

# REPORT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE OF QUALIFICATION DESIGN, ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING - CONCLUSIONS

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## **Quality assurance of qualification design, assessment and certification at vocational schools in Finland**

Finnish National Agency for Education and Ministry of Education and Culture organized seminars (3.6.2016 and 16.11.2016) on the topic "QA of qualification design, assessment and certification". This document is summary of conclusions which were made at the seminars.

Here are crucial things, which providers should to take into account in order to assurance the quality of qualification design, assessment and certification.

### **Reform of vocational education and training**

Providers should watch how the reform progress, so that they could adapt their QA activity with taking into account the reform's definition of policy/alignment.

### **Developing the quality management system**

Government presents that all providers should have well functioning quality management system. Probably discussions about quality management are increasing, because assurance of well functioning QM system will be one of the biggest challenges of

reform. Development of the QM demands commitment of providers to continuous improvement of their QMS.

### **Quality culture**

Quality culture takes center matter in the quality management. Providers should take into account that well functioning QM system needs functional structure and procedures, but also the quality culture which supports QM.

### **Management and internal audits**

In internal quality assurance the good management, especially pedagogic management, is the base of quality management. Internal quality assurance can be made for example with internal audits and by making good use of peer mentoring.

### **Data management and documents**

Data management has a big role in quality management, because it is important to get timely and faultless information for internal use and official supervision. Quality assurance of providers' processes by doing redefinition and by giving them new names might be useful, because documents and directions are important part of quality management, and also because language builds the reality.

## **External evaluation and mutual learning**

In connection to external evaluation, in draft law at § 109 says that:

“Providers have regularly to take a part in external evaluation of their function and quality management system. The results of these evaluations should be published.”

By taking a part of external evaluations and competitions will improve the quality because providers’ have to get ready to the evaluation. It is also useful to get views from outsiders. Learning from others and spreading good practices should be used more. It is useful to engage in quality network’s activities like development.

## **Structural change of qualifications**

Vocational education and training structure of qualifications is changing. At the moment there is in total about 350 qualifications (basic, vocation and special vocation qualifications). Starting from 1.1.2019 there will be 162 different structures of the qualifications. Only about 50 qualifications are about to remain the same, but there might still be some changes caused by the working life. Therefore almost all of the qualifications will change somehow.

## **Supply of vocational education and training**

The supply of the vocational education and training should be organized in such way that it takes local and nationwide needs into account. Moreover it should also enable both slow- and fast-moving students to proceed smoothly in their studies. The supply of the vocational education and training is planned together with the working life by anticipating the supply. A responsible provider of education limits the number of study places if necessary.

## **Recognizing and accepting the learning outcomes**

Recognizing the courses, which are carried out by the other provider of education, is quite trouble-free. Recognizing of learning which have happened elsewhere (or everyday learning) is more difficult. It is important to familiarize the staff with the principles, methods and practices of recognition. It must be clear by whom the recognition is done. Recognizing and accepting the learning outcomes should be systematic and it can’t be based on a one person’s views only. When recognizing and accepting learning outcomes one should know the qualification entity extensively and deeply so that the quality of the degree can be guaranteed. It is also important to take care that the learning

outcomes from earlier working experience and exchange experiences are recognized and accepted.

### **Students' personal study pathways**

Currently the provider of education must make a personal study plan together with the student and make sure that it will be updated during the education. Furthermore the provider must follow how this personal study plan (in the future personal competence development plan) will be realized in the future both young people and adults.

### **Involvement of stakeholders**

Student feedback should be collected appropriately, rightly and adequately. The feedback should be processed together with the students and corrective actions or other development actions should be made based on it. The student's involvement in the design of their studies is important for quality management. The perspective on working life should also be taken into account. Genuine dialogue, for example, on the basis of the feedback or through various cooperation forums, is important in the development of training processes and their quality management.

### **Quality assurance of assessment of learning outcomes**

In the future there will be only one way to show competence, as the skills demonstrations and the assessment of qualifications are removed separately. Assessing the quality of competence assessment, evaluating competence and ensuring that the candidate has the necessary skills is essential in ensuring the quality of acquiring the lack of competence.

### **Training and competence of assessors**

The provider of education must ensure the assessment competence of the participating labor market participants, which also affects the quality of the qualification and evaluation. Teachers' assessment skills and the up-to-date knowledge of the working life should also be taken care of. The new assessment descriptions included in the new qualification criteria also require orientation. Strengthening assessment skills is important.

### **Awareness of possible errors in assessment and knowledge of the qualifications**

When discussing about the quality of assessment, attention should be paid to the potential errors in the assessment. The assessor may make a mistake, for example, by interpreting the assessment criteria. Precise knowledge of the qualifications and qualification rules of the degree program will help to avoid mistakes in the assessment.

### **Monitoring systems**

A functioning and up-to-date monitoring system is essential for quality assurance in qualifications. In addition to tracking performance, it is also important to monitor the distribution of the grades. Student employment and access to postgraduate studies should also be monitored as they will continue to contribute to funding.

### **Students' self-evaluations**

It is necessary to ensure that students have skills to evaluate their own skills' development. Regarding the quality assurance of the qualification, it is also

important whether the students themselves feel that their skills are in line with the skills required in working life so that they are able to manage themselves in the working life.

