation this invitation is based on a toolbox approach which can support initial and/or continuing vocational training. Decisions on how to use the following information will depend on the characteristics of each Member State's system and how VET provision is organised. These indicative descriptors can be applied at all levels of VET provision and in a range of situations including work-based learning which involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills through carrying out and reflecting on tasks in a vocational context in the workplace or in a VET institution. They can also be applied to school based provision; apprenticeships, lifelong learning programmes, in-company training, and non-formal and informal learning.

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[2]
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:VoKDeq3f1ZwJ:ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk

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Quality Criteria	Indicative descriptors at VET-system level	Indicative descriptors at VET-provider level
Planning reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stake-holders and includes explicit goals/objectives, actions and indicators	Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long terms, and linked to European goals Social partners and all other relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels Targets are established and monitored through specific indicators (success criteria) Mechanisms and procedures have been established to identify the training needs of the labour market and society An information policy has been devised to ensure optimum disclosure of quality results/outcomes subject to national/ regional data protection requirements Standards and guidelines for recognition, validation and certification of competences of individuals have been defined VET qualifications are described using learning outcomes Mechanisms are established for the quality assurance of the design, assessment, certification and review of qualifications	European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored, and programmes are designed to meet them Ongoing consultation with social partners and all other relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/ individual needs Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development Providers plan cooperative initiatives with other VET providers and all other relevant stakeholders The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs VET providers have an explicit and transparent quality assurance system in place

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Quality Criteria	Indicative descriptors at VET-system level	Indicative descriptors at VET-provider level
Implementation plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles	Implementation plans are established in cooperation with social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders at the different levels Implementation plans include consideration of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines needed for support Guidelines and standards have been devised for implementation at different levels. These guidelines and standards include assessment, validation and certification of qualifications Implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers VET providers' responsibilities in the implementation process are explicitly described and made transparent A national and/or regional quality assurance framework has been devised and includes guidelines and quality standards at VET- provider level to promote continuous improvement and self-regulation	Resources are appropriately internally aligned/ assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans Relevant and inclusive partnerships, including those between teachers and trainers, are explicitly supported to implement the actions planned The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers Staff undertake regular training and develop cooperation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance VET providers' programmes enable learners to meet the expected learning outcomes and become involved in the learning process VET providers respond to the learning needs of individuals by using approaches to pedagogy and assessment which enable learners to achieve the expected learning outcomes VET providers use valid, accurate and reliable methods to assess individuals' learning outcomes

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Quality Criteria	Indicative descriptors at VET-system level	Indicative descriptors at VET-provider level
Evaluation of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement	A methodology for evaluation has been devised, covering internal and external evaluation Stakeholder involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process is agreed and clearly described The national/regional standards and processes for improving and assuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector Systems are subject to self-evaluation, internal and external review, as appropriate Early warning systems are implemented Performance indicators are applied Relevant, regular and coherent data collection takes place, in order to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Appropriate data collection methodologies have been devised, e.g. questionnaires and indicators/metrics	Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers Evaluation and review covers processes and results/outcomes of education including the assessment of learner satisfaction as well as staff performance and satisfaction Evaluation and review includes the collection and use of data, and adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders Early warning systems are implemented

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Quality Criteria	Indicative descriptors at VET-system level	Indicative descriptors at VET-provider level
Review	Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews are defined and used to improve the quality of provision at all levels Processes are regularly reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are adjusted accordingly Information on the outcomes of evaluation is made publicly available	Learners' feedback is gathered on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment. Together with teachers', trainers' and all other relevant stakeholders' feedback this is used to inform further actions Information on the outcomes of the review is widely and publicly available Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation, support the development of high quality provision, and improve opportunities for learners. Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place

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