Pupil/students assessment

Competence assessment plan

Assessment of competence is systematic and planned work. The VET provider prepares a competence assessment plan as a part of its quality assurance system. Competence assessment plans are prepared by the respective education provider for each training programme or qualification. The plan details the guidelines and procedures adopted by the education provider regarding the implementation of competence assessment. The plan includes among other things how the following aspects are carried out (who does what, how, where it is registered and how the student, staff and stakeholders as teachers, guidance and counselling staff and assessors of competence are informed); recognition of prior learning; demonstration of competence; ensuring skills before the demonstration of competence; assessment, certificates; preparatory programmes and monitoring the implementation of the plan itself.

The competence assessment plan is used by teachers, guidance personnel and assessors of competence. The feasibility of the plan is monitored and assessed. It is part of the quality assurance system of the VET provider. The plan is attached to the application for a licence to provide VET.

Assessment is based on demonstrated competence

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.

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.

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.

On programmes leading to upper secondary vocational qualifications, students’ learning and its
development as well as the competence acquired as a result of learning are assessed throughout the period of study. Assessment always involves students’ individual self-assessment.

Students’ learning and competence are always assessed in terms of the vocational skills requirements and assessment criteria determined within the relevant National Qualification Requirement.

Vocational skills are primarily demonstrated in practical work situations at workplaces in competence tests. Competences are assessed as per unit of a qualification. In a competence test, the student’s competence is assessed by a teacher and a representative of working life together. Working and business life is given a strong role in assuring the quality of skills: a representative of working life is one of the two assessors, and working life committees ensure the quality of vocational skills at national level.

Scale of assessment

Students’ learning is assessed by giving verbal or written feedback on the progress of their studies. Assessment of competence forms the basis for awarding grades for all qualification modules on students’ certificates, using the following five-step grading scale:

- Satisfactory 1-2,
- Good 3-4, and
- Excellent 5

Rectification of assessment

Students have the right to know the assessment criteria applied to them. A student not satisfied with the assessment may request rectification from the assessors within 14 days since he /she was informed of the assessment. If a student is not satisfied with the aforementioned decision, he / she has to make a request for rectification from the working life committee within 14 days of having had the possibility of receiving the decision. The committee may make a request for reassessment in cases where the decision seems to be incorrect.

Progression of Pupils/Students

In school-based vocational education and training, studies have traditionally been organised in year classes. However, the aim is to discard this tradition and the tendency is towards providing students with advancement opportunities that are as individual as possible.

There are various ways of promoting students' opportunities for organising their studies individually. Recognition of prior learning aims to shorten the duration of education and to avoid overlaps in education. The modularity of the qualifications, in turn, increases options; the qualifications consist of large units, which the students may partially choose themselves and complete in the manner best suited to them. The modular qualification structure increases flexibility and options and makes it easier to get credit for earlier studies and competence. The modular structure also makes it easier to supplement the qualifications.

Teachers work together with their students to draw up personal competence development plans, on the basis of which the students themselves can partially decide when, how and in which order they study. As the aim is to study without division into year classes, the institutions provide students with opportunities to progress according to their individual abilities and according to their personal competence development plans in different groups. Instruction may also be organised flexibly in the evenings or during the weekends as well as during the summer holidays.
Instruction not tied to year classes requires effective guidance counselling, as students do not necessarily have their own class or group and drawing up personal competence development plans may be demanding and complicated. Holders of upper secondary vocational qualifications or further and specialist qualifications are eligible for further studies at universities and universities of applied sciences. Natural study tracks for further studies for holders of upper secondary vocational qualifications include universities of applied sciences, where just below a third of new entrants have completed such qualifications. At present, university entrants mainly come from general upper secondary schools but the vocational track is another possibility.

Certification

The certification and the content of the qualification are regulated by the Vocational Education and Training Act 531/2017 and Decree 673/2017 as well as the National Qualification Requirements and other regulations of the Finnish National Board of Education. Since January 2018, acceptable performances are graded on the scale of excellent (5), good (4-3) and satisfactory (2-1), according to Decree 673/2017. Qualification certificates are awarded by the education provider/vocational institution.

A qualification certificate for the vocational qualification is awarded upon completion of all compulsory and optional study units (a total of 180 competence points) included in the student’s personal competence development plan. The assessment is carried out by the teachers and the representants of working life.

Once students have completed all units included in a qualification to an acceptable standard, they receive a qualification certificate.

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