More than 30.000 students receive a NQ every year.

National Vocational Qualification system description for Norway



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Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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NATIONAL POLICY STRATEGY FOR VET MISSION AND LEGISLATION

MISSION

The VET system, including apprenticeships, is an integral part of the Norwegian education system. The government views VET as a central means for achieving national goals in areas such as economic, regional and employment/labour market policies. Education and training including VET are considered a public responsibility. VET is available all over the state so as to ensure an equal education for all. Equal access to high quality education is a fundamental political principle. There are no school fees at any level including higher education in the public education system. Only a small share of pupils and students attend private education.



The government recognizes the major role of social partners, accordingly the formulation and implementation of VET policies are shared between public authorities and the social partners such as employers and employees' organizations and trade unions. This cooperation is institutionalized through the Vocational Training Act. It is also expressed through procedures for representation in central bodies and active participation in preparatory, implementation and control tasks within the field.

STRATEGY

Reform is an on going process associated to VET national policy in Norway, for instance, a comprehensive curriculum reform was introduced in 2006 so-called 'The Knowledge Promotion Reform'. New national curricula were developed for each subject in both school-based and apprenticeship-based education and training. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training managed this process through a broad and open process. Each Subject Curriculum were developed by a curriculum team and been subject to a broad consultation process (electronic questionnaires, seminars, meetings) that has involved schools, school owners and the social partners.

The government works to promote participation among low-skilled students in upper secondary VET. For example since 2000, through 'the training candidature scheme', low-skilled students are given the possibility of obtaining a specially adapted qualification of a lower degree. As opposed to the apprentice who signs an apprenticeship agreement, the training candidate signs a training contract which will lead to a competence exam as opposed to the trade or journeyman's certificate.

The Norwegian strategy towards VET attempts to bridge the general and vocational divide and particularly the gap between the vocational schools and the apprenticeship system. The most important reform in this regard is "Reform 94" in 1994, which encompassed rights, structure and content.



LEGISLATION

Reform 94 produced changes in several aspects of VET. At the upper secondary level, both the act regulating education and training in schools, and the act regulating apprenticeship training were revised and harmonized with the aim of achieving a more uniform education and better coordination between education in school and training at work. The following acts regulate the current VET system:

1. Act of 17 July 1998 no. 61 regulates the county authorities' responsibility for public upper secondary education and training, objectives and scope, organization and division of responsibilities, financing and content of education and training delivered by both public and private institutions.
2. Act relating to Upper-secondary Vocational Education and Training («lov om fagskoler 2003", latest amendment December 2010) regulates public and private post-secondary vocational education and training with courses and programs of 6 months' to 2 years' duration. Education and training under this law are not part of higher education.
3. The Adult Education Act («Lov om voksenopplæring – 1976», latest amendment 2003) regulates different types of adult training that is not covered by the Education Act. Education and training for adults is provided by a variety of public and private institutions. Among the most important are private adult learning study associations, labour market training, work based training and distance training.
4. The Act relating to Master Craftsman Certificates («Lov om mesterbrev», 1986) establishes the framework for the master craftsman certificate. It stipulates that only a person awarded the certificate is entitled to call him or herself a master craftsman.
5. The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges («Lov om universiteter og høyskoler 2005», latest amendment 2009) applies to all higher education, both state and private. The Act regulates organizational and management aspects, provides for the recognition of study program, examination and certification, for quality assurance as well as for the learning environment for students.

LEVELS

Tertiary education, age above 19
Upper secondary education, age 16-19
Secondary education, age 13-16 compulsory
Primary education, age 6 - 13 compulsory

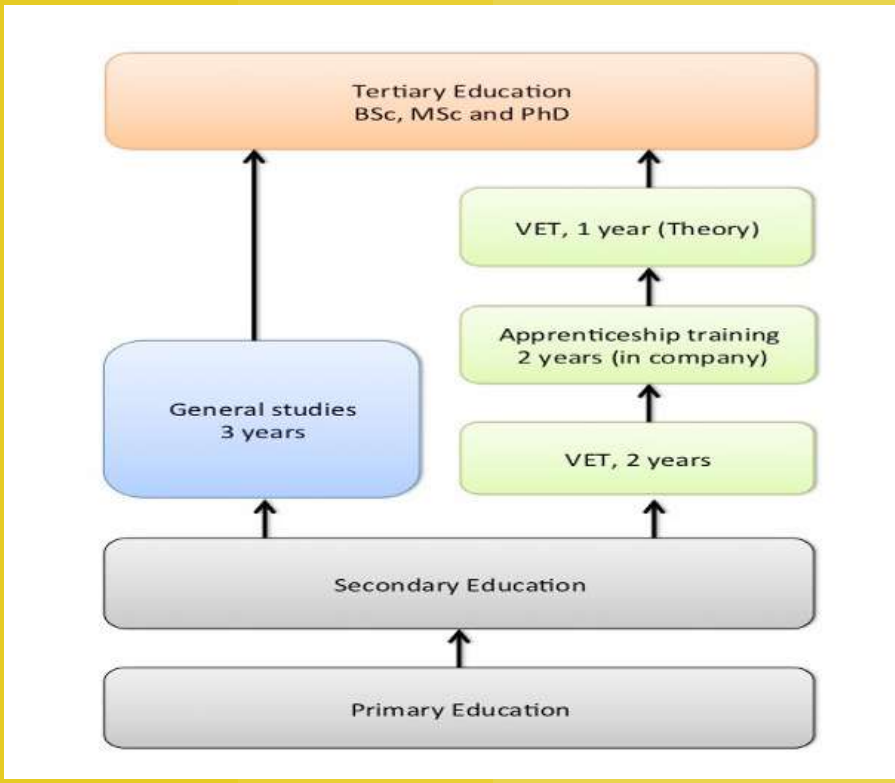


Figure A. The main educational levels in the school system in Norway.

NKR			
NKR levels	**Qualifications**		**EQF levels**
8	PhD degree		8
7	Master degree		7
6	Partial bachelor (short higher education)	Bachelor (Bologna first cycle)	6
5	5.1 Certificate of completed post-secondary VET (*Fagskole*) 1	5.2 Certificate of completed post-secondary VET (*Fagskole*) 2	5
4	4A Certificate of completed general upper secondary education	4B Certificate of completed vocational upper secondary education (*Fagbrev*)	4
3	Certificate of partially completed upper secondary education and training (*Kompetansebevis*)		3
2	Certificate of primary and lower secondary education		2
1	Not part of the NQF. No qualifications included.		1

Figure B. Extension of figure 1 with The Norwegian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning with linkage to the EQF levels.

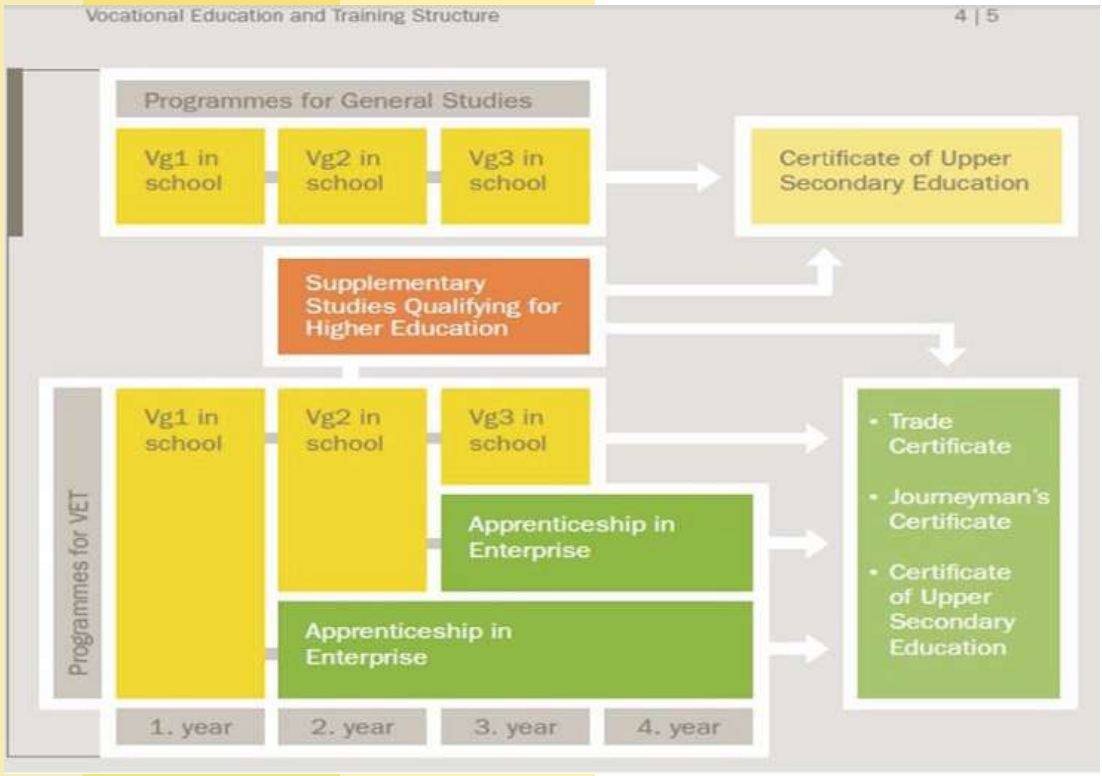


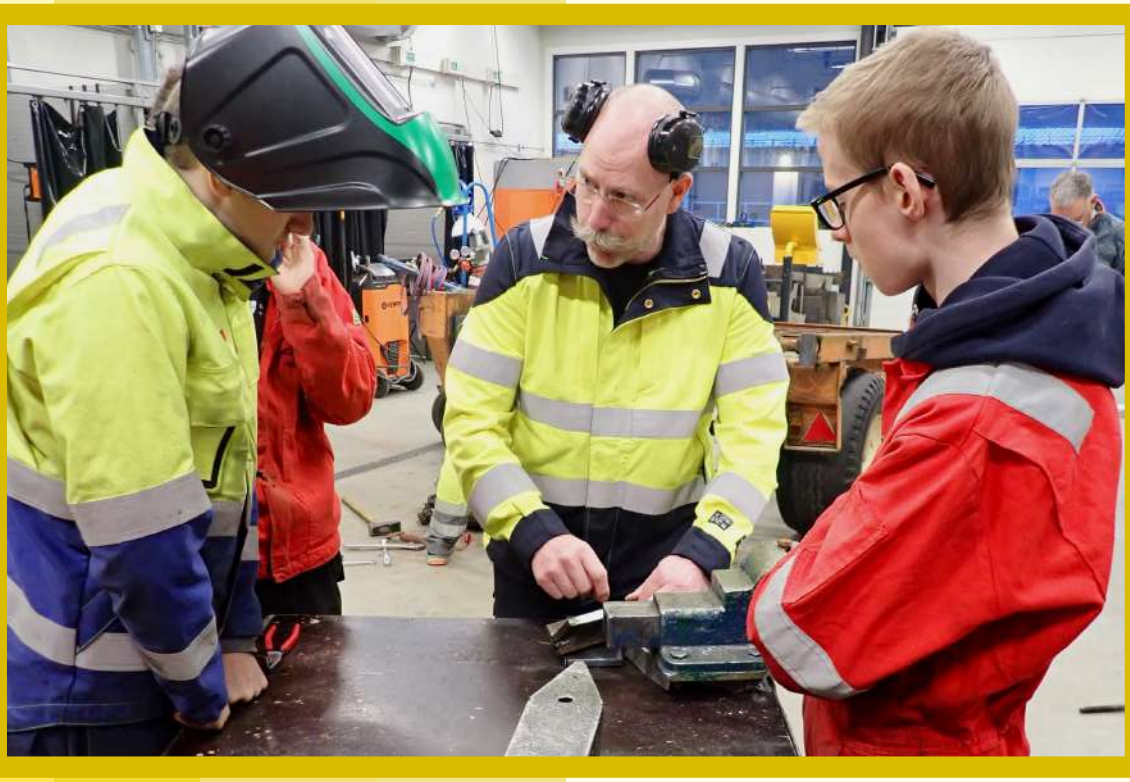
Figure C. The organization of the upper secondary VET education in Norway, including the apprenticeship system.

All young people leaving compulsory school have a statutory right to attend three years of upper secondary education. Since 1976, general and vocational education and training were subject to the same law, under the same roof. Thus, today nearly all upper secondary schools provide both general education and vocational training, often in the same building. Students may choose from twelve programs categorized as three general studies programs and nine VET-programs. The VET - programs are as follows:

1. Technical and Industrial Production
2. Electrical Trades
3. Building and Construction
4. Restaurant and Food Processing Trades
5. Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry
6. Health and Social Care
7. Design, Arts and Craft
8. Media and Communication
9. Service and Transport

The upper secondary VET leads to the trade- or journeyman´s certificate. The majority of upper secondary VET students are in the age group 16-21.

Upper secondary VET normally includes two years at school with practical training in school workshops and short work placements in industry, followed by two years of formalized apprenticeship training and productive work in an enterprise or public institution. During the last two years, the apprentice is engaged in one year of training and one year of productive work. This is known as the "2+2 model". However, not all VET programs follow the 2+2 model. A few programs are entirely school-based. Another small group of programs follow a "1+3-model", with one year in school followed by three years of apprenticeship training.



The first year in upper secondary VET consists of general education and introductory knowledge of the vocational area. During the second year, VET students choose specialization and the courses are more trade-specific. While in school, students participate in practical training in workshops and enterprises through the subject In-depth study project. The two-year apprenticeship takes place with an employer (or employers) and follows the national curriculum.

In Norwegian higher education, all vocationally-oriented courses and programs are part of the ordinary higher education system. There is no formal or other distinction between vocational and non-vocational higher education.



The Tertiary Vocational education is an alternative to higher education and is based on upper secondary education and training or equivalent informal and non-formal competence. Higher Education entrance Qualification is not required. The education consists of vocational courses lasting from half a year to two years.

The institutions of the tertiary VET level have developed through one of the following four main paths:

- county post-secondary technical colleges building on vocational secondary education, often leading to qualifications as master craftsmen or certificates for seamen;
- state funded private schools originally recognized as "secondary education without parallel to public provision", several of which are in art, culture or Bible studies;
- state and county funded programs in health and social studies;
- other private provision, generally developed through training needs resulting from new and emerging technologies and demands in the labour market since the 1980s, particularly in media, design, communication, administration, logistics and ICT.

The Act on upper secondary (tertiary) Vocational Education No. 56 of 20 June 2003, revised in 2007, regulates short (e.g. six months' to two years' duration) vocational training courses and programs at the postsecondary non-tertiary level. In this Act, the term vocational denotes programs leading to qualifications that can be immediately used in working life without further training. As a consequence of the 2007 revision, all providers must document quality assurance systems, and it is also possible to obtain institutional accreditation for programs within a defined field of study, rather than having to apply for recognition program by program.



GOVERNANCE

Norway enjoys a high degree of decentralization amongst the three administrative levels: state, county and municipality**.**

The municipalities are responsible for primary and lower secondary education.

- While county authorities are responsible for public upper secondary school, their associated tasks include: operational responsibilities for the development of curricula, examinations and quality control, running of schools, the intake of students, and the appointment of teachers.
- The Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for national policy development and administration of education and training at all levels, from kindergarten to higher education, including adult education. Higher education falls directly under the responsibility of the Ministry.
- For upper-secondary (tertiary) vocational training, the situation is slightly more complicated as the counties are responsible for most of the public funding, most schools are private, and a few schools are funded directly by the Ministry.

The Directorate of Education have responsibility for the continuous curriculum development. For this purpose it makes extensive use of expert groups from both school and companies that provide upper secondary education. When the need for a new qualification is identified a tripartite group is set down to write vocational profiles. This will make the basis for developing the subject curricula. The Directorate appoints teams for curriculum development consisting of professionals (most often suggested by the employer and employee organizations) and VET teachers. Also, the Directorate has recently developed a follow-up system for curricula named «System for follow-up of the curriculum». The system aims is to get a more holistic and systematic knowledge about the state of affairs with regards to the curriculum.



SOCIAL PARTNERS

The VET national policy is built on a close cooperation between public authorities and the social partners on a formal and informal basis. The formal basis for the role of the social partners in VET at upper secondary level is to be found in the International Labour Organization Convention 142 (of 23 June 1975) which Norway ratified in 1976. The convention establishes that the employers' organizations and trade unions shall influence and participate in the framing and development of vocational guidance and training.

The social partners have representatives in all important advisory and decision-making bodies at state and county levels:

- the National Council for Vocational Training;
- the 20 national Vocational Training Boards which represent the expertise in different sectors and recognized occupations;
- the Vocational Training Committee for each county; and
- the examination boards in each county and the national appeals boards.

Through this representation, the social partners are directly involved in, among others, the framing of structure and content of recognized occupations, the development of curricula and framing the trade and journeyman's examination. The participation of pupils, apprentices and students in the preparation of education and training is, moreover, stated in the acts concerning education and training.



FINANCING

Norway spends considerable resources on its education system, including VET, relative to many other countries. For instance, Norway spends more than the OECD average in Education per student. In 2008, Norway spent 5 per cent of its GDP on primary and secondary education and training as a whole, whereas the OECD countries spent only 3.8 per cent on average.

There is varied spending of resources because of differences in geography and demographic structure. This gives rise to substantial differences in the spending of resources among different municipalities and country authorities.

There are no school fees at any level, including higher education, in the public education system. The finance comes from country authorities for public upper secondary schools while MOER is responsible, include finance, for tertiary education.

Only a small share of pupils and students attend private education. The Financial Support to Students and Pupils Act («Lov om utdanningsstøtte til elever og studenter-1985», latest amendment 2005) states that all registered students on formally recognized study programs, at both public and private higher education institutions may receive grants and subsidized loans from the State Educational Loan Fund for subsistence costs.



Groups of VET teachers and instructors

There are three main groups of VET teachers and trainers at the upper secondary level:

- VET teachers who provide formal school-based education and training;
- Trainers and training supervisors in enterprises; and
- VET training facilitators who are involved in non-formal and informal workplace training.

The formal qualification requirements for VET teachers are specified in national regulations. In principle, there is no difference between teachers in VET and other teachers. Both groups must have two sets of formal qualifications: in the relevant subject and in teaching. VET teacher education programs follow the general degree system, with a three-year Bachelor's degree and a two-year Master's degree. To become a qualified VET teacher, one must either complete vocational practical-pedagogical education or vocational teacher education.

Vocational practical-pedagogical education (consecutive model) is a 1-year program (2-year for part-time study) for students who already possess a vocational/professional degree or other qualification. The main fields of study are pedagogical theory, vocational didactics and supervised teaching and training practice. Admission requirements are:

- qualification as a skilled craftsman/worker, or a bachelor's degree in a specific profession; and
- two years of occupational experience; and
- two years of further studies (technical, vocational, managerial); and
- general matriculation qualifications or recognition of non-formal qualifications.

Vocational teacher education (concurrent model) is a comprehensive 3-year bachelor program that covers both vocational training and pedagogy and qualifies for the teaching of specific subjects in years 5 – 7 in primary school, and in lower and upper secondary school. It is also available as a part-time study. Admission requirements are:

- an upper secondary vocational qualification and two years of relevant work experience
- general matriculation qualifications or relevant non-formal qualifications, e.g. long work experience

All teacher education programs for the lower and upper secondary levels (grades 8 – 13) including those for VET teachers are at present undergoing revision as part of the implementation of the Norwegian National Qualifications Framework of 15 December 2011, following both the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in the Bologna Process and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).



Trainers (instruktører) in enterprises are vocationally skilled, but not required to have a teaching certificate. Training supervisors (faglige ledere) in enterprises or other workplaces with apprentices must ensure that the training meets the requirements set by the Education Act. They must have one of the following qualifications:

- trade or journeyman's certificate in the relevant trade or craft
- master craftsman's certificate in the relevant craft
- relevant higher education in the trade or craft
- adequate educational background in the parts of the trade which, according to the curriculum, will be taught in the enterprise
- six years of experience in the trade or craft

There are no formal qualification requirements for training facilitators that deliver training outside formally approved education institutions. Still, VET training personnel involved in non-formal and informal workplace training often have a formal vocational qualification. Some training facilitators have not formalized their vocational skills, but perform solely on the basis of skills developed through work practice.

Enterprises that provide apprenticeship training must be approved by the county authority. Formal regulations simply state that the management of the institution must ensure that training personnel have "the necessary qualifications" (Education Act).

Teacher training for pre-primary, primary and secondary education was regulated by the Teacher Training Act of 1973, repealed in 1998. Provisions concerning teacher education are now under the Education Act of 1998 (e .g. teacher qualifications requirements), and in part under Universities Act of 2005. Following the Report to the Parliament (Storting) No. 11 (2008-2009), White Paper on Teacher Education (The Teacher-The Role and the Education), in May 2009 MOER appointed a National Curriculum Committee in order to propose national guidelines for a new teacher education program.

QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS

SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Secondary VET mainly leads to either a trade certificate (Fagbrev) for industrial and service trade or a craft or journeyman's certificate (Svennebrev) for traditional crafts. Graduates must pass the journeyman's examination, through which apprentices demonstrate their vocational skills and explain and justify the methods they have chosen to use to solve the test assignments.

Holders of a trade or journeyman's certificate may pursue further studies at a Vocational College (fagskole) and can also qualify for higher education. This has developed through four main paths mentioned in section 2 and leads to qualifications as master craftsmen or certificates.

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF)

NQF gives a view of the Norwegian educational system and its levels of qualifications. NQF is a contribution to facilitate the work on lifelong learning and is to be used as a transparency tool for comparison of Norwegian qualifications with qualifications from other countries, via the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and/or the European qualifications framework for higher education (QF-EHEA).



QUALITY ASSURANCE

The County Vocational Training Board (CVTB) provides advice concerning strategies for quality development in the vocational education system in the county, and evaluates the system of quality assurance. The Board is also responsible for securing the attainment of qualifications in vocational education and promotes cooperation between schools and the regional labour market. Other public bodies at the state and countries levels are involved in quality control for primary and secondary schools as well.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) was established in 2002, operative as of 1 January 2003. It is an in dependent agency with the task of carrying out external quality assurance of higher education and tertiary vocational

- Accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Accreditation of higher education programs and courses;
- Revision of accreditation;
- Evaluation of internal quality assurance in higher education institutions;
- Evaluation of specific types of educational provision or defined aspects of such;
- Recognition of tertiary vocational education; and
- General recognition of foreign qualifications.



All courses must be accredited by NOKUT and an up-to-date list of recognized courses can be found on NOKUT's website.

As a consequence of the 2007 revision, all providers must document quality assurance systems, and it is also possible to obtain institutional accreditation for programs within a defined field of study, rather than having to apply for recognition program by program.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSMENT

The Education Act regulates assessment in Norway VET and the regulations connected to this law, Chapter 3 – "Individual assessment in primary and upper secondary education". Persons in public primary education and students, apprentices, diploma candidates and apprentices in public upper secondary education are entitled to receive individual assessment by the law. The right to assessment includes a right to take part in continuous assessment, final assessment and documentation of the training process that ahs been done.

It is the owner of the school that is responsible for ensuring that the student or apprentice gets fulfilled their right to get individual assessment according to the Education Act. For apprentices and private candidates in companies, the company is responsible for offering the individual assessment.

The purpose of the assessment is to promote learning, express the competence of the student or the apprentice during the course and at the end of the course. The assessment process should provide feedback and guidance to students or apprentices such that they may use it to improve their learning.

At High School and Upper Secondary School (VET) level, assessment will be given with grades. There will always be given grades as numbers, on a scale from 1 to 6. The individual grades have these levels:

- Grade 6 expresses that the student has advanced competence in the subject
- Grade 5 expresses that the student has very good competence in the subject
- Grade 4 expresses that the student has good competence in the subject
- Grade 3 expresses that the student has quite good skills in the subject
- Grade 2 expresses that the student has low competence in the subject
- Grade 1 expresses that the student has very low competence in the subject.

In order to pass the minimum level in a subject, grade 2 is required.



Continuous assessment:
Continuous assessment in subjects will be used as a tool in the learning process, and as a basis for offering adapted training and help the student or the apprentice to increase his and her competence in the subjects. This assessment in subjects must be given on a continuous and systematic basis, and may be both oral and written.

Continuous assessment must contain information about the competence of the student or the apprentice, and provide guidance on how he or she can develop his or hers competence in the subject.

The correspondence between continuous assessment and final grade in subjects:

Continuous assessment should promote learning and allow the student to improve his / her competence throughout the entire training period. For students in public upper secondary school the competence the student has shown throughout the entire training period forms part of the assessment when the final grade in subjects is to be determined.

For adult private candidates and apprentice in adult learning courses the final exam will determine the final grade. However; also the adult students are entitled to continuous assessment during the courses.

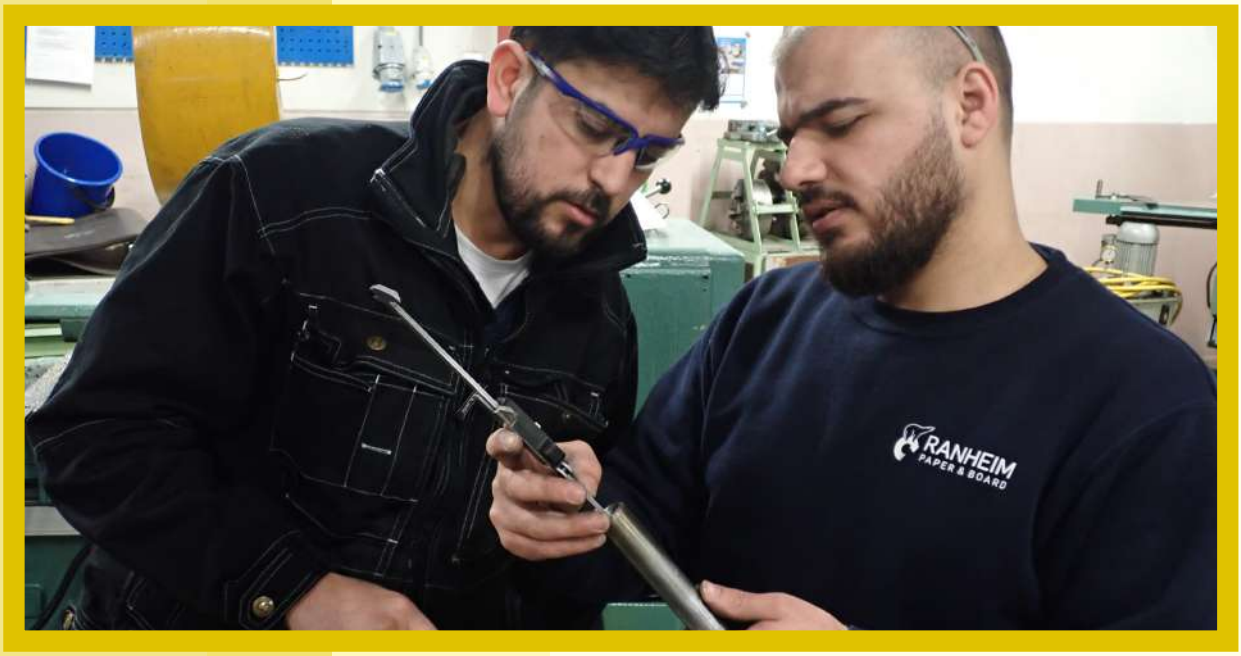


GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR EXAMINATION

The exam must be in accordance with the curriculum. The county authorities are responsible for the completion of the professional certificate test in accordance with the regulations and the curriculum in the subject. Registration for the professional certificate test must be sent to the county authority in the county where the learning contract or training contract is registered.

Private candidates must apply for a professional certificate test. The application goes to the county authorities before the deadlines set by the same county authorities.

Before applying for the professional certificate test, the candidate must have passed a theoretical examination according to the prerequisites set by the Directorate of Education. This exam will test to what extent the individual candidate has reached the competence levels defined in the curriculum. The exam is prepared centrally and censored locally. If the candidate does not pass the examination, a new examination may be reapplied at the earliest six months later.



The contents and scope of the practical professional certificate test

An Examination Board for the program subject is responsible for the design of the professional certificate test. The teaching company, possibly the school as an alternative to training in a company, can make suggestions for work tasks.

The professional certificate test will test the candidate's knowledge and skills in the subject as described in the curriculum for the profession. All the competence objectives in the curriculum of the subject could be tested. The tasks in the test must reflect the requirements that are defined for professional competences. The Examination Board is responsible for ensuring that the candidate's competence in the subject is tested in a reasonable manner.



The task should clearly define the content of what is expected of the candidate's work. Within the framework of the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum, the assignment will test the candidate in

A) Planning of work, and foundation for selected solutions
B) Carrying out a professional work
C) Assessment of own test work
D) Documentation of own test work.

The extent of the test should be clearly defined, and within the timeframe set in the curriculum.
In a summary conversation, the Examining Board may ultimately ask the candidate theoretical questions for professional clarification.

The assignment must be designed in such a way that it gives the candidate a realistic opportunity to perform a good quality work within the stipulated timeframe. The assistance that the candidate has been given during the learning period can also be tested during the exam or test.

In addition to the task, the Examining Board shall prepare a basis description for assessing the candidate's work with the examination. The main points of this description must be explained to the candidates.

The Examination Board

The Examination Board for professional certificate tests is appointed and administered by the county authorities, according to the Education Act. The examiner committee must have at least two members who have formal professional competence within the subject area and, as far as possible, have updated work experience in the subject. The county authorities must ensure that there is satisfactory assessment competence in the Examination Board.

The county authorities shall collect proposals for members to the Examination Board from the business sector. This should include both representatives from the employer's and the employee. The county authorities may also, if necessary, retrieve suggestions from others.