



Erasmus+ - Project
„European qualification concept –
Specialist for Vocational Orientation”



Quality standards for the
European qualification concept
“Specialist for Vocational Orientation”
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Project coordination

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The quality standards for the European qualification concept "Specialist for Vocational Orientation" were developed under the direction of the IBBT of the University of Education Schwäbisch Gmünd. The different quality standards were discussed and defined with the participation of all partners involved in the project.

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Introduction

Against the background of the objective of the Erasmus+ - project "European qualification concept - Specialist for Vocational Orientation" (BOQua) to continue with the professionalization and to improve the activities qualitatively of actors and experts of vocational orientation, who i.a. advise and / or support career choice processes of young people at the interface to working life, or people who want to reorientate themselves professionally, among other products an EU-wide uniform qualification concept was developed as well as five sector-specific qualification modules. The basis for the development of the EU concept and five qualification modules (and other products) are the results of a vocational research investigation. By case studies and expert discussions that were carried out with both the directly beneficiaries of the qualification, such as teachers, career counsellors, social workers, as well as with the indirect beneficiaries such as pupils, training companies, were identified in the five participating partner countries (Germany, Austria, Spain, Slovenia and United Kingdom) the work processes / tasks as such, and the requirements and the required know-how and competencies that are necessary to carry out the work processes / tasks of the mentioned actors. In addition, the status quo of vocational orientation was collected in the involved partner countries. This was done i.a. with the objective of analyzing to which extent qualification offers for the mentioned target group exist and insofar qualifications for vocational orientation are offered and implemented on which quality standards they are based. Thus, it should be ensured that possible existing quality standards are taken into account in relation to the newly developed qualification concept.

The results were discussed in detail with experts of vocational orientation or vocational training as well as in the project consortium in order to derive quality standards from them. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that the quality standards can be implemented and adhered in all EU countries. Country-specific conditions due to different training systems were not considered. However, the following quality standards can be supplemented by country-specific adaptations. However, a renunciation of some of the below described quality standards should be avoided against the background of the EU-wide comparability of the qualification.

In order to ensure the comparability of the qualification of actors or experts of vocational orientation after the transfer of the European qualification concept to other EU countries, the implementation of the qualification should be based on the following quality standards. This also refers to the implementation of individual qualification modules, which i.a. can be trained detached from the overall concept. The following quality standards describe on the one hand the necessary resources, framework conditions and the training regulations (input quality standards) and on the other the didactic concept (process quality standards) and thus the process of the qualification, as well as the objectives, competencies, learning / training success and the achievable certificates (output quality standards). They represent a kind of basic framework for the implementation of the qualification.



1. Definition of „quality“ and „quality standards“

The terms "quality" and "quality standards" are defined differently against the background of the various Vocational Education and Training (VET) of the different EU countries. For this reason at first a brief limitation of the terms should be made.

The term quality (Latin *qualitas* = nature, state, condition) sums up all characteristics of an object, system or process and evaluates its quality. According to DIN EN ISO 9000:2015-11 (the quality management standard) quality is defined as „a degree, in which a set of inherent characteristics of an object meets requirements“. This definition was replaced by the definition of DIN EN ISO 8402:1995-08, the old quality management standard. Thus, quality is the „entirety of characteristics of a unit with regard to its suitability to meet defined requirements.“ In this case, units are described as products, services, concepts, drafts, software, work processes, procedures and processes.

In general, however, it should be noted that the term "quality" is not a rating. Nevertheless, the term "quality" is used on a daily basis judgmental because the term is used as a synonym for the value of a unit. The term "quality" includes mostly an evaluation in "good" or "bad". Meets e.g. a qualification its objective and fulfills its purpose, in general people speak then of a "good" or "successful" qualification. If it does not fulfill its purpose, it is evaluated as "bad". In general the quality of a unit such as e.g. a qualification is difficult to measure. In order to be able to evaluate these, measurable criteria must be defined. For this have to be mentioned beside the accessibility of the defined teaching / learning objectives especially the qualification framework.

While the teaching / learning objectives are described in detail in the description of the qualification concept, the framework of the qualification is finally described in the following fixed "quality standards". With regard to the measurability of the quality of a qualification, it should also be noted that this is not exclusively due to the successful completion of a qualification. A positive qualification result is not necessarily equivalent to a "good quality" of a qualification, because numerous individual requirements, which the individual trainees have, have an influence on the result success.

In VET and further training we generally speak of "good quality" when the specified qualification requirements and their objectives are achieved. The higher the degree of compliance with the specified requirements is and the more (partial) objectives are achieved, the better is the quality of the qualification. In order to guarantee the measurability of the quality, it is necessary that the fixed quality standards of a qualification are adhered to by the implementing institutions. The quality standards are generally valid irrespective of a region or a training / VET system and contribute that the qualification complies with certain requirements and that certain guidelines are followed in implementing them.

The following quality standards are merely a recommendation that can and must be adapted in the context of a future adaptation or further development of the qualification.



2. Importance of quality standards with regard to the EU qualification concept

Future qualifications on vocational orientation in Europe must be entitled to effectively prepare employees in the field of vocational advice and support for the pressure of professionalization (skills shortage versus youth unemployment) and the associated challenges of the social and demographic change as well as current challenges such as digitization and to meet certain quality standards. For that, the labour market objectives must be linked to the (educational) policy objectives. By the existing and in the context of the vocational science analysis identified qualifications, which are predominantly few national qualification measures, a systematic qualification that meets these requirements cannot be guaranteed.

However, the need to introduce appropriate quality standards for a qualification in Europe is not only based on the aspect of quality improvement, but also on the cross-national comparability in Europe. By means of the quality standards, a qualification is given a EU-wide uniform framework, so that the comparability of the effected performances during the qualification is possible. Furthermore, the comparability with regard to the cross-border labour market plays a key role in many regions in Europe (including the partner countries). The introduction of quality standards allows the recognition of competencies the employees who are working in vocational orientation field as adviser or supporter.

On the one hand, the results obtained in the context of the vocational science analysis clarify national differences to vocational orientation and on the other hand, numerous country-specific and regional similarities could be identified, especially with regard to current and future-oriented measures for vocational orientation. To make the fulfilment and implementation of the skills and competencies which are necessary the vocational orientation and advice comparable in whole Europe and to achieve a certain uniform standards it is also necessary to implement quality standards. Thus, it can be ensured that, despite different national education systems that those who have to be qualified in future have to acquire the same competencies. By the same objective it can be ensured then that the quality of the vocational orientation and professionalization can be further promoted cross-national.

3. Input quality standards – resources, framework conditions, training regulations

The input quality standards refer to the resources, the framework conditions and the training regulations of the qualification. They cover all aspects that comprise the framework of the qualification – here are mentioned the so-called "hardware" of the qualification, such as the requirements for the learners and teachers / trainers (know-how, past experience, etc.), the number of participants, the teaching / learning place, the required equipment, the time frame, support through networks and co-operations, exchange with experts, teaching / learning materials, etc.

Nr.	Objectives and quality standards
1	<p><i>Number of participants per module</i></p> <p>The number of participants of each qualification measure should be limited to an appropriate number with regard to the resources and the particularities of the target group (min 5 – max 12).</p>



	<p>If a qualification of experts of vocational orientation of counseling institutions, providers of free youth work or general actors of the vocational orientation as well as of teachers as a further education measure takes place, then the number of participants should be limited to max. 10 participants.</p> <p>If a qualification of prospective teachers takes place in the context of the teacher's study and the qualification contents are integrated into the study, then the number of participants is unlimited.</p>
2	<p><i>Demand on the participants</i></p> <p>The participation in the qualification should be open for everyone interested – for beginners as well as experts who are active in the field of vocational orientation.</p> <p>If the qualification is offered to experts of vocational orientation of counseling institutions, providers of free youth work or general actors of the vocational orientation as well as of teachers as a further education measure, then their level of knowledge has to be considered and to and the content has to be adapted according to the scope and depth. (The educational level has to be considered)</p> <p>If the qualification is offered to prospective teachers as part of their studies, then their prior knowledge must be taken into account based on their curriculum.</p>
3	<p><i>Participants' preconditions</i></p> <p>At the beginning of the qualification, the participants have the opportunity to look at all relevant content (a list of core contents) via an Internet platform of the qualifying institution or prospective teachers can take the contents from their syllabus.</p>
4	<p><i>Consideration of previous knowledge and experience</i></p> <p>The realisation of the qualification should be flexible and take into account previous knowledge and experience of the participants. This can be done by setting priorities on individual modules or content, or the waiver or adaptation of content insofar as they have already been covered in their pre-qualification</p>
5	<p><i>Qualification of teachers/trainers</i></p> <p>The qualification has to be carried out by teachers/trainers, who have a sufficient amount of previous experience in the vocational orientation field and/or have the necessary knowledge about the different content-related topics of the individual modules.</p> <p>The teachers/trainers have to have pedagogical experience as well as social competencies with regard to the training of experts (adult education) or of prospective teachers.</p> <p>The qualifying institution chooses teachers/trainers in a special selection procedure. The basis of the procedure should be certain selection criteria.</p>



6	<p><i>Teaching/ Training place</i></p> <p>The teaching / training place for the qualification has to be easily accessible and the training rooms must provide a suitable teaching and learning atmosphere.</p> <p>Depending on the different qualification levels of the participants (experts or prospective teachers) as well as on the background of practical training parts in the context of the qualification, suitable places of teaching and learning are defined.</p> <p>The access to and the accessibility to the teaching and learning place must be guaranteed or organized by the qualifier.</p>
7	<p><i>Timeframe of the qualification as well as of individual modules and adaptations</i></p> <p>The time frame of the whole qualification can be flexible, but overall uniform and in relation to individual modules equally high. The timeframe can be adapted accordingly when content is adapted</p> <p>The timeframe of individual modules can be flexible but should not be more than 5 days per module or less than 3 days in total.</p> <p>The share of theoretical units and practical sessions has to be timed in advance.</p>
8	<p><i>Equipment</i></p> <p>The equipment should be adapted to the learning content, the participants and their experience.</p> <p>Participants should be informed about the equipment needed for the training (e.g. PC, documents, safety clothing).</p> <p>It has to be cleared if the participants lack essential equipment in order to ensure that equipment can be obtained in another way.</p>
9	<p><i>Support through networks and cooperation</i></p> <p>An essential objective of the qualification is a close link between theory and practice and consequently networking and cooperation with other actors in the field of vocational orientation.</p> <p>External actors of vocational orientation (e.g. experts of the Employment Agencies, the Chambers, etc.) who are not directly connected with the qualification should be included for the support of teachers/trainers in order to enable the participants to visit relevant institutions who are in touch with the topics of the qualification (of individual modules) and to network with them.</p> <p>Thus, contacts between participants and external experts should be established and an understanding between the actors should be supported.</p>



10	<p><i>Regular exchange between the qualifying institution and trainer/teacher</i></p> <p>If the teaching contents of a qualification are taught by several trainers/teachers and with regard to the optimisation of the realisation of the qualification (the qualification contents should be up-to-date) a regular exchange between the qualifying institution and teachers/trainers should take place.</p> <p>The experiences of the teachers/trainers have to be available in order to modify the qualification.</p>
11	<p><i>Teaching and learning materials</i></p> <p>Teaching and learning materials have to cover all contents of the qualification module and have to be available.</p> <p>Teaching and learning materials have to be prepared in a way that the corresponding know-how is easy to understand.</p> <p>Teaching and learning materials should contribute to the consolidation of know-how, the long-term utilisation and to improve the participants' competencies.</p>
12	<p><i>Choice of modules</i></p> <p>The participants can decide to take part in the entire qualification or several modules (general modules for vocational orientation or sector-specific modules).</p>
13	<p><i>Curriculum</i></p> <p>As part of the qualification concept, a curriculum is explicitly developed as the basis for the qualification, which unpacks and makes comprehensible all contents and defines the teaching processes.</p>

4. Process quality standards – didactical concept

The process quality standards refer to the didactic concept as well as the methodical implementation of the qualification (or individual qualification modules). They comprise all aspects that define the structure and implementation of the qualification like the basic structure, the teaching and learning method, the use of practical parts (internships), feedback and discussion rooms, the use of performance test and quality checks as well as final examinations, knowledge to be taught etc.

Nr.	Objectives and quality standards instruments
1	<p><i>Defined basic structure of the qualification resp. the qualification modules</i></p> <p>The qualification respectively the modules should cover basic, overview and contextual knowledge as well as expert knowledge.</p> <p>Different types of knowledge (the modules themselves) should build on each other.</p>



	<p>The content is graded so that different skills can be achieved during the qualification.</p> <p>The structure of the qualification modules has to be complied because of an easier realisation and comparability, details and methods may vary.</p>
2	<p><i>Teaching and learning methods</i></p> <p>Methods can be chosen freely due to the variety of different target groups (experts resp. prospective teachers) and have to be adapted to the demand.</p> <p>The methods used should base on modern teaching methods and enable a close coordination between theory and practice.</p>
3	<p><i>Practical parts and internships</i></p> <p>The qualification should include an in-depth practice session or an internship in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the achieved knowledge</p>
4	<p><i>Room for feedback and discussion</i></p> <p>The modules have to provide enough room for the exchange of experiences, discussions and feedback meetings</p> <p>Possible feedback meetings have to be documented in a systematic way (e.g. via a digital platform) for the trainer.</p>
5	<p><i>Performance test and quality control of the obtained knowledge</i></p> <p>The knowledge obtained as well as the competencies have to be examined during the qualification through performance tests. The test method is freely selectable (e.g. written, oral, practical test)</p> <p>The correct use of the acquired knowledge has to be examined also by practice sessions.</p> <p>The scope and time of the performance tests have to be adapted for the content to be examined in a suitable way</p>
6	<p><i>Final exams</i></p> <p>If a complete qualification takes places, a final exam about the total teaching content has to take place at the end.</p> <p>If only one or several modules are taught, a special examination about the content of the module has to take place the end of the training session.</p> <p>The scope of the examination depends on the content to be checked.</p> <p>Successfully completed individual modules are valid for a fixed period of time and can be included in the overall qualification at a later date.</p>
7	<p><i>Conditions for a successful completion</i></p> <p>In order to obtain a successful confirmation of participation for the modules, the participants have to attend the qualification with 75%.</p>



	In order to obtain a successful confirmation of participation for the modules, participants have to pass the exam with more than 50%.
8	<p><i>Evaluation of the qualification</i></p> <p>After the qualification modules, the participants are asked about their experiences, the abilities of the trainer and the applied teaching methods. In case of deficits, it is possible to change the choice of teaching method or the trainer/teacher in time.</p>
9	<p>Overview of all relevant core teaching content</p> <p>As part of the knowledge transfer, the participants are given a comprehensive overview of all aspects relevant to vocational orientation and possible peculiarities, and the connection between individual aspects is established.</p>
10	<p><i>Sector-specific know-how</i></p> <p>As part of the qualification, in addition to general content for vocational orientation, sector-specific knowledge about vocational orientation should be imparted. In this regard, the sector-specific modules and their contents must be taught mandatory. These are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocational orientation in the industrial-technical sector - Vocational orientation in the commercial sector - Vocational orientation in the service sector - Vocational orientation in the craft sector - Vocational orientation in the green / environmental sector

5. Output quality standards – objectives, learning / training success, certificates

The output quality standards relate to the teaching / learning objectives and success as well as to possible outcomes that can be achieved by the trainees at the end of the qualification. They comprise aspects such as adaptability of teaching / learning content, types of qualification and forms of certificates.

Nr.	Objectives and quality standards
1	<p><i>Adaption of the content of the modules to national framework conditions</i></p> <p>The teaching / learning content must not be changed in the main topics/main focus in order to ensure comparability.</p> <p>With regard to certain topics, the content can be adapted and should take into consideration the corresponding characteristics of the national/regional VET and vocational orientation systems as well as the national legal framework, and regulations, etc. of the particular countries.</p>
2	<p><i>Teaching and learning objectives</i></p> <p>An adaption of the content is only allowed in a way, that no teaching/learning objectives are changed.</p>



	The teaching/learning objectives have to be made transparent at the beginning of the teaching units.
3	<i>Order of contents</i> The content of the different teaching units should be ordered from general to specific.
4	<i>Partial qualification</i> A partial qualification for single modules can be carried out to acquire missing knowledge. The qualification is divided into a general and a sector-specific part. Thus 2 different part can be carried out. The teaching units provided (topics) in the modules can be prepared as partial qualification (as an individual seminar) in order to replace missing know-how of interested persons.
5	<i>Qualification certificates or module certificates</i> At the end of the qualification, the participants will receive a certificate if they have successfully passed the final exam / performance test. When participating in one or more selected modules, participants will receive certificates related to their acquired knowledge

Outlook

The newly developed European qualification concept "Specialist for Vocational Orientation" and the five vocational field specific qualification modules are further and continuing training for actors (experts) of vocational orientation professionals such as teachers, social workers of youth work, career counsellors, etc., which should contribute to the improvement of their professionalization. Because the above mentioned actors of vocational orientation are active at different institutions and correspondingly fulfill different tasks in the vocational orientation, they have so far due to their different form of qualification no uniform knowledge of vocational orientation. In the various EU countries, the relevant experts who work in the field of vocational orientation complete different trainings. These range from continuing education activities to academic education. Accordingly, the scope varies in terms of learning content for vocational orientation. Accordingly, in the individual EU countries with a focus on different target groups, the teaching / learning content of the qualification must be adapted. It should also be noted that the fixed quality standards need an adaptation after a final and future content-related design of all qualification modules which are named in the EU qualification concept. In order to ensure a cross-national comparability of the further and continuing education and training as a "specialist for vocational orientation", the quality standards described here should be met in the implementing of the EU qualification concept and training of the five vocational field specific qualification modules.

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