

Vocational education and training will be reformed to meet the needs of students and working life

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PRESS RELEASE



Vocational education and training (VET) will undergo a comprehensive reform. The Government submitted a proposal for a new act on vocational education and training to the Parliament on 24 April.

The objective is to reform vocational education and training so that it could better than nowadays respond to the changes occurring in working life and meet the future competence needs. Individual study paths would be created for both young people and adults already in working life. The significance of learning occurring at workplaces would be increased, and a new learning agreement model would be created. A new funding model would be introduced to decrease discontinuation of studies and to improve the effectiveness of VET.

The existing acts on vocational upper secondary education and training and vocational adult education and training would be repealed. The provisions governing vocational education and training would be brought together in a single act so that they would form a consistent whole. Furthermore, parts of labour policy education would be transferred from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment to the Ministry of Education and Culture and made a part of the new vocational education and training system.

"The reform of vocational education and training is the biggest reform in the field of education in two decades. It will create a system that responds more flexibly to the changing training needs in working life. The reform will also decrease discontinuation of studies and young people's social exclusion. Individual study paths and closer collaboration with working life will improve the effectiveness of education and training and facilitate students' employment. The reform was drawn up in a difficult economic environment. It is, however, a welcome and necessary reform and it will reinforce the professional skills of people in Finland," Minister of Education and Culture **Sanni Grahn-Laasonen** says.

Quicker access to employment

In future, students could acquire skills in the way that best suits them. Studies would focus on the acquisition of missing skills, which would shorten the duration of studies especially for adult students. A personal plan for competence development would be drawn up for every student. The plan would chart and recognise the skills previously acquired by a student and outline what kind of skills the student needs and how they will be acquired in different learning environments. The plan would also include information on the necessary supportive measures. The plan would be drawn up by a teacher or a guidance counsellor together with the student.

Qualification system will be reformed

The current three-tier qualification structure (vocational upper secondary qualification, further vocational qualification, and specialist vocational qualification) would be retained. In future the qualifications would, however, be more broad-based, and there would be no need to create new qualifications if new competence needs arose. The number of qualifications will decrease from the current 360 to 150. Students would have more freedom of choice within a specific qualification than nowadays. Vocational qualifications would still provide eligibility for higher education.

Vocational education and training could even be training preparing for vocational education, training preparing for working life and independent living as well as other vocational training that does not lead to qualification.

Practical demonstration of skills as the method of completing a qualification

As a rule, occupational skills would in all vocational qualifications be shown by demonstrating them in an actual, practical work situation. The performance would be assessed by a teacher assigned by the education provider and a representative of the working life together. In case of common modules and preparatory training, performance would be assessed and determined by the teacher in question. Students' right to receive special support due to learning difficulties, disability, illness or other reason would be extended to cover also students pursuing further and specialist vocational qualifications.

More guided training at workplaces

According to the proposed act, training at workplaces would be arranged as apprenticeship training based on a fixed-term contract or in the form of training agreements without a contractual employment relationship. The latter would replace the current on-the-job learning. Different combinations of training agreements and apprenticeship training would be possible.

Guidance of students at workplaces would be improved through collaboration between teachers and workplace counsellors.

Year-round admissions

Most students would enrol to vocational education and training through a flexible year-round admission system. The national joint application procedure organised each spring would be meant primarily for comprehensive school graduates and other people without any vocational qualifications.

Completed qualifications and access to employment as basis for funding

According to the proposal, a single coherent funding system would be established for all vocational education and training. The system would encourage education providers to reduce the number of students who discontinue their studies, increase learning at workplaces, shorten the duration of studies, and to provide more education in those fields where labour force is needed the most.

The funding would be divided into imputed core funding, performance funding and effectiveness funding as well as strategy funding. Core funding, based on the number of students, and performance funding, based on the number of completed qualifications and modules, would account for 50% and 35% of the imputed total funding, respectively. Effectiveness funding would account for 15% and depend on students' access to employment, pursuit of further education and feedback from students and the labour market. The core funding would guarantee that vocational education and training would continue to be provided in all fields and for all students also in future. The funding system would take into account the differences in the costs for providing education, such as cost differences between qualifications or sectors, costs for arranging special support, labour policy education, and training for prisoners.

The central government funding for vocational education and training would be determined annually in the Budget instead of the current system where the funding is based on the actual costs.

More authority and responsibilities for education providers

The proposal aims to lessen bureaucracy. All vocational education and training would in future be governed by a single licence to provide education. Education providers would have more freedom in deciding how they wish to organise the education they provide. The new legislation would reduce overlaps in the administration and planning, which would free up principals' and teachers' time from administrative duties to teaching. The processes of skills acquisition and demonstration would be streamlined.

Teachers' work would become more versatile

Individual study paths would make the guidance and support provided for students more important than before. Teachers, as experts in pedagogy, aim to build motivating paths for students together and in cooperation with working life. Teachers would more often visit workplaces personally and provide guidance for students outside the educational institution.

Reform has been prepared in an open and participatory manner

The aim is that the new act will enter into force on 1 January 2018. The government proposal has been prepared in close cooperation with stakeholders. More than 1,500 representatives of different stakeholders participated in the work.

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Material on decisions will be made available online (as soon after the government plenary session as possible) (in Finnish)

Read more about the reform of vocational education and training online <https://minedu.fi/amisreformi>

New VET PDF 167kB (PDF)

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