Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Responsible bodies


The Austrian Federal Minister for Family and Youth at Federal Chancellery [3] is responsible for youth welfare laws, policies for child-minders, family allowances and childcare benefits. In line with the Barcelona objective of the European Union, the Federal Government and the provinces agreed to promote the availability of childcare facilities.

The provinces [4] are responsible for quality assurance in the ECEC sector, they organise and carry out quality checks in the kindergarten sector through the office of a kindergarten inspector (Kindergarteninspektor/in).

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

As institutional childcare forms part of the provinces’ tasks, there are many different approaches and methods in the field of quality assurance in the ECEC sector in addition to the procedures commonly applied in all provinces (visits to childcare facilities by professionally qualified inspectors). One first attempt to set nationwide quality standards was made in 2009 with the cross-provincial education framework plan for elementary education establishments, which is not legally binding however.

External Quality Assurance

Locations are visited on average once or twice per year by an inspector. If complaints are submitted, non-routine inspections may occur. Inspectors may access the building and review operational records, act as primary assessors of quality and indicate quality shortcomings. Services have to fulfil standards defined by the provincial law concerning size and organisation of indoor and outdoor space, equipment, sanitary facilities and suitability of staff. If these standards are not fulfilled during the accreditation process, institutions are required to upgrade their standards. Already existing accreditation might be withdrawn in case of non-compliance.

Until 2009 no nationwide quality assurance measures had been implemented in the ECEC sector as childcare is the task of the provincial governments. In 2009, however, a cross-provincial education framework plan for elementary education establishments for children between the ages of 0 and 6 years was introduced in Austria (cf. ‘Bildungsrahmenplan’ [5]). This plan, which was developed on behalf of the nine Austrian provinces by the Charlotte Bühler Institute for Practice-Oriented
Infant Research [6] in Vienna, describes uniform principles of elementary teaching in crèches [7] and kindergartens [8]. The plan has been implemented since 2009 in all provinces [9] in the area of elementary education institutions in the form of different measures.

Also in the area of applied research, Austria continually takes different measures for quality assurance in the ECEC sector. In the provinces Vienna, Lower Austria, Carinthia and Tyrol, this is done, among other measures, as part of the study “Daily Routine in Kindergartens [10]”, which is carried out on behalf of the Chamber of Labour [11] by the Austrian Institute for Children's Rights and Parent Education [12] (IKEB) and the Austrian Institute for Family Studies [13] (ÖIF). At the focus of this study there is the question about the challenges arising in everyday working life from the viewpoint of elementary school teachers and assistants/helpers in kindergartens and how these challenges are tackled.

Training in the field of elementary education is currently undergoing changes due to the restructuring of teacher training [14]. At Graz University [15], for example, a chair for early childhood education was set up in 2009, with a bachelor’s and master’s degree programme in early childhood education scheduled for 2015. The first Austrian bachelor’s degree programme in elementary education will be launched in Vienna in the winter semester 2014/15. This will have a duration of seven semesters and graduates will be awarded the degree “Bachelor of Arts: Education +”, with the course initiated by the provider organisation Children in Vienna [16] in cooperation with Koblenz University of Applied Sciences [17]. New teacher training is strengthening the professionalisation of training by safeguarding the previous quality level in all cases, increasing it where necessary, and differentiating between different functions of educational work.

Internal Quality Assurance

The general educational objectives in the relevant curriculum of kindergarten training explicitly mention that the graduates have to prove competences in the field of quality management (quality development and quality assurance). Self-evaluation is mentioned as a major part of quality development. At the individual level, teachers are obliged to evaluate their teaching activities based on feedback of pupils, parents, and other teachers.

In Austria, different approaches towards quality assurance in ECEC are pursued depending on the province and location. In Upper Austria, for example, the team responsible for the educational supervision of childcare institutions has developed new instruments of supervision management. One of them is for the self-evaluation of the teaching quality in childcare establishments [18] and builds on the above-mentioned education framework plan. The self-evaluation instruments were tested between January and the autumn of 2013 at a total of 20 kindergartens, crèches and day-care centres. Then evaluation was carried out by the Charlotte Bühler Institute [6]. The nationwide implementation which followed was promoted within the framework of eleven major events in which all heads of Upper Austrian childcare institutions took part. To ensure in-depth training, the province of Upper Austria offers specialist further training measures that started in the working year 2014/15. By providing the foundations for academically founded, location-specific quality development, a new, innovative pathway for childcare has been taken in Upper Austria. The self-evaluation instruments are designed in a way that the educational quality of the childcare establishment can also be evaluated within the framework of an external evaluation.

Quality Assurance in Primary Education and Secondary Education

This chapter aims to describe the QA measures of primary and secondary schools. Some of these
measures are implemented at both educational levels or in general and VET school types. These measures are explained in this section. The following sub-chapters (A to C) deal with the measures that are only applied in the general education, the VET and the dual training sector.

The measures used across education sectors and school types include:

- School inspections
- National educational standards
- Standardised, competence-oriented matriculation (and diploma) examinations
- Reform of teacher training (‘New teacher training’)
- National Report on Education

### School inspections

The **2017 Education Reform Act** defines a comprehensive framework on school quality and introduces a new system of school inspection and school evaluation.

The provincial **Boards of Education** established with effect from 1 January 2019 are subdivided into an **Administrative Department** and a **Pedagogical Department** responsible for school supervision and quality management. One of the main tasks of the Pedagogical Departments is to steer quality management and work on quality development, especially of the school supervision system to be set up by **regional teams in the education regions**. With the school year 2019/2020 the quality management for schools will be put on a completely new footing. School inspectors appointed for certain school types then no longer exist, instead they give way to the term “school quality manager”. The school quality managers form teams of equal rank. The focus of school supervision will be even more on responsibility in quality management, including support for school development in schools. Education controlling is very important, i.e. ongoing monitoring and analysis of whether specified educational goals are being achieved.

### National educational standards

#### General education

An **amendment to the School Education Act** in August 2008 created the legal basis for the introduction of educational standards. The **relevant ordinance** specifies in individual subjects what pupils should be able to do and what they should know after years 4 and 8. The standards were introduced at primary schools and lower secondary schools as well as academic secondary schools as of 1 January 2009. Educational standards were laid down for the following subjects:

- Year 4 (primary school): German, reading, writing, mathematics.
- Year 8 (new secondary school, academic secondary school): German, first modern foreign language (English), mathematics.

The educational standards lay down the competences pupils should have acquired with lasting effect by a given school year. They focus on key areas of a subject and describe the expected learning outcomes, defining subject-related basic competences which are important for the further school-based education or vocational training. The introduction of educational standards aims to improve the basic competences of pupils in selected subjects and ensure lasting educational returns. This is to be achieved, above all, through new teaching methods and outcome orientation in the planning and implementation of teaching (orienting function of the standards), improved abilities of teachers in the fields of diagnostics and support (support function), and through feedback of the performance level and targeted location-specific quality development (evaluation function). The regular examination of
the standards safeguards and optimises the quality of teaching; teachers get feedback about the learning outcomes of pupils.

**Vocational education and training (VET)**

The educational standards in the VET sector focus on the **final qualifications** of VET schools and VET colleges and describe the core competences pupils (should) achieve by the end of a training programme. The educational standards are a proof of qualifications for the performance portfolio of a graduate at the interface to the world of work or a further (tertiary) educational establishment and they enable learning outcomes to be presented and compared at the national and European level in the best possible manner.

Since 2004 the **Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research** [1] has been working together with working groups of teachers on educational standards for all school types and also standards for specific school types. This development process is supported academically and evaluated externally by two universities as part of a piloting phase. In this phase, the developed educational standards are tested at selected pilot schools before being published on this website [25].

In the VET sector it was decided not to have the educational standards (attainment of the standards) externally examined. The educational standards in VET are therefore not examples of examinations but **aim to provide teachers and learners with orientation about the respective performance level**.

But the generation of new competence-oriented curricula in VET describes, in framework curricula, the competences to be achieved, which in turn reply to the educational standards. In all curricula, the descriptors of the educational standards are allocated to the learning and teaching objectives of the individual syllabus areas. Therefore these objectives build on the developed competence models, follow the approach of **learning outcome orientation** and also contain social and personal learning objectives.

In addition, since 2015/16, all pupils have to carry out standardised, competence-oriented assignments in the new **matriculation and diploma exam** [19] in the subjects of German, English, applied mathematics and second modern foreign language based on the curriculum of the respective school type and on these educational standards on the same examination date. All contents and assessment criteria for the correction are developed by experts on the subjects and specified by **BMBWF** [1]. All the other educational standards mainly serve to promote competence-oriented teaching. They should be seen as suggestions and orientation in teaching but should also be used as a means of self-evaluation and therefore help improve the quality of the entire VET system. They define objectives for the pedagogical and didactic work and formulate requirements on problem-solving capacities and on teaching and learning.

Success with the implementation of these educational standards will be guaranteed by applying systematic **project management** and a project group which comprises representatives of the educational administration, academics and teachers.

**Standardised, competence-oriented matriculation (and diploma) examinations (Reifeprüfung/Reife- und Diplomprüfung)**

The introduction of the **standardised, competence-oriented matriculation examination/matriculation and diploma examination** [26] creates standardised basic competences, the same framework conditions for all pupils, and a higher degree of objectification. In
the school year 2013/14, the new matriculation examination was tested at academic secondary schools (AHS), in 2014/15 it was at VET colleges (BHS). Since 2015/16 the new matriculation examination is compulsory at both school types. It is designed according to the three-pillar model, which means that it comprises a written pre-academic paper (AHS) or diploma work (BHS), standardised written exams, and oral exams.

Reform of teacher training

The reform of teacher training is one of the government's key education policy projects and covers training and further training for all those working in the teaching profession. In a broad-based development process carried out in consultation with all parties involved a future-oriented model was developed (2009 – 2012) and is going to be implemented.

The new teacher training scheme provides for the following cornerstones:

- Training is in principle geared towards the pupils’ age brackets (primary level, secondary level)
- Bachelor’s degree programme, eight semesters, 240 ECTS points
- Master’s degree programme, two to three semesters, 60 to 90 ECTS points. The master’s degree programmes can be completed on a part-time basis
- One-year professional entry phase (induction), supported by experienced pedagogues as mentors. During the induction phase, students can complete the master’s degree programmes
- Supplementary study programmes for lateral entrants, with credits awarded for subject-related and pedagogical competences
- Aptitude and admission procedure, which comprises several stages, at training institutions
- Cooperation of university colleges of teacher education and universities while observing their existing spheres of competence.

The switch to bachelor’s degree programmes in the primary sector should be completed as of 2015/16, in the secondary sector as of 2016/17. The new master’s degree programmes should begin by the winter semester 2019/20 at the latest.

With the new teacher training the following aims should be reached:

- Quality enhancement: The new training scheme aims to increase the training level by providing more academically founded theory and practice in teacher training
- Quality assurance guaranteed by an independent quality assurance council
- Competence orientation
- Mobility and internationalisation
- Permeability
- Enhancement of attractiveness: The switch to the Bologna system makes the teaching profession more easily accessible and more attractive for lateral entrants
- Equivalence: Due to joint quality assurance and cooperation ventures all teachers will obtain standardised and equivalent qualifications.

A quality assurance council [27] was set up to provide quality- and needs-oriented academic support for the development of the new teacher training programmes and to safeguard the occupational law-specific requirements of the new scheme. This council comprises six members, who must be experts on the national and/or international higher education system and have relevant knowledge of the Austrian school system. Its tasks include:

- observing and analysing the further development of teacher training in Austria and
drawing up opinions about the curricula regarding the extent to which they portray professional requirements
   ○ (competence catalogue
   ○ qualification profile
   ○ recruitment requirements).

National Report on Education

Since it came out for the first time in 2009, the National Report on Education (NBB) has been published every three years (last edition Vol.1 [20] + Vol.2 [28]). The NBB aims to provide bases for the educational policy discourse in Austria. Specialist, practice-oriented educational policy is oriented towards data-based and fact-based system knowledge and understanding and needs regular reports about the school sector. The Report on Education especially targets members of the National Parliamentary Council and of the Federal Parliamentary Council.

The NBB supplies relevant data, analyses and background reports for school development which can explain the distribution of competences or qualifications in the population as well as socioeconomic and democratic consequences. Selected topics are supplemented by in-depth analyses to ensure that readers can interpret key performance indicators and the observed changes over time with the necessary background knowledge.

The NBB consists of two volumes: a volume of indicators and a volume with analyses. Both volumes complement one another in terms of content: Volume 1 presents data and indicators related to the Austrian education system; it compiles data from many different, relevant data sources and thus provides an overall picture of the statistical knowledge on the education sector. Volume 2 contains ten contributions by leading educational scientists on key development issues and challenges of the Austrian education system.

A. General education

Responsible bodies

• Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1]: BMBWF is responsible for the external evaluation of schools in Austria conducted by the school inspectorate which is established by the Federal School Inspection Act [29].
• Boards of Education [22]: The school inspections are exercised by school inspection officials affiliated to the boards of education [22] and to educational regions (Bildungsregionen) as well as by teachers upon whom inspection duties have been conferred.
• Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School System [30]: BIFIE of evidence collected, the decision-makers of Austrian education policy.

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

The major methods of quality assurance which are implemented at Austrian schools in the general education area include the following:

• Regular school inspections by professionally qualified staff.
• The educational standards which have been used since early 2009 and specify in individual school subjects what pupils have to know by a given school year.
• The implementation of a standardised, competence-oriented matriculation examination [31].
‘School Quality in General Education’ [32] initiative pursues the objective of contributing to the best possible learning conditions for pupils at general education schools by conducting quality development and quality assurance in the field of teaching. After the SQA pilot year 2012/13, SQA was implemented nationwide in the general education school sector in 2013/14.

The National Report on Education [20], which BIFIE [30] publishes every three years on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1], offers data, analyses and background reports on school development, thus supplying important empirical bases particularly for the tasks of school quality assurance.

The Education Reform Act 2017 [21] stipulates to develop a uniform QM system for all types of schools in Austria. The law provides for an implementation of the common QM at the beginning of the school year 2020/21. The QM systems SQA and QIBB remain valid during the transition.

External Quality Assurance

The School Quality in General Education (SQA) initiative: Introduced in 2012, SQA is designed to ensure optimum learning conditions for students at school by improving teaching quality and quality assurance in general.

In a coordinated interaction of all levels of the school system, SQA aims to set up development processes which range from the formulation of needs and an analysis of the current situation, agreements on objectives, implementation measures, and success control, to conclusions and further plans. The goal is always to have concrete, needs-oriented development projects which the pupils can also attain.

SQA defines two supporting structural elements which are situated at or between all levels of the school system: development plans and periodical review and objective-setting discussions. The latter in particular are characterised by dialogical leadership and a culture of agreements. They are held in an atmosphere of fundamental appreciation and on an equal footing with the interlocutor. Their binding character is established by putting down the contents of the discussions in writing. The bases of these discussions are the development plans and other relevant documents, which are made available to the managers in advance.

Other measures (for more information cf. the text above):

- School inspections
- National educational standards
- Standardised matriculation examinations
- Reform of teacher training
- National Report on Education

Internal Quality Assurance

SQA-online [33]: The schools’ self-evaluation is backed by the web-based support system SQA-online of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1], which is an evaluation instrument for teaching and school quality for the fourth grades of new secondary school, general secondary school, and academic secondary school (year 8). SQA-online can provide indications of strengths and weaknesses at the school location. Participation in SQA-online is voluntary. It allows the pedagogically responsible staff of a school to obtain feedback from pupils by using a questionnaire which focuses on 14 aspects of school quality. Therefore the survey provides an important basis for the development work at the individual school.
B. Vocational Education and Training: VET schools and colleges

Responsible bodies

- **Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research** [1]: The former General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and School Sport (or: GD VET) (now: Directorate-General General and Vocational Education) fulfils the tasks of school administration for the VET school sector which, due to legal provisions, fall within the sphere of competence of the Ministry. This includes the following areas of school-based education, among others: pedagogical matters and occupation-specific issues (e.g. curriculum development); continuing and further training of teachers; questions related to location and facilities; quality assurance; school development; education research; international cooperation ventures, etc.

- **Boards of Education** [22]: They are responsible for executing laws and for school supervision.

- **Principals**: They are responsible for managing the individual school and for its quality management.

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

- The VET Quality Initiative QIBB [34] is a strategy launched by the former GD VET of BMBWF [35] to implement systematic quality management in the Austrian VET school sector.

- In analogy to the general education school sector, there are also educational standards in VET. They lay down the core competences which pupils have to have acquired with lasting effect by the end of the respective programme as part of their training. In addition, educational standards make a significant contribution towards supporting competence-oriented teaching design in the VET sector.

- **Competence-oriented teaching** at VET schools and colleges takes account of the fact that, in the future, acquired competences will be seen even more strongly as a yardstick for the success of learning processes. They play a major role in the Austrian VET sector as they are a prerequisite for the ability to exercise an occupation and the ability to take part in HE study programmes.

- The Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training, ARQA-VET [36], was set up in 2007. It fulfils the task of establishing networks between actors and institutions of the Austrian VET sector and plays an active mediating role from and to the European level (EQAVET [37]).

- Issues of quality assurance and quality management at school level are regulated in the School Education Act [38] and form part of the tasks of the school management.

The Education Reform Act 2017 [21] stipulates to develop a uniform QM system for all types of schools in Austria. The law provides for an implementation of the common QM at the beginning of the school year 2020/21. The QM systems SQA and QIBB remain valid during the transition.

External Quality Assurance

The VET Quality Initiative [39] – QIBB: QIBB is a strategy launched in 2004 by the former GD VET of BMBWF [35] to implement systematic quality management in the Austrian VET school sector. The objectives of QIBB are the assurance and further development of school and teaching quality as well as the quality of administrative services on the governance levels of the Federal Government, provincial government, and school. As regards its objectives, guiding principles and structure, QIBB corresponds to the model of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET [37]).
QIBB aims to support and encourage the autonomous and professional work of actors at every system level. Both educational and administrative activities are at the focus here. The quality management instruments provided in QIBB aim to help to systematically observe, evaluate and reflect on the quality of processes and results to ensure that well-founded measures can be taken based on data.

Evaluation carried out as part of QIBB is mainly in the form of self-evaluation. On the one hand, the work includes individual feedback, which serves to reflect on and further develop the teachers’ and managers’ professional activities. On the other hand, the work covers system feedback, which serves to optimise teaching and administrative processes at organisation and system level. For the evaluation an internet platform is available where evaluation instruments (questionnaires, survey grids) and tools for standardised data evaluations can be accessed.

Reporting in QIBB comprises school, provincial and federal quality reports. On the one hand, the quality report has the function of a working document that aims to support the systematic planning, control and documentation of quality development within the respective sphere of responsibility. On the other hand, it fulfils the function of informing and reporting to the superior level. The quality reports form one of the bases of the review and objective-setting discussions. These are talks between managers at different hierarchical levels to take stock and agree on development and implementation objectives.

‘Peer review in QIBB’ has been offered for VET schools and colleges within the framework of QIBB since 2009. The peer review is an evaluation procedure which is applied for the quality and school development at the school location. Here evaluation is conducted by a group of external experts (peers). Peers are people who are not employed at the school which undergoes the evaluation process but are familiar with the practical area ‘VET schools and colleges’ and have professional expertise in this field. They are invited by the school to evaluate particular quality areas defined by the school. When the peer review process is completed, the school gets oral feedback and a written report. The decision to conduct a peer review is taken by the school management.

Competence-oriented teaching at VET schools and colleges: In the future, acquired competences will be seen even more strongly as a yardstick for the success of learning processes. They play a major role in the VET sector as they are a prerequisite for the ability to exercise an occupation and the ability to take part in HE study programmes. Competence comprises a network of connected aspects such as knowledge, abilities, understanding, know-how, acting, experience and motivation, and is therefore the requirement for overcoming a specific problem situation.

Due to the paradigm shift from subject- to competence-oriented teaching, pupils learn how to transfer factual knowledge into competent action and how to use existing knowledge when they take certain steps. The goal is to further develop learning and teaching towards competence orientation, which is to become a key element of the planning and realisation of teaching and of performance assessment. New forms of teaching and learning should be at the focus here. Competence-oriented teaching is to be seen as an overall concept for developing and safeguarding the quality of school work.

Systematic project management and a project group comprising representatives of the educational administration, university colleges of teacher education, academics and teachers aim to pave the way towards a competence-oriented teaching design.

Current measures and activities:

- The starting point is the educational standards in VET: They provide teaching staff with an
instrument to orient their work even more towards competences.

- Development of competence- and learning outcome-oriented curricula: In addition to the educational standards, they constitute another major element to encourage the competence orientation of teaching. They provide orientation about which competences should be obligatory in educational pathways and they form a framework for assessing the outcomes achieved.

- Development of the training programme “Competence-oriented teaching” in cooperation with the Centre East (Upper Austrian University College of Teacher Education) and the Centre West (Tyrol University College of Teacher Education). The major contents of this training programme are the definition of terms, the use of educational standards to encourage competence-oriented teaching, performance assessments and the preparation of additional examples for classroom use. In addition, a wide range of further training programmes for teachers are offered for individual or several schools: In particular, school working groups are working on pools of topics and the competence-oriented assignments for the oral matriculation and diploma examination. These in turn are oriented towards the competence model of the educational standards.

- PR activities (information events, folders)

Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ARQA-VET): The EQAVET Recommendation provides for the establishment of national reference points for quality assurance in the VET sector. With ARQA-VET, Austria has had such an institution since 2007. The tasks of ARQA-VET include creating networks between actors and institutions of the Austrian VET sector, information and communication from and to the European level, supporting QIBB and the implementation of EQAVET at the national level. ARQA-VET is the point of contact and service institution for all issues related to quality in VET.

Other measures (for more information cf. the text above):

- School inspections
- National educational standards
- Standardised, competence-oriented matriculation and diploma examinations (Reife- und Diplomprüfung)
- New regulation of teacher training
- National Report on Education

Internal Quality Assurance

In accordance with the School Education Act the “school administration and management, quality management, school and curriculum development, leadership and human resource development (...)” are tasks of the head teacher. Internal evaluation should cover teaching and learning, the classroom environment and the environment of the school in general, the partnerships and external relations of schools, school management, the professionalism of staff and staff development. Furthermore, indicators expressing input, processes and results are applied. The results of the standard tests are also discussed as standard testing has control function with results- and effect-based education management, shows the implementation of key competences and reveals problem areas.

C. Vocational Education and Training: Dual VET (apprenticeship training)

Responsible bodies

At the federal level, it is mainly the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research which is concerned with all matters of apprenticeship training. The legal bases for dual training are laid down in the Vocational Training Act. The training regulations for the individual
apprenticeship occupations are issued by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1] on the basis of expert opinions submitted by the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship [23], which comprises representatives of the social partners.

At the provincial level [4], quality assurance is above all the responsibility of the apprenticeship offices. These are the vocational training authority of the first instance and are located in the economic chambers in the individual provinces. They examine (jointly with representatives of the regional chambers of labour) the training companies’ suitability to provide apprenticeship training in subject-specific and staff-related respects; in addition, they are responsible for examining and recording apprenticeship contracts.

**Approaches and methods for quality assurance**

Quality assurance in the dual training sector focuses on many different levels: starting with the development of job profiles (the in-company curricula) and training regulations as well as the authorisation of companies to provide training, the qualification of IVET [46] trainers, on to the continual safeguarding of the company’s training quality, the quality of training at part-time vocational school (as part of QIBB, cf. the text above) and the final exams, but also of the associated administrative system.

In 2013 the social partners launched the Quality Management in Apprenticeship [47] initiative, which will set up a comprehensive QM system.

**External Quality Assurance**

**Assessment procedures for training companies**: Companies that want to train apprentices are obliged, before recruiting them, to submit an application for determination of suitability for apprenticeship training (request for declaration) to the local competent apprenticeship office of the Federal Economic Chamber. The apprenticeship office will examine jointly with the Chamber of Labour if the company meets the prerequisites for apprenticeship training, that is if the knowledge and skills required by the job profile can be taught at the training location and whether there are suitably qualified trainers in the company. In this work it is supported by the Chamber of Labour in the respective province. Where the preconditions have been met, the company will be issued a ‘declaration’ which authorises it to recruit and train apprentices.

**Quality of IVET [46] trainers**: To safeguard the quality of company-based training, the work of IVET trainers requires a previous occupation-specific/professional qualification that is relevant for the respective apprenticeship and proof of knowledge and skills related to vocational pedagogy and law. This knowledge is proven in the course of the IVET trainer exam. The examination is waived for people who have completed the forty-hour IVET trainer course.

In addition, there exists a wide variety of CET programmes for IVET trainers, ranging from deepening specialist competences, expanding teaching skills, onto strengthening social skills and leadership qualities. Furthermore, some companies have in-house CET programmes for IVET trainers. Many offers are also available in adult learning establishments.

**The quality of the apprenticeship-leave exam [48]**: The apprenticeship-leave exam aims to establish whether the exam candidate has acquired the skills and competences required for the respective apprenticeship and is able to carry out the activities particular for the occupation himself or herself in an appropriate manner. The apprenticeship offices are responsible for organising the apprenticeship-leave exam. They set up the examination committee, which is made up of a chairperson and two assessors, who have to furnish proof of legally regulated qualifications and are
themselves active in the training of apprentices. With the establishment of the clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave exam in 2012, an important instrument of quality assurance for the apprenticeship-leave exam has been created. The project comprises issuing a quality seal for suitable examples of examinations, the training of examiners of the apprenticeship-leave exam, and the further development of exam modalities. This aims to guarantee a uniform and valid standard for the apprenticeship-leave exams across Austria.

Safeguarding the training quality at part-time vocational schools [49]: The quality of part-time vocational schools (that is: the school-based part of the dual VET system) is safeguarded and further developed as part of QIBB (cf. the text above). Since the introduction of university colleges of teacher education (PHs) in 2007, subject-related didactics has been taught to part-time vocational school teachers in the form of a bachelor’s degree programme of at least three years’ duration at PHs. The first and third year of the course are completed on a part-time basis, the second is a full-time course. Graduates are awarded the academic degree ‘Bachelor of Education’ (BEd).

Visibility of best-practice examples: The public sector has launched initiatives which particularly aim to make high-quality apprenticeship training visible to the wider public: The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1], for example, awards the prize ‘State-honoured training company’ to training companies for special achievements in apprenticeship training. Criteria for awarding the state prize include: success in apprenticeship-leave exams and in provincial and national competitions; dedicated involvement in the field of career guidance; cooperation ventures entered into by the training company; and its in-house and external CET programmes for apprentices and trainers. In addition, every two years the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1] awards the state prize ‘Best training companies – Fit for future’, which was developed by ibw Austria [50] - Research & Development in VET. The objective of the state prize is to improve quality, innovation and sustainability in apprenticeship training.

Quality Management in Apprenticeship [47]: This initiative was launched by the social partners in 2013. It aims to ensure that even more young people complete an apprenticeship and pass the apprenticeship-leave exam [48] – without lowering the level of the exams. QML builds on annually evaluated indicators which supply information about the attainment of two major targets: the share of apprenticeship dropouts and the share of apprenticeship-leave exams passed successfully. The set of data is supplied by a report that is drawn up annually by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and includes rates of apprenticeship graduates, the rates of apprentices who sit for the final exam, and success rates of the apprenticeship-leave exam, broken down by apprenticeship occupations and other characteristics.

In the initial phase, the focus is on apprenticeship occupations and sectors with high apprenticeship figures that have the highest dropout rates. In the beginning, in-depth analyses of the occupations concerned are conducted with the responsible professional organisations in order to identify the possible causes (such as topicality and quality of the job profiles/training regulations, suitability/qualification of the apprentices, degree of specialisation, equipment of training companies, quality of company-based training, etc.). Measures are agreed on which address the respective causes and aim to lead to an increase in the apprenticeship success rates without lowering the training quality.

Report on the situation of youth employment and apprenticeship training in Austria: Every other year, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [1] is obliged to submit a report on the situation of youth employment and apprenticeship training in Austria to the National Parliamentary Council. This report represents a regular academic analysis and evaluation of apprenticeship training in Austria, where not only the training itself but also the political measures implemented in the reporting period and subsequent professional success of apprenticeship
graduates are subjected to a **monitoring procedure**. It also examines youth employment itself (and not only in connection with apprenticeship training) in the national and European context. This publication is valuable because it examines not only the level of the education system (apprenticeship training) but also the framework conditions (political measures such as subsidisation schemes for apprenticeship posts) and outcomes (career entry and labour market success). Specifically, the report contains academic studies on various topics such as labour market policy measures for young people and measures to promote dual VET, it also covers information about youth unemployment and VET policies in a European comparison/context, apprenticeship training in Austria, labour market entry after graduation, the requirement for skilled labour and employment prospects.

**Internal Quality Assurance**

**Control by actors of the governance structure**: The governance structure of the apprenticeship system involves many actors (the social partners, ministries, advisory boards, etc.), which strengthens the joint ownership of the system and consequently the sense of responsibility for it. Mutual control within the system constitutes a key aspect of internal quality assurance.

**In-house measures**: Depending on the respective quality management system, every company applies its own measures to guarantee training quality. In their work, companies are provided with support through a large number of information materials and brochures, most of which are published by the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](http://www.bmbiki.gv.at) and the Austrian Economic Chambers. Training companies in Austria are provided with subject-specific and didactic training materials, for example. In addition, there exists a wide range of printed or online products, such as online apprenticeship exchanges to balance supply and demand for apprenticeship posts, recruitment guidelines, which aim to exploit the potential of applicants as best as possible, selection procedures and selection tests for applicants, information websites such as [Ausbilder](http://ausbilder.bmbaki.gv.at) (cf. also Qualität Lehre [51]).