



FINNISH NATIONAL
BOARD OF EDUCATION

**INSPIRING AND STRENGTHENING
THE COMPETENCE-BASED APPROACH
IN ALL VET IN FINLAND
– Support material for implementation**

Guidelines for education providers

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Introduction

All education providers must ensure the implementation of a learning outcomes based approach – at the latest when implementing the new VET law and new national qualification requirements. Finland's national strategic intent is based on a learning outcomes based approach. Although this approach is nothing new, education providers are at different stages of putting it into practice.

Change process timetable:

- The national qualification requirements for all vocational qualifications were issued in October 2014.
- New statutes and the qualification requirements will enter into force on 1 August 2015 and will apply to the education of both present and future students.
- Education providers must prepare implementation plans and solutions for the transitional stage in good time before education begins on 1 August 2015.

Education providers have requested common guidelines that structure and support the implementation. This support material aims to facilitate education providers' work in implementing the necessary changes. The Finnish National Board of Education encourages education providers – who are currently at different stages of the implementation process – to take immediate action by planning and scheduling their change process, process management, necessary measures and follow-up. In this work, education providers should take account of their starting point, including their current organisation and personnel. It is important for education providers to make a comprehensive assessment of the current status of their organisation in order to recognise their needs for change and to outline and manage a change process.

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IMPLEMENTING A LEARNING OUTCOMES BASED APPROACH – GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION PROVIDERS – SUPPORT MATERIAL

PART I provides background, grounds and information on transferring to a learning outcomes based approach. It also provides information on national strategic intent and the details of a learning outcomes based approach as stipulated in the new VET law and acts, and explains what this approach means in education providers' operations. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) will be also be put in force by law in connection with the reform of the qualification system and national qualification requirements. Part 1 of this document has been prepared by the Finnish National Board of Education.

PART II provides the actual guidelines for education providers' self-assessment and change planning, supported by a number of case examples. Part 2 of this document has been prepared by the management and experts of Vocational Education Centre Sedu.

A discussion event was organised in support of the preparation of this material. The event was attended by members of the Finnish Association for the Development of Vocational Education and Training AMKE, the Finnish Association of VET Directors SAJO, as well as representatives of education providers and educational institution management. They provided feedback and additional examples, which were taken into account in this material.

PART I

Starting points, national strategic intent and changes entailed by a competence (learning outcomes) based approach

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1 Starting points – 20 years of competence based approach

A work and learning outcomes based approach have formed the basis of Finnish vocational education and training for a rather long time, for virtually a couple of decades. When the national core curriculum of vocational qualifications was reformed in 1993–1994, the former syllabuses, study units and subjects were replaced by vocational study modules and competence-based objectives and assessment criteria that are based on the operational entities of working life. At the same time, a competence-based qualification system was introduced in adult education.

Since those years, the aim of all reforms affecting curricula and competence-based qualification requirements has been to further a learning outcomes based approach. The change has taken quite a long time, both at national level and in the operations of education providers, educational institutions and teachers. This is due to the fact that they have had to shift their thinking away from a science- and subject-based approach – deep-rooted in all of us – towards vocational study structures based on working life activities and functions.

1.1 Why the shift from a subject-based model to a work and learning outcomes based way of structuring vocational studies?

- requirements to increase the labour market relevance of education/the need for skilled labour force – the need for a common language between education and working life
- the need to clearly and concretely impart to students and working life the skills that students need after completing their studies
- the need to create a clear basis for the assessment of learning outcomes
- the need to increase the efficiency of the education system, improve the quality of education and emphasise the importance of learning outcomes
- the need to shift the focus of education and teaching from instruction contents towards learning outcomes or competencies, in other words, to the skills students must have after completing their studies and qualifications
- the need to transfer from a teaching-centred to a learning-centred approach
- the need to strengthen a student-centred approach while making students the subjects of learning and evaluation processes – the increased emphasis on a socio-constructivist conception of learning
- the diversification of learning environments – increase in studying at workplaces and other different learning environments
- appreciating the importance of prior learning, its validation and recognition
- acquisition of learning outcomes as the starting point for the validation and recognition of competences, instead of lessons or detailed study contents

1.2 What kind of changes the learning outcomes based approach brought to national qualification requirements and assessment?

- a transfer from an objective- and subject-based national core curriculum to national qualification requirements, and from the definition of objectives to the definition of vocational skills requirements
- all of the vocational requirements related to a qualification were defined as vocational skills and learning outcomes required in working life
- the previous study modules, today known as qualification units, were defined and named in accordance with the operational entities and work processes of working life
- national qualification requirements define learning results as learning outcomes (vocational skills requirements, assessment targets and criteria), which in turn form the basis of learning, teaching and student assessment
- a transfer from the dichotomy of theory and practice (and theoretical and practical contents) to competence entities. With respect to each qualification unit, the related vocational skills requirements and assessment targets are structured through work processes, methods and tools, as well as through knowledge as the basis of work, and lifelong learning skills. These, rather than particular study contents, also constitute the assessment targets.
- vocational skills requirements (targeted learning outcomes) were defined as learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences), which materialise in occupational activities. The learning outcomes achieved can be assessed – instead of written tests – in practical work assignments and genuine work environments.
- a three-scale assessment criteria expresses the level of learning outcomes
- student assessment was changed to consist of a student's self-assessment, the assessment of learning outcomes and vocational skills demonstrations; the assessment of learning and the assessment of learning outcomes were separated
- the assessment of learning supports the learning process, whereas the assessment of learning outcomes involves the assessment of learning results
- national guidelines for vocational studies were introduced in support of vocational skills demonstrations
- national assessment of learning outcomes were started

2 What does the new VET law stipulate with respect to a learning outcomes based approach?

2.1 The outlines of a competence based approach

The general objective of the new VET laws is to clarify the regulation and terminology related to qualification structures and requirements.

The key areas in developing the VET qualification system include:

1. qualifications' and the qualification structure's relevance to work and the ability to react to changes
2. holistic approach to the qualification system and the clarity of the qualification structure
3. common approach to structuring qualifications
4. the flexibility of qualifications and the qualification structure.

STRATEGIC INTENT OF A COMPETENCE (LEARNING OUTCOMES) BASED APPROACH

The key goals:

- to move increasingly to a learning outcomes based approach and a unit-based (modular) qualification structure in all vocational education and training leading to a qualification
- to further strengthen the learning outcomes based definition of vocational qualifications and the unit-based (modular) qualifications, which will in turn support the construction of flexible and individual study pathways and promote the validation and recognition of prior learning as part of a qualification.

Furthermore, the aim is to promote a qualification and decision-making structure that allows a swift and flexible response to changes in working life and society.

System based on

- Competences needed in worklife/LO's (KSC's)
- Correspondence with needs of working life
- Responsiveness
- Clarity
- Logic and consistency
- Holistic approach
- Flexibility
- Optionality
- Individual learning and qualification pathways
- Validation of LOs

Figure 1. Political objectives of the Finnish Qualification System, 1 August 2015

2.2 A learning outcomes based approach in the statutes

Definition of a vocational qualification

A vocational qualification is an entity of learning outcomes covering one or several competence areas. The vocational skills requirements and objectives for the learning outcomes of a vocational qualification are based on the needs of working life. Vocational qualification must be usable from the viewpoint of several employers, as well as from the viewpoint of individuals.

Introducing the concept of a competence area in place of a study programme

According to the proposal, the concept of competence area will be consistently introduced in all qualifications. This would emphasise a learning outcomes based approach instead of an education-based approach, also in the vocational upper secondary qualifications.

Introducing competence points to measure qualifications and qualification units (units of learning outcomes)

The proposal suggests that the allocation of competence points to vocational qualifications should comply with the principles of the ECVET recommendation (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training). A learning outcomes based approach lies at the heart of the ECVET system. ECVET points refer to a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of the units of learning outcomes in relation to the qualification.

According to the ECVET recommendation, the learning outcomes completed during one year in official, full-time vocational education correspond to 60 points. In the ECVET system, the total points of a qualification are defined first. After that, these total points are distributed to the various units of learning outcomes in accordance with their weight in relation to the whole qualification. It is recommended that the total points of a qualification are defined on the basis of the qualification's official learning pathway.

In the vocational upper secondary education and training system, it is suggested that a quantitative basis based on the ECVET system be introduced as the basis for vocational upper secondary qualifications and qualification units. In this system, the ECVET points, which are called **competence points in Finland, will replace the credits** used today. However, credits will not be converted into competence points by using a certain coefficient. Instead, the competence points of a qualification and its units will be defined in line with the principles of the ECVET recommendation.

Allocation of competence points to a qualification

The quantitative basis of vocational upper secondary qualifications and qualification units, taken as part of the vocational upper secondary education and training system, is a competence point. The scope of a vocational upper secondary qualification is 180 competence points. If the regulation of a specific vocational field so requires, the Ministry of Education and Culture can issue a decree stipulating that the scope of a qualification exceeds 180 competence points.

Allocation of competence points to units

The competence points allocated to the units of learning outcomes are determined on the basis of the **scope, complexity and significance** of the related learning outcomes

in relation to the vocational skills requirements and the objectives for learning outcomes attached to the whole qualification.

Defining the objectives of a vocational upper secondary qualification

In defining the objectives of vocational upper secondary education and training, a competence (LO) based approach will be strengthened. According to a proposed provision, the aim of vocational upper secondary education and training would be to provide students with the learning outcomes and vocational skills required by the legislation on vocational qualifications. A person who has completed a vocational upper secondary qualification has the comprehensive basic skills for various tasks in a particular field, as well as specialised expertise and vocational skills required by working life in at least one sub-area. According to a proposed provision, the general objectives of a whole qualification would not be determined in the national qualification requirements since – by their legal nature – the objectives of a qualification do not constitute an independent regulation. However, determining the objectives of a qualification is necessary in other respects, since they must be taken into account in the national qualification requirements, including individual units of learning outcomes and the qualification-specific rules on structure.

The objective of vocational upper secondary education and training is to provide students with the learning outcomes and vocational skills required by a vocational qualification, as well as capabilities for entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the mission of education is to support students' growth into good and balanced individuals and members of society, and to provide them with the diverse knowledge and skills needed in further studies, professional development and leisure activities and in the development of their personalities.

Composition of each upper secondary vocational qualification

As today, a vocational upper secondary qualification will consist of vocational units, common units and free choice units. Vocational Qualifications achieved in competence-based examinations will continue to comprise vocational units only.

A compulsory unit strengthens the shared competence base of persons who have acquired a particular qualification. The introduction of compulsory units guarantees that all persons holding a qualification have the core vocational competence. A unit-based (modular) qualification structure is also the key to maintaining study motivation and reducing drop-out rates. From the viewpoint of drop-out students, it is important that they can return later to continue their studies in order to complete their qualification.

Optionality

In addition to changes in working life, an equal or even greater change is affecting our society and culture in general. This involves a **decrease in the proportion of consistent education and learning pathways**, even though the majority of young people continue to proceed through the traditional stages of the education system.

The aim is also to increase the proportion of optionality and free choice. **Optionality within one and the same qualification will help in meeting the different, and sometimes very diversified, orientation and competence needs in working life.** However, we should ensure that the increase in free choice and optionality does not decrease the professional competence provided by a vocational qualification. With respect to regulated trades in particular, it is important to ensure that the compulsory units provide

sufficient vocational competence vis-à-vis the skills requirements defined in the statutes governing regulated trades.

In addition to the needs of working life, the **vocational qualification system must also serve individuals, enabling them to make choices according to their individual needs and to build flexible study pathways**. Free choice units, the possibility to complete selected units and the revised structure of common units would enhance the flexibility of qualifications and enable individuals to develop their competences according to their own needs. Flexible study pathways and free choice units would also promote equality in education and reduce the unnecessary overlapping of studies.

Competence based unit of learning outcomes

A competence based method of describing vocational skills requirements and the objectives for learning outcomes is further strengthened since defining these as knowledge, skills and learning outcomes will improve the transparency, comparability and understandability of the qualification system. A competence based approach describes the qualification holder's competence regardless of the form in which the education was provided, and promotes the flexible combination of institution-based and apprenticeship-based education. A competence based description method promotes the validation and recognition of prior learning as part of a qualification. In particular, this applies to informal learning. Furthermore, a competence based description method focuses on education results, which improves the quality of education.

National qualification requirements

The national qualification requirements define the following:

1. qualification titles
2. the structure of a vocational qualification
3. the units or learning outcomes included in a qualification, as well as the scope of the vocational units and common units, as competence points; and
4. the vocational skills requirements and the objectives for competence-based learning outcomes for the various units, and competence assessment.

The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the national qualification requirements for each vocational upper secondary qualification completed through vocational upper secondary education and training or as a competence-based qualification examination. The national qualification requirements would define the vocational skills requirements for the vocational units and the objectives for competence-based learning outcomes for the common units. In addition, the national qualification requirements would define the assessment of learning outcomes in said units, such as the ways of demonstrating vocational skills, the assessment targets and the assessment criteria.

The curriculum of an education provider

The curriculum decided by an education provider must comply with the national qualification requirements.

In their curricula, education providers must decide on at least the following:

1. the methods of providing education
2. the implementation of training in the workplace in conjunction with practical tasks
3. the student's opportunities for individual choice and the provision of units of learning outcomes in collaboration with other education providers and working life

4. the provision of guidance counselling and preparation of a student's individual study plan
5. the implementation of special needs education
6. the general principles of student assessment
7. the procedures for the validation and recognition of prior learning.

Furthermore, the curriculum of an education provider must state, by qualification, the provision of units and their order of completion, as well as the assessment of the students' learning outcomes. An education provider must also decide the methods and times of providing education, and the learning environments.

On-the-job learning

A vocational upper secondary qualification must include at least 30 competence points of the acquisition of learning outcomes through on-the-job learning.

Student assessment

A competence based approach involves transferring from the assessment of single credits to the assessment of extensive competence areas that correspond to the work and operational processes of working life.

One of the aims of the new regulations is to emphasise the difference between the assessment of learning and the assessment of learning outcomes. The assessment of learning refers to the support and guidance provided to students in achieving vocational skills requirements and the objectives for learning outcomes. The assessment of learning involves monitoring and assessment of the students' competence development during their studies and providing them with feedback on their development. The assessment of learning outcomes evaluates whether the student meets the vocational skills requirements and the objectives for learning outcomes set forth in the national qualification requirements. The assessment of learning outcomes evaluates the level of competence, mainly expressed in grades obtained from an assessment scale. Reassessment of learning outcomes and improving a grade have also been defined.

The purpose of student assessment is to provide students with guidance and encouragement, develop their self-assessment capabilities, provide information on their competencies and ensure the achievement of vocational skills requirements and the objectives for learning outcomes defined in the national qualification requirements or the national core curriculum.

A student's learning outcomes are assessed by comparing them with those defined in the national qualification requirements or the national core curriculum.

On the basis of this assessment, each unit of learning outcomes is graded. The assessment scale for learning outcomes is issued by Government decree.

Students shall be entitled to receive information on the application of assessment criteria in the evaluation of their learning outcomes.

If the student has failed in his/her demonstration of learning outcomes, the education provider must arrange an opportunity for the reassessment of learning outcomes. If necessary, the education provider must reserve the student an opportunity to otherwise demonstrate a skill level that enables the continuation of his/her studies.

A competence based approach, and promoting the validation and recognition of learning outcomes

In addition, young people may possess such capabilities and competences – gained, for instance, through hobbies – that comply with the vocational skills requirements or the objectives for learning outcomes set forth for a vocational upper secondary qualification. It is already possible to identify and recognise prior learning in vocational upper secondary education and training. However, modular qualifications corresponding to the work and operational processes of working life, and a learning outcomes based definition of qualifications, would further support the achievement of this principle.

A student has the right to demand the validation and recognition of prior learning that corresponds to the vocational skills requirements or the objectives for competence-based learning outcomes stated in the national qualification requirements or the national core curriculum. Such prior learning outcomes may be recognized as a certain unit of a qualification, either in part or in full.

A COMPETENCE BASED APPROACH IN STATUTES

- A vocational qualification is an entity made up of learning outcomes
- Introducing the concept of competence area in place of a study programme
- Introducing competence points as the basis for allocating points to qualifications and qualification units (units of learning outcomes).
- Defining the objectives of a vocational upper secondary qualification with a learning outcome based approach
- A vocational qualification structure based on the operational entities and work processes of working life
- Competence based qualification units and competences defined for these units
- Compulsory units– all persons holding a qualification have the core vocational competence required by the qualification criteria
- Optionality within one and the same qualification will help in meeting the different, and sometimes highly diverse, orientation and competence needs in working life
- Competence based national qualification requirements and education providers' curricula and operations
- On-the-job learning as a way of acquiring competences
- In student assessment, transferring from the assessment of single credits to the assessment of extensive competence areas that correspond to the work and operational processes of working life
- The assessment of learning supports and guides students in achieving vocational skills.
- The assessment of learning outcomes and quality assurance – does the student meet the vocational skills requirements and competence objectives set forth in the national qualification requirements?
- The opportunity for the reassessment of learning outcomes and improving a grade
- Modular (unit-based) qualifications corresponding to the work and operational processes of working life, and a learning outcomes based definition of qualifications – promoting the validation and recognition of learning outcomes
- Prior learning that corresponds to the vocational skills requirements or competence objectives stated in the national qualification requirements or the national core curriculum are identified and recognised.

3 Implementing ECVET

In June 2009, the European Commission issued the EU member states with a recommendation on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). This system can be used, for example, to recognise learning outcomes acquired and studies completed in another European country. The introduction of ECVET has two broader objectives. It promotes international mobility, primarily within the European Union, and facilitates lifelong learning. The aim is to facilitate credit transfer, accumulation and recognition through a consistent description system. The starting point is a system based on learning outcomes, which are defined as knowledge, skills and competence. Each qualification and qualification unit (units of learning outcomes) can be described on the basis of a certain number of ECVET points. The use of ECVET is based on national legislation, as well as operating principles issued in recommendations.

The essence of the ECVET credit transfer system lies in qualifications and qualification units. In each country, competent institutions identify and recognise assessed and approved learning outcomes in these qualifications and qualification units in a manner that enables learning outcomes to be accumulated for a qualification or transferred to another study programme or qualification. The ECVET system provides the necessary tools and procedures, such as the description of qualifications through units, learning outcomes and points; procedures related to credit transfers; and documents, such as memorandums of understanding, learning agreements and user's guides.

The basic principle is that **competences can be acquired from a variety of sources, and can be assessed by persons other than the student's current teachers, as long as it can be ascertained** through memorandums of understanding and learning agreements **that the learning outcomes and competence assessment methods correspond to the national qualification requirements.** The purpose of ECVET points, or competence points, is to provide complementary information.

ECVET is based on the following: learning outcomes or competences, qualifications and qualification units, ECVET points (in Finland: competence points), recognition of prior learning as part of a qualification, mutual trust, partnerships between organisations, and documentation – in other words, factors introduced through the implementation of qualification structure reform.

The implementation of ECVET will take place as part of the current reform on the qualification system and revision of the national qualification requirements. This includes strengthening of a competence based approach and the introduction of competence points to describe the scope of qualifications and qualification units. The starting point for defining competence points are the criteria complying with the ECVET recommendation. These criteria emphasise the scope of competence rather than the former time-based approach. This will further promote the validation and recognition of learning outcomes. As part of the implementation, a number of ECVET tools, such as a memorandum of understanding, a learning agreement, and user's guides, will be introduced.

4 Implementing a competence based approach in the operations of education providers

In the implementation of statutes related to the new national qualification requirements, it is crucial that all education providers take vocational skills requirements, or the competences required in working life, as the starting point for teaching, guidance and the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes. To enable this, the subject-, content- and time-based approach must be abandoned. This is already included in the present national qualification requirements, but has not materialised in all respects. The implementation of competence points and the ECVET system will not cause changes in qualifications, qualification units, vocational skills requirements, assessment targets or assessment criteria. In vocational upper secondary education and training, credits will be replaced by competence points. This will affect the operations of education providers as well as curricula, individual study plans, the planning of education and teacher's work, and administrative systems in the education sector.

Changes are often needed in the teacher's role and in the educational institution's operational culture. The changes in teacher's work depend on how the teacher's role and work have been structured. The teacher will be needed as before, but the starting point of teaching and assessment will be the achievement and support of competencies. Instead of the teaching required by the credit system, the emphasis is on the teaching and guidance needed by the student in support of the acquisition of competences. This includes the opportunity to utilise open learning environments and educational technology. Skilled education providers, teachers and other staff will join forces to implement the change.

Students will also encounter changes. They will transfer from subject-based studying to the acquisition of competences and demonstration of learning outcomes. This change will also entail new concepts, such as qualification units, competence points, competences, learning outcomes and acquisition of learning outcomes, as well as student financial aid based on competence points instead of time. The change will facilitate national and international mobility as the ECVET system is introduced as part of the implementation of qualifications and national qualification requirements. Finland has excellent prerequisites for implementing the change, due to a number of experiments, national pilot project FINECVET and several years of training acquired in this field.

It is important for education providers to make a comprehensive assessment of the current status of their organisation, in order to recognise their needs for change and outline and manage the change process. Unless they are already implementing a competence based approach, it is important that they plan the stages of change on both strategic and operational level.

IMPLEMENTING A LEARNING OUTCOMES BASED APPROACH IN THE OPERATIONS OF EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- A competence based approach must form the basis of all pedagogical activities. A change of thinking is crucial.
- The acquisition of learning outcomes and the related quality assurance become the starting points of pedagogical activities.
- Learning outcomes and the learning processes needed to achieve them, as well as teaching, guidance and assessment processes, are crucial.
- The learner's learning outcomes and supporting their development must be brought to centre stage and constitute the starting point of pedagogical activities.
- In planning learning and teaching activities, the student's existing competences will form the basis on which new competences are built as needed.
- The validation and recognition of learning outcomes must be further increased; A transfer from quantitative achievements to the acquisition and demonstration of learning outcomes must take place.
- All students, both present and future, will transfer to the new system as from 1 August 2015 – this requires thorough preparations in order to avoid unnecessary additional studies for students and extra costs.
- The teachers will be needed as before, but the starting point of teaching and assessment will be the achievement and support of learning outcomes. The emphasis will be on the teaching and guidance needed by the student in support of the acquisition of competences.
- A transfer will be made from subject-based studying to the acquisition of competences and demonstration of learning outcomes, and from credits to competence points – it is important that the students be informed of future changes.
- Plans must also be made to inform working life of these changes.

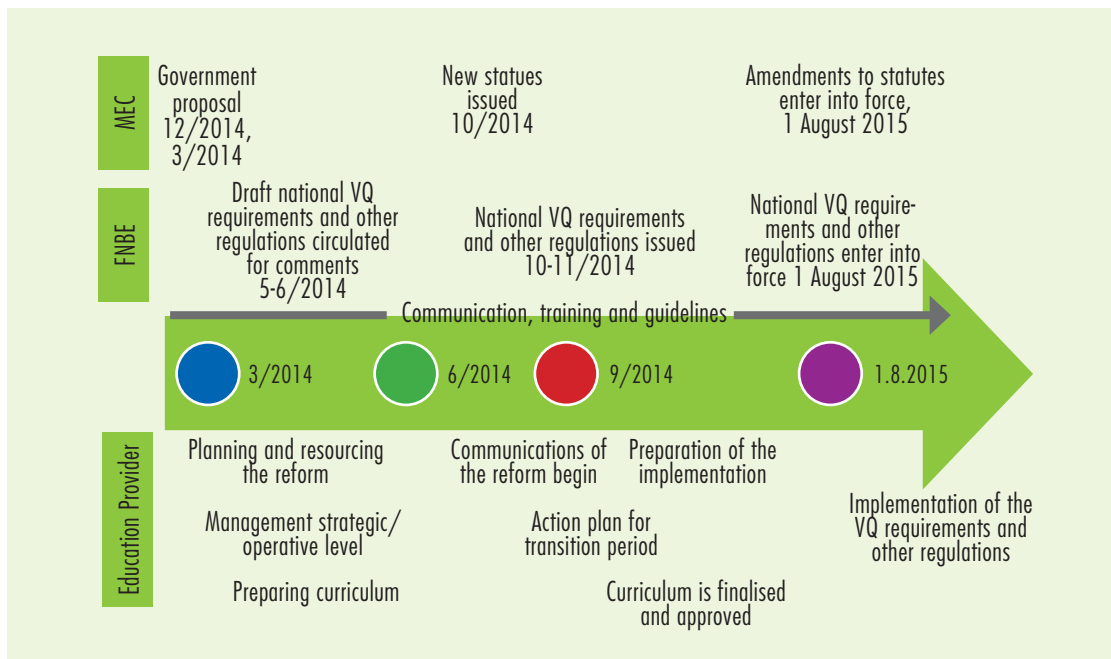


Figure 2. Timeline: Grounds, other regulations and education provider's measures

PART II

A competence based approach and the provision of education – guidelines

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1 Background

The purpose of this support material is to provide vocational upper secondary education and training providers with tools and tips in order to strengthen the learning outcomes based approach taken within their operations and operating environment. The support material also provides case examples from various fields.

This material contains summaries presented in tables. The purpose of these is to support the strategic and operational implementation of a learning outcomes based approach. With the help of these summaries (Chapter 2), education providers can perform a self-assessment of their present status and gain ideas on how to proceed in strengthening a learning outcomes based approach. The material also contains a number of practical examples.

A checklist for the provision of learning outcomes based education (Chapter 3) provides tips in the form of questions. These will help education providers to consider the steps they should take in order to enhance the learning outcomes based approach taken in their operations.

This support material was a collaborative effort by the Finnish National Board of Education and representatives of education providers.

2 Steps towards strengthening competence based approach through a self-assessment tool

2.1 Strategic level

Education provider's decisions, outlines and guidelines

A learning outcomes (competence) based approach lies at the heart of the current qualification system reform and the ECVET system. This involves an emphasis on individual choice and the flexible progress of studies. The rules, decisions and plans approved by education providers create the prerequisites for the implementation of a learning outcomes based approach. A good starting point is to analyse how the following documents support the provision of learning outcomes based education.

Strategic level	Questions to ponder	Approved	Under preparation	Next measures
Administrative rules and guidelines	<p>How do the education provider's decisions, outlines and guidelines support a learning outcomes based approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Administrative regulations and rules of procedure ■ Operational rules and instructions ■ Education provider's quality management and assessment system ■ The common elements in the education provider's curriculum ■ Human resources policy outlines ■ Information management system ■ Employee training 			
Implementation	<p>How has the education provider prepared/ how is the education provider preparing the implementation plan for a learning outcomes based approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ committing the management of the educational institution or its units ■ responsible persons and areas of responsibility ■ timetables ■ self-assessment 			
Communications	<p>How has the education provider drawn up/will the education provider draw up a communications plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ committing the management of the educational institution or its units ■ responsible persons and areas of responsibility ■ target groups of communications; internal/external ■ timetables ■ self-assessment 			

Case Sedu

Guidelines and other outlines concerning the strengthening of a learning outcomes based approach

- Action plans and operational instructions in which a learning outcomes based approach was taken into account:
 - action plans: pedagogical, student wellbeing, cooperation with working life, internationality, communications and marketing, entrepreneurship, education technology, IT management
 - instructions for drawing up the curriculum
- A decision to transfer to a four-term system to support progress via qualification units
- a qualification structure based on working life-oriented periods, and an annual working time experiment supporting modularity
- A decision to introduce a student administration system that supports the implementation
- Defining the supervision, control and assessment tasks of a local board for vocational skills demonstrations. The guidelines were updated to include, for example, international on-the-job learning and competence assessment performed abroad
- The common elements in the education provider's curriculum and its pedagogical policy
- were combined. The document was updated to include outlines requiring the organisation to develop its learning environments and methods and education technology.

Sedu redefined its organisational structure to further promote its pedagogical development:

- Pedagogical development was selected as a specific area of development led by a denominated development manager
- Development work was organised through working groups operating at education provider level (for example, the working group of persons responsible for the curriculum, entrepreneurship and internationalisation, and the working group of educational technology)
- Representatives of working groups act as change agents in their respective units.

Education provider's implementation plan

It is worthwhile for the education provider to draw up an implementation plan to support the realisation of the change. This plan should cover the various sub-processes of the implementation process, and nominate the process owners and other responsible persons. The implementation will be assessed and monitored as agreed in the plan.

Education provider's self-assessment			
Implementation plan	Approved	Under preparation	Next measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Processes have been described ■ Process owners and responsibilities have been defined ■ Decisions of implementation resources have been made ■ A decision to introduce a feedback system that supports the implementation ■ The analysis and utilisation of assessment data have been described as part of the development work 			

Case Sedu

- The process descriptions supporting the strengthening of a learning outcomes based approach (for example, the on-the-job learning process, the vocational skills demonstration process and the individual study plan process) have been drawn up on the basis of competences, as well as the learning, teaching, guidance and assessment processes required to achieve said competences. Relevance to work and key skills in lifelong learning are taken into account in this process.
- Competence development needs are assessed for each target group. For example,
 - Working life
 - Local board for vocational skills demonstrations
 - Personnel
 - ~ competence analyses and the employee training plan based on these
- Monitoring and assessment of the progress of implementation
 - Management reviews in various units
 - Monitoring of working groups responsible for the implementation
- Peer mentoring (teachers, other education providers)

Sedu's implementation timeline is available in Appendix 1.

Education provider's communications plan regarding the strengthening of a learning outcomes based approach

It is crucial that the education provider prepare a communications plan on the implementation of a learning outcomes based approach within their organisation. The target groups to be taken into account in communications include current and future students and their families, personnel, working life and other stakeholders, among others. In planning the communications schedule, it is important to consider optimal timing for various target groups.

Education provider's self-assessment			
Communications plan	Approved	Under preparation	Next measures
How has the communications process been planned/will be planned? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ timetables ■ target groups ■ communication contents ■ responsible persons 			

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Communications by target group and taking account of the various viewpoints (student/family/teacher/working life/business life/national and international stakeholder groups):

- Students, teachers, guidance counsellors, parents and carers: introduction of flexible study pathways (projects supporting operations: JOBI; Osaamisen Oma polku; Opimisen SULO). Information on where and how the students can make the choices enabled by individual and flexible study pathways; agreeing on procedures and responsibilities
- Teachers: changes in planning the teacher's work when transferring from credits to competence points

- All target groups:
 - abolishing the time-based approach when transferring from credits to competence points
 - progress by qualification units
 - implementing the guidelines on the validation and recognition of learning outcomes and the guidelines on the assessment of learning and learning outcomes; implementation of policies and guidelines steering the operations
 - a learning outcomes based approach during international study periods.

2.2 Operational level

The common elements in the education provider’s curricula, qualification-specific part of the curricula and individual study plans.

The Finnish National Board of Education determines the national qualification requirements. On the basis of the requirements for basic qualifications, the education provider draws up the common part of its curriculum, as well as the qualification-specific part of the curricula and students’ individual study plans.

Education provider’s self-assessment			
The common part of the curricula, qualification-specific part of the curricula and an individual study plan	Completed	Under preparation	Future measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The curriculum process’s responsible persons, cooperation partners and forums (working life, students and their families, other education providers) have been defined ■ The common part of the education provider’s curriculum has been updated as required by the qualification reforms ■ Qualification-specific parts of the curricula have been updated as required by the qualification reforms ■ The training provider has defined how the achievement of a learning outcomes based approach in its curricula is evaluated ■ With respect to qualification units (units of learning outcomes), the competence points defined in statutes and national qualification requirements are applied ■ Qualification units are assessed and entered in the registry system as entities ■ Entities smaller than a qualification unit are documented as needed when the learning outcome has been achieved. ■ Guidelines for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes have been compiled and the related communications planned ■ The validation and recognition of learning outcomes is assessed and developed on a regular basis ■ The curriculum enables various methods of acquiring learning outcomes ■ Individually acquired learning outcomes are approved as part of a qualification through the validation and recognition procedure ■ An individual study plan is drawn up for every student and updated on a regular basis ■ Students have the opportunity to implement their individual choices in accordance with the national qualification requirements 			

Case examples:

- New instructions for drawing up learning outcomes based curricula at education provider level, taking account of the following perspectives: a learning outcomes based approach, work orientation, optionality, flexibility and key skills of lifelong learning, validation and recognition of learning outcomes, the assessment of learning and learning outcomes
- Process description on drawing up a curriculum
- Curriculum compilers have a shared Moodle learning environment that contains joint outlines, guidelines and instructions, national qualification requirements (in rtf format) and discussion forums. All staff members interested in the Moodle environment are welcome to participate (Omnia). Moodle logs information on users visiting the site and the materials visited. There are also other corresponding platforms enabling communal compilation of curricula.
- A plan of the allocation of competence points to qualifications, locally provided qualification units and, in exceptional cases, entities smaller than a qualification unit, as well as the related responsibilities, in accordance with the regulations of the National Board of Education
- A report on the opportunities to select qualification units from other qualifications or qualifications in the same field
- Integration of vocational and common units and key skills in lifelong learning by module
- Investigating the organisation of dual qualifications; a joint working group of general upper secondary schools and vocational institutions
- Investigating the opportunities provided by the digital individual study plan (eHOPS)

Guidance in competence based learning and the utilisation of learning environments and methods and education technology

The strengthening of a competence based approach and labour market relevance provides the personnel with the opportunity to apply new teaching methods and operate in versatile learning environments. It is important to ponder how a learning outcomes based approach materialises in the guidance of learning, learning environments and methods and education technology. Personnel should receive support and training as needed.

Education provider's self-assessment			
Teaching and guidance, learning environments and methods and education technology	Completed	Under preparation	Next measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaching and guidance supporting the student's acquisition of learning outcomes will be arranged by qualification unit, while taking account of labour market relevance ■ Upon the transfer from credits to competence points, a time-based approach will be abolished and replaced with a learning outcome based approach ■ Learning guidance will support individual and flexible study pathways ■ Utilisation of learning environments and methods that support a learning outcomes based approach, such as on-the-job learning, entrepreneurship, virtual instruction and social media ■ Implementation plans enabling modern learning methods ■ Opportunities for national and international mobility during studies. 			

Case examples

- Learning and competences/The teacher's new role (theme year) A Revolution of Learning tour visited all units of the education provider, in order to provide information on the planning and implementation of learning outcomes based teaching and guidance from various viewpoints
- Progress by qualification units (units of learning outcomes)
 - Representatives of working life and students will participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of periodised education, based on the competence entities of working life
 - Integration of vocational and common units and key skills in lifelong learning, unit by unit
- In the instruction for common units, the concept of reversed learning will be applied (for example, the Khan Academy model: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>). This means that the student studies the issue in advance via online material. Following this, the student applies his or her learning in practice, under guidance.
- Qualification-specific persons responsible for the curricula act as change agents in learning outcomes based education.
- A report on the opportunities to select qualification units from other qualifications or qualifications in the same field
- Organisation of free choice units at the level of education providers
- Organisation of dual qualifications in a joint working group of general upper secondary schools and vocational institutions (for example, the Opinlakeus network)
- Provision of education in such a manner that the student can proceed faster if he/she has prior competences or acquires competences faster
- Flexible 'Oma polku' (Own Pathway) arrangements. For example, www.sedu.fi/omapolku
- Guidance and counselling cooperation in the field of individual and flexible study pathways (training managers, the working groups of internationalisation and entrepreneurship, the working group of persons responsible for curricula, education technology working group, teacher mentors and guidance counsellors)
- Cooperation between guidance counsellors, student services secretaries and pedagogical development experts
- Curricula for various study pathways (Omnia) Following qualification-specific parts of the curricula, the introduction of study pathway-specific curricula; "study pathways in support of planning" <https://www.omnia.fi/web/ammattiopisto/opetussuunnitelmat>
- Utilisation of various learning environments and methods, such as e-learning, mobile learning, co-operatives, A Year as an Entrepreneur programme, workshop activities
- Vocational qualification in construction: a construction site as a learning environment; vocational qualification in hairdressing: a hairdresser's shop as a learning environment; vocational qualification in surface finishing: a co-operative as a learning environment
- In the planning of learning environments and facilities, the emphasis is on solutions that support interaction
- Curricula, learning environments and education provision enable the accumulation of international competence through the methods of 'internationalisation at home'
- International competence is included in the curricula of all qualifications
- Education and learning environments that support the acquisition of international competence in one's own educational institution play a central role in the implementation of work orientation and a learning outcomes based approach to education.

- In quality assessment related to students' international mobility, key assessment criteria include a learning outcomes based approach and the development of key skills in lifelong learning. Matters related to overseas study periods are documented in a learning agreement. The learning agreement includes descriptions of prior learning, the learning objectives and assessment procedures and responsibilities related to the study period in the country of destination, and the validation and recognition procedures after returning home.

Validation and recognition of learning outcomes and assessment of learning and learning outcomes

The validation and recognition of a student's learning outcomes is an important area of assessment, in addition to the assessment of learning and learning outcomes. These play an increasingly important role in ensuring the realisation of flexible and individual study pathways for students. Furthermore, student administration systems must meet changing needs. The students' individual study plans must support the planning, implementation and monitoring of their study pathways.

Education provider's self-assessment			
Validation and recognition, the assessment of learning and learning outcomes	Completed	Under preparation	Not yet started
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Guidelines and practices for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes support a flexible and individual approach as well as national and international mobility, in line with the qualification reform. ■ The common part of the curriculum and the guidelines for the assessment of the qualification-specific parts of the curricula provide clear descriptions of the concepts and methods in the validation and recognition of learning outcomes and the assessment of learning and learning outcomes ■ The assessment of learning provides students with guidance and encouragement, develops their self-assessment capabilities and provides feedback on progress made in learning ■ The assessment of learning outcomes ensures the achievement of the national qualification requirements or the vocational skills requirements and competence objectives specified in the curriculum. 			

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International mobility

- Competences acquired during foreign study periods are assessed by representatives of the countries of destination. This means that the representative of an international cooperation partner assesses whether the student has a command of the matters specified in the learning agreement.
- The assessment procedures are agreed in the learning agreement. Any documents related to the assessment are attached to the learning agreement. In accordance with the ECVET system, the purpose is not to transfer the Finnish vocational skills demonstration system abroad as such, but instead to agree with the cooperation partner on the procedures for assessing the achievement of competence objectives in the country of destination.

- For example, the Europass Mobility Certificate will be applied when transferring competences acquired abroad. The mobility certificate, the assessment document and the feedback discussion with the teacher responsible for guidance during the exchange period form the basis of the validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad as part of the student's vocational qualification. The acquired learning outcomes are compared to the goals entered in the learning agreement before the exchange period. If the goals are regarded as having been achieved as such, the guiding teacher ensures that the qualification units thus completed are entered in the student's study records (registry system).
- If the goals for learning outcomes have not been achieved as such, or the student has acquired other competences, these are taken into account in the validation and recognition of learning outcomes and in the student's individual study plan.

Employee competence development

The employees' up-to-date and work oriented competences form the basis of learning outcomes based training. It is important that the employees are provided with opportunities for the versatile development of their skills.

Education provider's self-assessment			
	Completed measures	Measures under preparation	Planned measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An employee training process has been defined ■ A method is in place for the assessment and development of the employees' pedagogical competences ■ A strategy-based competence analysis has been performed in the organisation ■ Strategy-based, individual development and training plans have been compiled ■ The training provider has arranged appropriate induction to ensure that teachers have sufficient capabilities for the implementation of the curriculum. 			

Examples

- Competence analyses (for example, the Oskar & Osma project)
- Employee training:
 - learning outcomes based approach and the assessment of learning and learning outcomes
 - Information on learning outcomes based education and guidance from various perspectives: different learning environments (co-operatives, young entrepreneurs' programmes, workshops), individual study pathways (such as 'My Own Pathway to Internationality' and 'My Own Pathway to Entrepreneurship'), modulation models
 - The 'Pedagogical Top Experts' training in a learning outcomes based approach and the assessment of learning and learning outcomes
 - The revolution of competences: progress by qualification unit, modulation support and ECVET news by unit

- Education in working life pedagogics; planning and assessment of education in cooperation with representatives of working life
- Teachers' work placement periods
- Individual educational plan (IEP) workshops
- Training in individual and flexible study pathways

Implementation of a communications plan

Education provider's self-assessment			
Implementation of a communications plan	Approved	Under preparation	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information to students enabling them to make decisions on individual and flexible study pathways, and to understand the possible consequences of these decisions for their future careers ■ The transfer from subject-based thinking to vocational skills requirements and competence objectives and to activities based on learning outcomes ■ The transfer to the provision of qualification units based on the operational entities of working life (taking account of assessment targets and criteria) as well as activities based on the demonstration of learning outcomes ■ The transfer from credit-based thinking to competence points ■ National and international mobility opportunities ■ Communications by target group ■ personnel, students and their families, working life ■ Cooperation with other stakeholder groups and communicating on responsibilities. 			

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A game-based steering tool to support the adoption of flexible study pathways; students transferring from basic education as the target group

3 A checklist for the provision of learning outcomes based education

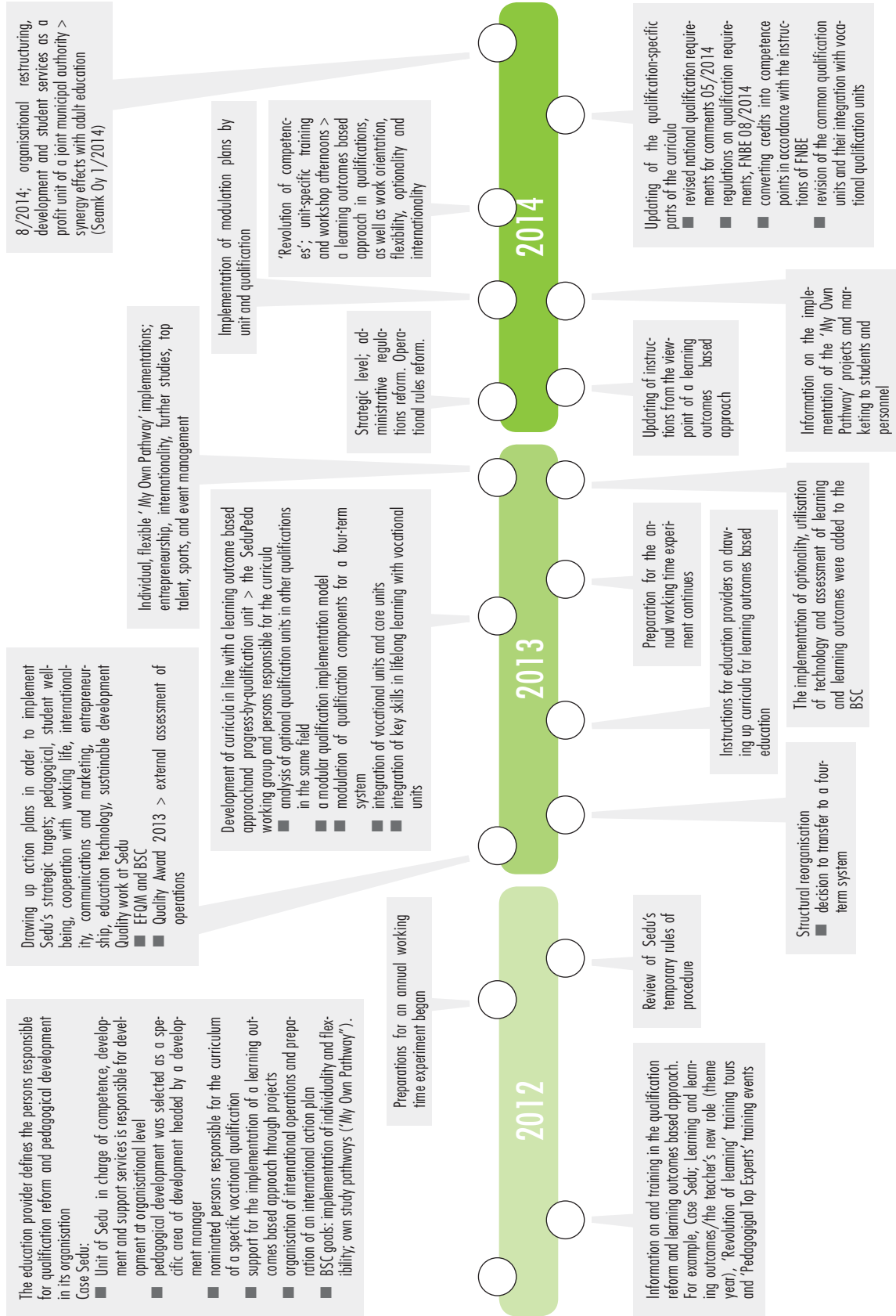
	Questions to ponder	Next measures
<p>The common part of the curriculum, qualification-specific parts of the curricula and individual study plans</p>	<p>How do we ensure that the common part of the education provider's curriculum has been updated as required by the qualification reforms?</p> <p>How do we ensure that the qualification-specific parts of the curricula have been updated as required by the qualification reforms? What about the plans for the assessment of learning and learning outcomes?</p> <p>How will our curricula be modelled as required by the qualification reforms, and how will we provide the related instructions? How have we assigned responsibilities for updating the curricula?</p> <p>Do our curricula enable different methods and times for acquiring competences?</p> <p>How does working and business life participate in the compilation of curricula? What about students or other education providers?</p> <p>How do we assess the degree of learning outcomes based approach in our curricula and education provision?</p> <p>How do we ensure that individually acquired competences are approved as part of a qualification through our validation and recognition procedure?</p> <p>How do we assess and develop the validation and recognition of learning outcomes?</p> <p>How do we ensure that an individual study plan be drawn up for all students?</p> <p>How do we ensure that students can make individual choices and achieve individual competences in accordance with the national qualification requirements?</p> <p>How do we enable the making of individual choices in practice as part of education provision?</p>	


	Questions to ponder	Next measures
<p>Learning outcomes based learning guidance and learning environments</p>	<p>How do we implement learning guidance and assessment in a learning outcomes based manner in support of the achievement of vocational skills requirements in qualification units?</p> <p>How do we shift our focus from a subject-, content- and time-based approach to a learning outcomes based approach?</p> <p>How do we integrate the common units with vocational units?</p> <p>How do we ensure that work orientation is taken into account in the provision of each unit?</p> <p>How do we implement learning based on the competence entities of working life in practice?</p> <p>How do we shift our focus from teaching to learning and to the student achieving the competences needed in working life?</p> <p>How do we prepare for the transfer from credits to competence points in vocational upper secondary education and training? This will affect education providers' curricula, individual study plans and the planning of teacher's work, among other things.</p> <p>How do we support teamwork skills and collaboration among teachers?</p> <p>How do we promote the provision of individual and flexible study pathways to students?</p> <p>How do we ensure opportunities for national and international mobility during studies?</p> <p>How do we utilise learning environments and methods that support a learning outcomes based approach in education and guidance?</p> <p>How do our facilities support a learning outcomes based approach?</p> <p>Do our training provision plans enable modern learning methods?</p> <p>Does our allocation of human resources support the development of learning environments and versatile operational models?</p>	

	Questions to ponder	Next measures
Validation and recognition of learning outcomes and the assessment of learning and learning outcomes	<p>Do our guidelines for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes support a learning outcomes based approach, and do they cover national and international mobility?</p> <p>How well does the common part of the curriculum and the guidelines for the assessment of the qualification-specific parts of the curricula describe the concepts and methods for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes and the assessment of learning and learning outcomes?</p> <p>How do we as education providers ensure that the assessment capabilities of working and business life are updated in order to support a learning outcomes based approach?</p> <p>How does our assessment of learning outcomes support the student's learning? Does it enhance the student's self-assessment capabilities and provide information on his/her competences?</p> <p>Does our student administration system support validation and recognition (for example, the digital individual study plan, eHOPS)?</p>	
Employee competence development	<p>Has the implementation of a learning outcomes based approach been taken into account in our employee training?</p> <p>How do we assess and develop our employees' pedagogical competences?</p> <p>How do we plan our employee development and training?</p> <p>How do we as an education provider ensure induction in such a manner that teachers have sufficient assessment capabilities in support of the implementation of the curriculum and a learning outcomes based approach?</p> <p>How do we as an education provider ensure sufficient working life competence among our employees?</p>	
Communications	<p>How do we implement a learning outcomes based approach in our communications to employees, students and their families, working and business life and other stakeholder groups?</p> <p>How do we guide our students towards making well-informed decisions on individual and flexible study pathways and the resulting career paths?</p> <p>How do we implement the opportunities for national and international mobility in our communications?</p>	

Guidelines for a learning outcomes based approach - Vocational Education Centre Sedu

Appendix Guidelines for a learning outcomes based approach - Vocational Education Centre Sedu



The background of the page is a vibrant green color, transitioning from a darker shade at the bottom to a lighter shade at the top. The design features several overlapping, curved, semi-transparent green shapes that create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized landscape or abstract waves. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

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