Curriculum, subjects, number of hours

Also in upper secondary education, the government, schools and teachers together shape the curriculum. Recent criticism created a new dialogue and the necessary to renovate the current curriculum. These sentiments stimulated the origin of a new platform, called ‘Curriculum now’ (in Dutch). Important aspects that gain attention are ICT- literacy, problem solving skills, critical thinking, creativity and the forming of social competences.

At the end of the 3rd year of HAVO and VWO (and in some cases at the end of the 4th year of VWO), pupils choose one of four subject combinations and are often regrouped accordingly.

From the fourth school year of HAVO and VWO the preparation for higher education starts. This phase is arranged according to different profiles. A profile is a coherent program with the following construction:

- A general social and personal preparation
- A general preparation on higher education
- A special preparation for groups related to various studies (of content) in higher education.

The four profile types are:

1. Nature and Technology
2. Nature and Health
3. Economy and Society
4. Culture and Society

Each profile comprises:

- a common component, which is identical for all profiles of the respective school type;
- a sector-specific component, specific for each profile and;
- an optional component.

Since 2015-2016 there is no prescribed or advisory timetable, and no prescribed minimum for the number of teaching hours in each subject. The old norm is replaced by a norm per study field, set in the law ‘Wet modernisering onderwijstijd’ (Law modernisation of instruction time). Schools decide for themselves how these hours should be spread over the school year, as long as they maintain the norm for the hours throughout the whole studies:

- 3700 hours in VMBO
- 4700 hours in HAVO
- 5700 hours in VWO
VMBO curriculum

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) specifies the subjects to be studied by VMBO pupils during the four-year course.

VMBO-theoretical programme (VMBO-T)

- At the end of the second year at the earliest pupils opt for a particular sector and learning pathway.
- Each sector (engineering and technology, care and welfare, business or agriculture) and each learning pathway (the theoretical programme, combined programme, middle-management vocational programme or basic vocational programme) has its own curriculum.

Subjects in the sector-specific component of the theoretical programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and technology</td>
<td>Mathematics and physics &amp; chemistry 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and welfare</td>
<td>Biology and one of mathematics, geography, history or social studies 2 and politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Economics and one of mathematics, French or German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Mathematics and either biology or physics &amp; chemistry 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each subject combination comprises a common component, an optional component, and a sector-specific component. The common component is compulsory for all pupils and comprises:

- Dutch
- English
- Social studies I
- Physical education
- Arts I

Pupils from the combined programme (VMBO-G), the middle-management vocational programme (VMBO-K) and the basic vocational programme (VMBO-B) choose between ten profiles:

1. Building, living and interior (BWI)
2. Producing, installing and energy
3. Mobility and transport
4. Media, design and ICT
5. Maritime and technique
6. Care and welfare
7. Economy and entrepreneurship
8. Hospitality, bakery and recreation
9. Green sector
10. Services and products

Depending on their learning pathway, pupils follow either one or two additional optional subjects:

- two general subjects in the theoretical programme.
- one major vocationally-oriented subject in the basic vocational and middle-management vocational programmes;
- one minor vocationally-oriented subject and one general subject in the combined programme.
Schools providing basic vocational programmes may offer programmes *combining work and study*.

1. Work-study programmes are learning pathways within the basic vocational programmes that include an out-of-school practical component.
2. These programmes are specifically aimed at obtaining a basic qualification at basic vocational level.
3. Pupils must take classes at the least in Dutch and the appropriate vocational subject. They must also make examinations in these subjects. Examinations may also be taken in other subjects, but are not compulsory. Pupils are awarded a special diploma enabling them to go on to related courses at MBO level 2.
4. Different requirements apply for pupils in the lower years who will be going on to work-study programmes.

Since 2014, special skilled labour and technology routes started. With these training routes vmbo schools in the region and mbo institutions created special programmes. This should ease the transition from VMBO to MBO, and encourage more pupils to follow further education and obtain a basic qualification.

**Practical training curriculum**

Practical training focuses on the personal and social skills of pupils. It includes at least Dutch language, arithmetic and mathematics, IT studies and physical education plus subjects that prepare pupils for jobs on the regional labour market. These subjects are chosen by the competent authority (school board) in consultation with the municipal authorities and, through them, local employers.

**ICT in education**

For more information about ICT in secondary education see 6.2

**Educational/vocational guidance and education/employment links**

It is the government’s aim that every school-leaver entering the labour market possesses at least the minimum qualifications for entry to a profession. HAVO provides a general education and is intended to prepare pupils for entry to higher professional education/university of applied sciences (HBO). In practice, however, pupils with HAVO certificates (graduated) also opt to move across into VWO or go on to MBO. The purpose of VWO is to prepare pupils for university entry (WO). However, some pupils with VWO qualifications (graduated) go on to HBO. New subject combinations have been introduced in HAVO and VWO with the aim of improving the interface with higher education.

VMBO is not designed as terminal education but is intended to lay the basis for further education. The majority of pupils with VMBO qualifications go on to MBO. The four learning pathways were introduced in VMBO in an attempt to facilitate the transition to MBO. Given the continuing shortage of skilled personnel on the labour market, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is working with the vocational education sector on measures to make it easier for students to move up through VMBO and MBO to higher professional education (HBO).

Most schools offer career advice from school career advisers about career and jobs possibilities.