



Introduction

This report has been drafted by the EQAVET National Reference Point of Sweden and describes the main quality assurance arrangements in vocational education and training.

SECTION A - DESCRIPTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Initial VET (IVET)

Introduction

There is little distinction between initial vocational education and training and the general school system in Sweden. Upper secondary education entails three years of full-time studies for students 16 to 19 years of age. Adults over 20 years of age are entitled to choose the same vocational courses. From 2011 the vocational programmes in upper secondary school should reflect better the skills needs in the labour market. In addition, there is also some IVET available at folk high schools. Vocational training can also be offered as an active market policy measure for employed individuals registered with the Public Employment Service.

1.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in IVET

- National Framework for quality assurance in initial VET – who is in charge of what? Sweden has a decentralised school system, of which initial VET is an integrated part. The Education Act outlines the responsibilities of national and local Governing Boards for systematic quality assurance and development, which includes work-based learning. Responsibilities of heads and staff in schools as regards this work are also regulated in the curriculum for each type of school. The task of The Swedish National Agency for Education is to support and develop the work carried out by the Governing Boards, principals and staff on systematic quality assurance in accordance with the regulations in the policy documents. The School Inspectorate carries out regular supervision of the work with systematic quality assurance carried out by local actors.

- **Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in initial VET systems**
The Swedish National Agency for Education has a mandate from the Government to continually liaise with stakeholders in joint national programme advisory boards for all vocational programmes within the upper secondary school and corresponding levels for adults. Branch organisations and various vocational boards play an important role in many occupational branches when it comes to work with quality control.
- **Requirements for evaluation and review**
The Swedish National Agency for Education has developed a web-based programme for principals and their staff to use in their work with quality assurance (BRUK). The programme follows the annual cycle for systematic quality work and includes an opportunity to evaluate and develop the education provided. The Swedish National Agency for Education has also adopted regulations and general guidelines to facilitate the work of principals and staff with systematic quality control work.
- **Identification of training needs**
Since autumn 2011 upper secondary IVET has been guided by national programme advisory boards which involve stakeholders and social partners. This should ensure that upper secondary IVET meets industry skills needs more closely. Traditionally, Swedish upper secondary IVET is largely school-based, but should contain at least 15 weeks of workplace learning. Since 2011 apprenticeship has been offered as an alternative pathway in upper secondary education. Earmarked state grants were also introduced in 2011 to support apprenticeship in municipal upper adult education. Therefore, the role of work based training in Swedish VET is increasing significantly and upper secondary vocational education has become more closely linked to working life and training needs of the labour market.
- **Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**
The responsibility for nearly all vocational education in Sweden lies with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment. Legislation, framework and financing originate at national level. Swedish municipalities carry the greatest responsibility for and have the right to arrange vocational education at upper secondary school level. Within vocational education for adults it is possible for municipalities to outsource education to independent providers but only through regulated quality assurance. As regards vocational education for youths, there are also a large number of independent providers who are entitled to offer education approved by the School Inspectorate (Independent schools). The Swedish Public Employment Service gives short vocational courses for unemployed adults. Folk High Schools also offer vocational education, in particular in the field of craftwork.
- **Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)/monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**
In accordance with the Education Act every Governing Board and provider of education has a responsibility to ensure that systematic quality work is carried out. The Swedish National Agency for Education must support principals, providers and personnel and provide opportunities for their development within the field of systematic quality work. The task of the School Inspectorate is to ensure through supervision that this work is carried out in accordance with the intention of the legislation. The Swedish legislation regarding systematic quality work is based on the basic principles of the EQAVET agreement. The Swedish National Agency for Education produce annual reports and statistics at a national level for the monitoring and evaluation of the vocational education

offered at upper secondary school level. The Agency also gathers and publishes statistics and reports the number of pupils and their performance at provider, municipal and national levels, depending on the data, and also provides analytical reports as well as guidance documents that contribute to quality assurance. Validation is regulated in the Education Act. Within vocational education for adults it is stipulated that principals must offer assessment and validation to be eligible for government grants for vocational education.

- How is the quality assurance implementation monitored?
The task of the School Inspectorate is to supervise the systematic quality work.

1.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in IVET

- Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)
In upper secondary school vocational education is offered on the basis of young people's right to a free choice within the educational programme. Youths who choose a vocational programme will have the opportunity to choose an apprenticeship scheme, which offer significantly more time in a workplace during their educational period. Within vocational education for adults the principals/municipalities need to prepare a needs analysis of the local labour market to be entitled to specified government grants. These needs analyses must contain a dialogue between the local employment office and representatives from different branches. The upper secondary schools must have local programme advisory boards/apprenticeship boards to enable discussions on matters of education.
- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
Regulations in the Education Act and the curricula details how annual systematic quality work in upper secondary school and local adult education must be carried out. The Swedish National Agency for Education has produced material for support and development and the School Inspectorate carries out supervision and control of compliance with regulations.
- Certification, assessment and validation of learners
All vocational education programmes at upper secondary school level focus on making students highly employable upon completion of their studies and after receiving their grades/exams. The Diploma Project (Upper Secondary School Exam Project) has been added to further strengthen the link between the vocational programme and relevant branch. For adults who take corresponding vocational courses a specific number of courses within the same branch is required to achieve a certificate or grade and attain the same qualification status. Validation as a concept and a process is defined in the Education Act. Adults can have previous knowledge and experience documented, assessed and approved against the course objectives regulating different kinds of vocational education. Certification after a completed validation process can be in the form of either a certificate or a grade. For a grade to be given, a test must first be carried out against different grade levels.
- Stakeholder involvement
Within the upper secondary school, local branch representatives must be given places on the local programme advisory boards. The law stipulates at least 15 weeks of work-based education on all vocational education programmes. If the education is in the form of an apprenticeship, at least 50% of the vocational education must take place at local places of work. Within certain branches vocational colleges have been created, where employers and labour organisations have been given significantly greater influence over the education,

not least when it comes to the quality of work. In 2016 this is the case within health and social care and in the area of industry and technology. In local adult education, principals should actively involve representatives of different branches to facilitate the establishment of apprenticeship education for adults. Specific government grants available to principals require active participation from local businesses and the local employment office.

2. Continuous VET (CVET)

Introduction

Vocational education at the post-upper secondary level in Sweden is administered by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The laws and regulations which apply to Higher Vocational Education set out the framework for this level of vocational education. It can entail up to three years' studies after completion of upper secondary school or an equivalent level of knowledge and qualifications reached by an individual through other means. Financing is provided by the State and amounts to a certain sum per educational place. The present Government is planning to increase gradually up to the year 2018 the number of places for this kind of education.

2.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in CVET (include information on work-based learning)

- National Framework for quality assurance in CVET – who is in charge of what?
The responsibilities for systematic quality control work are described in laws and regulations. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education shall approve all applications to give vocational education at postsecondary level. The Agency shall review all applications on the basis of several quality criteria. One of the most important criteria is that the applying provider can document the need for this education programme within the applicable branch. For each education programme which is approved there must be a responsible steering group. This team is responsible for admission to the programme and issues certificates or exams after completion of the programme. The steering group also has a responsibility to make sure that systematic quality work is carried out. (The provider responsible and the appointed educational leader are in charge of the daily work.) The structure of the steering group is stipulated in the regulations. Students must have a place in the group. The branch has significant influence on the education programme and thus has a more direct opportunity to formulate and guide the programme to ensure that learning results meet the demands of the labour market.
- Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in CVET systems
Each steering group must have a representative from the branch. The steering group for each individual education programme offered has the responsibility to ensure that the quality control work is carried out by the provider who applied to give the programme.
- Requirements for evaluation and review
The Agency for Higher Vocational Education has a responsibility to monitor those educational programmes which have been given government grants to arrange vocational education. The Agency supervises a chosen number of providers each year. According to law, all educational providers shall re-apply to the Agency, if the intention is to continue providing an education programme

after two years. The Agency has produced general guidelines for systematic quality control.

- Identification of training needs
Work-based learning (LIA) is compulsory on two-year educational programmes and can and may be included in shorter programmes. Thanks to the strong link between representatives of the branches and educational providers, there is ongoing dialogue about the need for other actions to be taken, such as field trips to relevant places of work or that representatives from branches lead/participate in certain modules during the course of the programme.
- Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers
Applications to arrange vocational education shall be sent to the Agency for Higher Vocational Education. State universities and university colleges, county councils, municipalities as well as individual natural or legal persons can apply to start an education programme. The requirements to obtain a permit for an education programme are strongly linked to branches and the programme in question must be deemed important in a regional/local context by the employment services. No education programme will be sanctioned if there is no labour shortage within the relevant branch.
- Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)
When an education programme comes to an end, an appropriate certificate or grade (exam) is issued. The number of students who become employed after completing an education programme is high. According to the Agency for Higher Vocational Education, 89% of those who achieved a grade in 2014 were employed one year after their completed education. The laws and regulations also stipulate that validation of prior learning should be carried out both as part of the admission process and as a means for the applicant to receive credit for parts of the education programme.
- Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators
There are no formal requirements to use the indicators at system level but in the statistical follow-up of completed education on a yearly basis, some of the indicators are used.
- Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)
See above.

2.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in CVET

- Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)
Applications to receive permission to give vocational education need careful planning. A detailed educational plan of the intended programme must be prepared and approved by the Agency for Higher Vocational Education. The responsibility for the education programme will be assumed by a steering group, which shall be put in place before the start of the programme. In the application, the need for vocational education must also be made clear and certified by the relevant branch as well as through communication with the employment service.
- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
The steering group for the education programme is responsible for ensuring that the programme is delivered in accordance with the prearranged educational plan, which states how systematic quality work will be carried out during and after completion of the programme so as to make necessary changes or

adjustments in the educational plan for the following year. The educational provider responsible and the appointed educational leader share operative responsibility for this. Each provider is responsible for producing facts and documentation on annual quality work. After two years a new application for permission to continue giving the education programme must be submitted to the Agency for Higher Vocational Education.

- **Certification, assessment and validation of learners**
The educational plan for vocational education, regardless of branch, shall be prepared in close cooperation with the relevant branch locally and regionally. Elements of learning in the workplace must be included if the education is lengthy, so that it is completed with a qualified vocational exam (two-year education). For shorter educational programmes the link to the relevant branch is very strong, while the steering group must always include a representative from the branch. Individuals who have no formal qualifications corresponding to upper secondary school level shall have the opportunity to be admitted to the education programme on the basis of prior learning. It will also be possible to give credit for prior learning to those individuals who have previous experience within the relevant branch.

- **Stakeholder involvement**
As previously outlined, stakeholders/branches are deeply involved in the education offered within the Higher Vocational Education. This is made possible through the structure of the steering group, its function and tasks and through an educational plan, prepared in the light of what participants in the education programme will require to be able to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills.

SECTION B - INTERACTION BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE and EQAVET

- **National Reference Point – Introduction**
The Swedish National Agency for Education is also the National Reference Point in Sweden. In specific terms this means that two persons at the Agency's department for curricula are responsible for ECVET and EQAVET as part of their appointments.

- **National approach to enhance quality assurance**
The role of the Swedish National Agency for Education is to support and develop the systematic quality work regulated by law which has to be carried out by principles responsible for offering vocational education at a basic level. Supervision of this work is carried out by the School Inspectorate. In other matters the Swedish National Agency for Education cooperates with the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education when it comes to vocational education at an advanced level. However, the Swedish National Agency for Education has no jurisdiction in this area.

- **Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**
Since the new School Law on 1 July 2011, systematic quality work is regulated in a special chapter. The law describes the annual quality work in terms of the same process and cycle as is described in the agreement on EQAVET. Laws

and regulations for Higher Vocational Education also contain rules that govern the systematic quality work.