QUALITY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

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FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Vocational education and training (VET) makes a significant contribution to economic competitiveness and welfare in a global knowledge-based economy. The main challenge for vocational education and training is to meet the changing skills needs of individuals and the world of work in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning. While demand for new skilled workers is increasing, it is also necessary to attend to developing and upgrading the skills of the existing workforce and to promoting labour mobility. In addition, the VET customer base is also constantly diversifying. Attention to individual needs and differences and recognition of previously acquired skills are a key to planning and implementation of education and training services. The core mission of vocational education and training also includes various services and development tasks, which aim to promote workplace innovation activities and to develop operations and working communities within micro-enterprises and SMEs in particular.

Continuous improvement of the quality of vocational education and training is a key priority both in Finland and within the European Union. Quality improvement is one of the main objectives of the Copenhagen process in vocational education and training. Other key objectives include increasing the attractiveness of education and training and promoting mobility among vocational students.

The Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training has been adopted by the Ministry of Education to support and encourage VET providers to pursue excellence when improving the quality of their operations. The recommendation is based on the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) in vocational education and training and it forms an important part of Finland's implementation of the Copenhagen process measures. The recommendation has been prepared by the Finnish National Board of Education working in co-operation with VET providers, representatives of the world of work and business as well as students.

The purpose of the Quality Management Recommendation is to provide a framework for long-term development of quality management in all types of vocational education and training. The recommendations can be applied to vocational education and training implemented in different ways: initial VET and further and continuing training, competence tests and training preparing for competence-based qualifications, as well as curricular or school-based VET, special needs VET and apprenticeship training. In addition, the recommendations have been prepared such that they can be applied at both VET provider and individual unit levels and that they are relevant to users at different stages of quality improvement.

1. PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION

The Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training is designed to assist VET providers to develop quality management and to encourage them to continuously improve the quality of their operations and results in pursuit of excellence.

The document is intended for all VET providers and their different units and forms of operation as a strategic development tool for quality management. It caters for senior civil servants and elected officials and other staff working for VET providers and units within them.

The purpose of the individual recommendations set out in this document is to raise issues and policies that are important in terms of quality management in order to support development work. The document neither presents solutions or ready-made approaches – selection of these is up to individual VET providers – nor does it offer any minimum criteria for quality management, but it does encourage users to develop their operations in pursuit of excellence. The way in which recommendations should be applied has also been left to the discretion of users. In addition, the document is not intended to replace any existing quality assurance systems or steer users to apply any specific system. The recommendations can be applied to existing systems.

The Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training is based on the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF), developed as part of the European Union's Copenhagen process in vocational education and training. The Council of the European Union issued a recommendation for promotion of implementation of the CQAF in the Member States in May 2004. The Common Quality Assurance Framework is designed to help develop, monitor, evaluate and improve quality systems and quality management practices at both national and VET provider levels. In addition, it aims to encourage different parties operating within vocational education and training to share experiences, identify and make use of good practices and learn from each other on a voluntary basis. Another aim is to facilitate comparison of operations and results in different Member States and at different levels of the education and training system.

In addition to actual recommendations, this document includes descriptions of basic concepts concerning quality management and quality in vocational education and training and of the national quality assurance system. These descriptions aim to clarify the status of Quality Management Recommendation as part of national quality assurance in vocational education and training and to highlight the importance of quality management as part of VET development. In addition, the publication contains a glossary with definitions of key terms in quality management.

2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Perspectives on quality in vocational education and training

Quality can be defined in many different ways. For instance, it can mean excellence, zero defects, uniform quality, satisfying customer needs or operational improvement.

Instead of creating a pervasive and unequivocal definition of VET quality, it is more relevant to examine it as a relative and contextual concept. Quality is always bound to satisfying customer needs. Defining quality is ultimately a common task for VET providers and their key customer and stakeholder groups.

Quality assurance and quality management can be defined in different ways. In this document, quality management means those procedures, processes or systems used to guarantee and improve the quality of a VET provider's operations. The definition covers quality assurance and quality improvement. Quality management aims to facilitate continuous improvement and development of operations and results. Quality management is an integral part of a VET provider's operational system and is thus linked to all functions and levels within the organisation.

The national quality management system in vocational education and training

The quality of vocational education and training is assured and improved in many different ways. In Finland, the national quality management system in vocational education and training comprises quality management of VET providers, national steering of VET and external evaluation of VET. International policies and mechanisms relating to quality assurance, such as the European Union's Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) in vocational education and training, play an increasingly significant role in development of quality management at both national and provider levels.

Operational systems of VET providers as the foundation for quality management

Legislation governing vocational education and training for young people and adults confers extensive decision-making powers on VET providers in issues concerning VET provision as well as in use of funds granted for this purpose and quality management. The law obligates providers to evaluate their VET provision and its effectiveness and to participate in external evaluation of their operations. Fulfilling the statutory evaluation obligation requires providers to have an operational system in place, which includes appropriate and effective quality management procedures. Each provider is free to decide on these independently.

In this document, an operational system means the whole made up of various means and methods of quality management that is used to implement the quality policy specified by the VET provider within the organisation. The system is provider-specific and consists of the policies and procedures to be observed within the organisation. It may be documented in a quality manual, but more important than the form is that the system works in practical terms and encourages systematic action and development.

National steering of vocational education and training as part of quality management

National steering of vocational education and training aims to set objectives for VET provision and its quality and to ensure achievement of these objectives. In addition to statutes governing operations and financing, key steering tools of quality management

include the Development Plan for Education and Research, adopted by the Government, the State Budget, authorisations to provide vocational education and training, the qualifications structure and the National Core Curricula for Upper Secondary Vocational Education and Training and the Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications, criteria for funding operations and performance-based funding, qualifications requirements for teaching staff, along with guidance by the educational administration through development and information services**.**

External evaluation of education and training

External evaluation of education and training aims to guarantee fulfilment of the spirit of law governing vocational education and training and to support its development and improve conditions for learning. VET providers are obliged to participate in external evaluation of their operations.

External evaluation of education and training is organised by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council or some other auditor appointed by the Ministry of Education. Evaluations are usually based on the principle of development-oriented evaluation, which means that the aim is to support VET providers as they develop their operations and to produce information in support of decision-making both for providers and for the educational administration.

European co-operation in support of quality management

Development of quality management in vocational education and training is more and more strongly influenced by co-operation within the European Union. The Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF), developed as part of the Copenhagen process in support of quality assurance in vocational education and training, helps develop, monitor, evaluate and improve quality management systems and practices at different levels by means of a common approach and concrete tools.

Like many other existing assessment models (such as the EFQM and CAF), the CQAF model is based on continuous learning and systematic improvement of operations. The approach behind the model is the principle of continuous improvement known as the Deming Quality Cycle (Plan, Do, Check and Act). The model guides VET providers to pay attention to aspects that are important in terms of quality, but it does not provide any answers about how providers should operate.

The CQAF model can be applied as a quality management framework for the national VET system and individual VET providers. Involvement of stakeholders is of the utmost importance when aiming to improve the quality of systems and operations. The phases of quality assurance used in the model are shown in Figure 1 below.
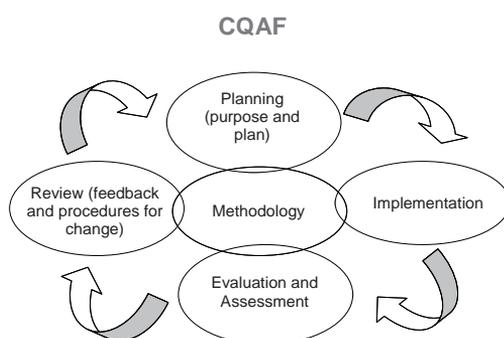
CQAF

Figure 1. The Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF)

The elements of the model are planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment and review (feedback and procedures for change), each of which is assigned a set of quality criteria. Different Member States have made different choices for dealing with quality assurance and improvement in vocational education and training. This is why the model presents the core quality criteria such that they can be applied to different operating environments. The model uses questions to draw attention to critical quality factors.

Planning refers to setting up clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources. In addition, the phase involves defining indicators to facilitate monitoring achievement of these goals and objectives.

The essential aspect of *implementation* is to establish procedures to ensure achievement of goals and objectives. Procedures may vary considerably at a provider level, such as in terms of development of the operational system and the organisational structure, resource allocation, involvement of stakeholders, or development of partnerships.

Evaluation and assessment cover evaluation of VET provision and assessment of the achievement of outcomes at system and individual levels. In general, the evaluation and assessment phase consists of two parts, i.e. collection and processing of data and discussions, evaluation and assessment based on this data. Evaluation requires designing the evaluation mechanism and defining its scope as well as providing information on the results of evaluation.

Feedback and procedures for change form part of a systematic and goal-oriented process used to change plans and develop operations in order to achieve the targeted outcomes and for setting new objectives. The aim is to learn from information acquired in different ways, such as results, by discussing and analysing these together with key stakeholders. It is also possible to learn from good practices by benchmarking the user's own operations with these.

Methodologies may differ. The key is for VET providers to decide what type of methodology will best serve their needs. Quality assurance and management emphasise self-evaluation combined with external evaluation. Other key aspects include how and in what roles customers and stakeholders (such as enterprises, workplaces, students, other authorities) participate in evaluation and how they are being motivated to take responsibility for evaluation. It is also important to determine the methods used to collect and analyse data and draw conclusions.

The CQAF model is in line with other currently applied quality management and assessment methods and it is possible to make use of other existing methods during its different phases.

3. STRUCTURE AND PREMISES OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION

The Quality Management Recommendations below are divided into sections on the basis of the characteristics of an excellent organisation. Within each section, in turn, the recommendations are grouped in accordance with the different phases of the CQAF model. Each section presents recommendations relating to different phases of the model: planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, as well as feedback and procedures for change (see Chart 1 below).

The recommendations have been prepared such that they can be applied within different types of VET provider organisations. In addition, they take into account special characteristics, key priorities and development targets of vocational education and training, as defined in national strategies.

Alongside recommendations, the document also sets out specifications and examples intended to help VET providers to put the recommendations into action. The examples are indicative and do not cover all forms and situations of vocational education and training.

SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VET POLICIES AND PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL BASIS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF)

- planning
- implementation
- evaluation and assessment
- review (feedback and procedures for change)

Characteristics of excellence

- consideration of functions as a whole
- customer focus
- leadership
- results orientation
- continuous learning, innovation and improvement
- people as resources
- effective processes
- relevance to the world of work and partnerships
- social responsibility

Chart 1. Structure of the Quality Management Recommendation

The recommendations are primarily designed to support the operations and development work of VET providers and their units, but they often pose challenges for other parties responsible for the quality of education and training as well. Each provider decides appropriate ways to implement the recommendations in practical terms. This requires co-operation with other parties.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1 Consideration of functions as a whole

The operational system helps VET providers to consider, develop and steer their operations as a whole towards their own objectives. It allows providers to ensure that agreed goals and objectives are converted into practice in all areas (such as customers, finances, people, processes) and at all levels (such as operational units, VET fields, forms and services) of the organisation and that their achievement is assessed and improved systematically. The operational system is characterised by the fact that it changes and develops as a result of changes occurring within the operating environment. The system itself is also a target of continuous evaluation and improvement.

Evaluation forms an important part of a VET provider's operational system. Statutes require education and training providers to evaluate their provision and its effectiveness. In addition, providers must participate in external evaluation of their operations. Each provider decides on the objectives, principles and implementation, such as procedures and schedules, of its own evaluations. Providers are also free to decide on how to utilise the results of self-evaluation in other evaluations and, correspondingly, on how to use the results of other evaluations in support of self-evaluation. Providers also determine how they will follow the results of evaluations of other organisations and make use of these when developing their own operations.

Planning

Each VET provider has a documented operational system that is used to plan and steer operations as a whole and to communicate to customers, staff and key stakeholders information about the values, goals and objectives guiding operations. The operational system also covers descriptions of processes and the organisational structures and approaches that support their development.

VET providers:
- plan and steer different VET functions and forms and operations of their units as a whole, such that these support achievement of common goals;
- ensure that quality management forms part of their strategic planning and everyday activities;
- include a programme for sustainable development as part of their operational system, in order to steer achievement of objectives and measures relating to environmental issues, social responsibility and health and safety at work and the well-being of staff and students;
- plan and steer operations by means of operational chains, i.e. processes, determined on the basis of their basic mission;
- document key procedures, processes and guidelines in an electronic system, maintenance of which has been ensured;
- inform key stakeholders within their operating area of their operational system and key policies and procedures in the system.

VET providers have determined and outlined a system and plan to evaluate operations and assess results, covering all key strategic objectives, policies and guidelines concerning evaluation and assessment as well as schedules and responsibilities involved.

VET providers:
- create consistent principles for evaluation of their operations and different units;
- ensure that they have collected and documented information for various needs relating to operational evaluation (such as national evaluations, follow-up reviews, research and skill demonstrations);
- have determined how to analyse, combine and make use of evaluation data acquired from different sources.

Implementation

VET providers function in line with objectives specified within the framework of their operational system and improve their operations continuously from their own points of departure.

VET providers:
- implement their policies and strategy by means of key processes;
- steer their operations and their operational units according to consistent policies;
- develop their education and training provision, forms of operation and organisational structures such that these form a whole strong enough to meet the skills needs of different sectors of the world of work;
- communicate to their staff that quality management is part of the job of everyone working within the education and training organisation;
- make sure that the principle of sustainable development is taken into account in all operations.

VET providers make diverse use of various evaluation methods and data in order to develop their operations.

VET providers:
- collect and analyse evaluation results and other feedback information;
- make use of results obtained in other evaluations, such as the results of national evaluations;
- have an external evaluation of their operations carried out at least once every three years;
- develop their operations by means of internal audits;
- co-operate with other education and training providers by carrying out benchmarking and peer reviews, for example.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their operational system regularly and make changes as required.

VET providers:
- regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their evaluation system and develop evaluation in line with the national evaluation strategy;
- decide on development actions on the basis of the analysis of evaluation results and prepare the necessary action plans, determining schedules and responsibilities for actions;
- co-operate with other education and training providers in order to develop their evaluation system.
- monitor that documents guiding their operations are kept up-to-date and review these as required.

2   Customer focus

Customer focus and relevance to the world of work are visible throughout VET providers' operations. This requires identification of different customer groups and their current and future needs. Customers are the ultimate judges of the quality of education and training and other services. Customers may be a VET provider's *external customers* (such as students, enterprises and other workplaces, funding bodies and society) or *internal customers*. The latter refer to customers of the organisation's internal processes, such as staff. By way of example, the student affairs office provides services for teaching staff.

Excellent VET providers create partnerships and network relationships and co-operate in order to cater for their different customer groups in the best possible way. Customer focus calls for among other things monitoring and anticipation of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of different customer groups and development of operations based on results achieved. It is also important for providers to respond to and learn from negative customer feedback.

Planning

VET providers identify key customers and their current and future needs and expectations. VET providers take customer needs and expectations into account when planning and developing services and products for different customer groups.

VET providers:
- identify external and internal customers, prioritise different customer groups and take each group's needs and expectations into account when planning education, training and other services in co-operation with key VET stakeholders (such as the world of work);
- identify the needs of prospective and potential students and co-operate with key stakeholders (such as comprehensive schools, general upper secondary schools and liberal adult education institutions as well as the labour administration);
- make systematic use of forecast data and anticipate the needs of the world of work together with key stakeholders, planning education, training and development services responsive to the world of work on the basis of anticipation;

- set clear and measurable objectives for each customer group in line with the chosen strategy and plan individual educational solutions for different students (such as special needs students, unemployed job-seekers, top professionals) based on their needs;
- involve different customer groups in development of education, training and other services.

Implementation

VET providers take the needs and expectations of different customer groups into account as a whole when implementing education, training and development services.

VET providers:
- take the needs of different customer groups (such as young people, adults, apprentices, immigrants, special needs students, unemployed job-seekers, workplaces) into account when making decisions concerning teaching arrangements, learning environments and financial and human resources;
- create procedures that allow provision of education, training and development services on the basis of individual needs (such as recognition of prior learning and competence and systematic implementation of individualisation on all programmes);
- develop procedures that enable enterprises and other workplaces, students and other stakeholders to play an active role in operations and development of them;
- develop procedures to attend to students' well-being, thus strengthening a sense of community;
- promote expression of students' views by creating opportunities for students to participate in planning and implementation of education and training and supporting their co-operation (such as student association activities);
- ensure that all staff members are aware of their own function in provision of education and training services and that they improve the quality of services in co-operation with other people working within the education and training organisation.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers acquire performance data concerning different customers in a diverse manner, making use of it when developing services and operations.

VET providers:
- regularly monitor achievement of objectives concerning different customer groups using selected indicators;
- regularly collect feedback on different customer groups' perceptions (such as satisfaction among students and the world of work), making use of feedback collected for developing education, training and other services and operations;
- monitor and anticipate short- and long-term changes in demand for labour, employment rates among qualification-holders, demand for and supply of education and training, making use of this information in provision of education and training services;
- monitor the attractiveness of vocational education and training in their area and play an active role in improving it.

3   Leadership

Leadership plays a key role in provision of high-quality VET services and continuous improvement of operations. Systematic development of a VET provider's operations requires management to define a clear direction for the organisation and create conditions for functioning in line with its vision. Management regularly exploits factual information collected on the operating environment and any changes to it in support of decision-making. Setting relevant objectives requires active co-operation with the world of business and work, other education and training providers, as well as other parties and stakeholders involved in vocational education and training. In addition, it also calls for benchmarking data.

Planning

VET providers monitor and anticipate changes occurring in both internal and external operating environments on a continuous basis, making use of this information for operational planning.

VET providers:

- are familiar with key regional, national and European objectives concerning vocational education and training;
- anticipate changes occurring in the world of business and work, demographic trends and society and carry out anticipation work in co-operation with other education and training providers and institutions operating in the area, business and other working life organisations, as well as other stakeholders;
- systematically collect information on their own operations and make use of the field's research information in their operations;
- follow how changes to statutes, instructions and recommendations governing the operations of VET providers and the world of work in fields relevant to their provision change and influence their own operations.

VET providers define their mission, vision and the values and policies guiding their operations together with staff.

VET providers:

- develop sufficiently consistent quality management policies for their functions, different operational units and different VET forms;
- ensure that their organisation focuses on operations in line with their basic mission;
- ensure that the annual operational plan is based on the mission, vision, values and strategic objectives;
- allocate material and human resources in keeping with objectives, operational changes and development priorities.

Implementation

VET providers plan, steer and develop operations on the basis of information obtained through analysis of the operating environment.

VET providers:
- make use of information obtained through analysis of the operating environment when drawing up their strategy and annual operational and financial plan;
- set annual provider- and unit-level objectives based on their mission, vision, values and strategic objectives.

VET providers ensure achievement of specified goals and objectives through leadership and create conditions for continuous improvement of operations.

VET providers:
- ensure that leadership is supported by an up-to-date operational system;
- ensure that operational and unit-level management complies with jointly agreed policies;
- develop an organisational structure that supports achievement of objectives;
- ensure that leadership responsibilities have been defined clearly in terms of pedagogical leadership, for example;
- communicate values, specified objectives and results achieved to staff, customers and partners;
- support and encourage staff in achievement of objectives and personal development.

VET providers, their operational units and staff function in line with the mission, vision, values and policies and commit to continuous improvement of them.

VET providers:
- communicate the values, vision and policies to staff effectively and sufficiently;
- ensure that people in leadership positions contribute through their own actions to a working environment and atmosphere that support achievement of objectives;
- ensure that different units, VET forms and functions (such as quality management) comply with jointly agreed policies;
- take the principles of sustainable development into account in all operations.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

Assessment of leadership, vision, values and achievement of strategic objectives is part of systematic self-evaluation. VET providers also acquire other feedback information in support of development.

VET providers:
- actively monitor performance and effectiveness by means such as national indicators for performance-based funding, using information obtained to revise performance targets and to develop operations;
- systematically monitor and assess implementation of quality management policies.

4   *Results orientation*

Successful and effective education and training requires clear and realistic goals. VET providers define the results that they want to achieve and they set objectives for their operations. When setting objectives, VET providers take into account aspects such as national VET objectives, the requirements of the local operating environment (including enterprises, other workplaces and students) and the needs of other stakeholders. Based on these needs, providers then select appropriate procedures.

The purpose of evaluation is to show the extent to which objectives set for operations have been achieved and the progress made towards them. Evaluation supports VET providers' continuous improvement and results-oriented performance. Through evaluation, providers obtain information about major strengths and development needs. VET providers monitor, assess and analyse results achieved systematically through means such as various surveys, quantitative indicators and self-evaluation. Providers and their units receive significant information on their success from customers and stakeholders. It is also important to take into account the opportunities for customers and stakeholders to provide continuous feedback on operations and results. Another key aspect is use of immediate feedback.

VET providers also make use of benchmarking data obtained from other organisations. Providers ensure that performance data is comprehensive and that they receive appropriate information on achievement of strategic objectives. Providers use performance data when developing operations and setting new performance targets.

Planning

VET providers set challenging, tangible and achievable objectives for their operations on the basis of customer needs and expectations. Results orientation requires balanced consideration of the needs of all key customers and other stakeholders.

VET providers:
- take national objectives for and European development trends in vocational education and training into account when defining objectives;
- take the needs of enterprises and other workplaces, different students, partners and other key stakeholders into account when defining objectives;
- take the principles of sustainable development into account when defining objectives;
- set both quantitative and qualitative objectives for the whole organisation and its units on the basis of their strategy and possible sub-strategies.

Implementation

VET providers work towards specified objectives at all levels of the organisation and in all functions and units.

VET providers:

- ensure that the objectives and operations of units and forms of operation create an integrated whole that supports achievement of strategic objectives;
- ensure that staff are familiar with specified objectives and work in line with them;
- support and encourage staff in achievement of specified objectives;
- ensure that students and participants in competence tests achieve the vocational competence specified in the relevant National Core Curricula or Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications and obtain capabilities for occupational development in keeping with the principle of lifelong learning;
- make sure that curricula are kept up-to-date, that agreements to organise competence tests are valid and that education and training is carried out to a high quality standard;
- take action to promote achievement of the objective of providing education and/or training for entire age groups, completion of qualifications, development of vocational skills among gainfully employed people, students' employment and transition to further studies, prevention of social exclusion and reduction in drop-out rates;
- take action to promote socially, ecologically, economically and culturally sustainable development;
- play an active role in developing their operating area and the local world of work.

VET providers prepare an information management strategy stemming from their own needs and the needs of their units.

VET providers:

- ensure that their own organisation and units have information at their disposal about operations and performance that makes it possible to monitor achievement of strategic objectives;
- take the needs of national information systems, such as performance-based funding and electronic application systems, as well as their own needs into account when developing information systems;
- ensure that electronic information systems are up-to-date and that staff have sufficient skills to use them;
- ensure that information submitted to the authorities and other parties is accurate and up-to-date.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers monitor and assess achievement of objectives in a systematic and goal-oriented manner at all levels of the education and training organisation and in its different functions.

VET providers:
- collect performance data facilitating steering and development of operations in a diverse and goal-oriented manner;
- monitor performance through a set of indicators that covers key areas of operations and that provides information on achievement of and trends in objectives;
- ensure that the indicators selected are aligned at different levels of operations and in different units;
- analyse results and compare these with objectives specified in their strategy and curricula, relevant reference data and best practices, for example;
- also make use of data obtained about other organisations' operations in analysing results and evaluating their operations.

VET providers monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of education, training and learning processes on a regular basis.

VET providers:
- make use of information obtained from vocational skills demonstrations and competence tests, information produced by national evaluations as well as other reference data about learning outcomes in their operations and operational development;
- monitor indicators describing VET performance, such as performance-based funding indicators;
- systematically collect feedback from enterprises and other workplaces, students and other customers and partners;
- make sure that staff and students participate in planning and implementation of evaluation and ensure that they are familiar with key evaluation methods and understand the significance of evaluation activities.

VET providers assess and improve their information management systems regularly in order to acquire up-to-date and relevant performance data.

VET providers:
- regularly monitor guidelines issued by authorities responsible for collection of information (such as Statistics Finland and the Finnish National Board of Education) and make sure that their information systems produce reliable information as required for official information collection procedures.

VET providers develop their operations on the basis of performance data acquired from different sources.

VET providers:
- revise previously specified objectives and set new ones based on performance data;
- provide information on evaluation results and development plans.

5   *Continuous learning, innovation and improvement*

In order to meet the changing skills and development needs of students and the world of work, VET providers need to identify skills needs comprehensively and base their operational strategy on continuous learning. VET providers create conditions for continuous learning and development of competence, innovation and dissemination of results achieved at all levels of their organisation. Meeting customer needs also requires providers to continuously develop their core competence areas and operational processes.

In pursuit of excellence, VET providers follow other organisations' operations on a continuous basis and develop their own operations making use of the experiences of others. The operational culture of a learning organisation supports experimentation with new practices, while also helping to prepare for the possibility that these are not necessarily suitable for its own operations. VET providers can promote creativity and innovation by organising various forms of co-operation, such as joint learning forums for different customer groups.

An organisation develops through individuals' learning. Creation and application of innovations require critical analysis and, where necessary, rejection of previous models and principles. The starting points for increasing creativity and innovation are an atmosphere and operational culture that promote learning, development and creativity. Learning also involves accepting and learning from mistakes. Providing and receiving feedback as well as evaluation and continuous improvement of operations form part of an excellent organisation's procedures. Every organisation is encouraged to take initiative, be innovative and use innovative working methods.

VET providers ensure utilisation of feedback and other performance data by creating effective procedures that bring about change. These should be determined in writing, in order for staff to be aware of how to move things forward. Providers appoint specific people to take responsibility for change processes and set schedules for their implementation. They reserve the necessary resources to bring about change and monitor its progress. This makes it possible to monitor implementation of changes and developments in results. By making use of feedback information and going through change processes, providers gain support as they learn how to improve their operations.

Planning

Planning

VET providers develop their forms of operation and organisational structures such that these enable and promote continuous learning, creativity and innovation.

VET providers:
- create procedures to actively identify development targets by means of performance data and analysis of operating environments, to evaluate these targets and to use them as a basis for preparing development plans;
- develop their approaches and organisational structures so as to allow flexible and diverse utilisation of organisational expertise in various education, training and development duties;
- create conditions for making use of their staff's innovative potential by providing them with opportunities to follow developments in their own field and to participate in various development projects and other forms of operational improvement;
- enable monitoring and analysis of other organisations' operations in order to make use of the experiences of others when developing their own operations;
- take the best practices used both within their own organisation and in other organisations into account when preparing development plans.

Implementation

VET providers promote creation of an open operational culture that encourages creativity and exchange of information both within their own organisation and with the world of work and other stakeholders.

VET providers:
- make sure that elected officials, unit management and staff commit to continuous improvement and management of operations in keeping with the principles of a customer-focused organisation;
- promote making initiatives related to development of their operational processes and launching necessary development activities based on these;
- create conditions and procedures and reserve resources for development projects to promote implementation of their operational strategy and ensure opportunities for staff to participate in development projects and improvement of operations;
- engage in active and systematic co-operation with their customer and stakeholder groups by means such as establishing field-specific co-operation bodies to develop their operations;
- reserve sufficient resources for innovation activities.

VET providers make use of their staff's creativity and innovative capacity in their operations and services.

VET providers:
- create flexible study opportunities that take into account customer needs as well as the requirements of different VET fields and forms;
- participate in national and international networks and benchmarking activities aiming to promote vocational instruction and excellence;
- encourage staff to develop and make use of their own competence extensively, by means such as teachers' on the-job-learning periods and development projects aiming to improve working life skills;
- encourage staff to participate in development of their own field and work.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers monitor and evaluate their development and innovation, improving these on the basis of the results achieved.

VET providers:
- learn from their own actions and encourage staff to continuously look for opportunities to improve organisational performance;
- identify and prioritise key areas for improvement and operationalise these into development projects;
- identify and plan development measures together with the world of business and work, staff and stakeholders such that all parties are aware of the direction of operational development and change processes involved;
- assess their feedback and change procedures and acquire benchmarking data on their partners' procedures.

6 People as resources

Teaching and other staff play a key role in terms of how VET providers can meet the changing skills and development needs of students and the world of work. Providers need to make sure that they have staff who can, in terms of their number, structure and competence areas, support implementation of their basic mission in the best possible way. Staff must also be capable of meeting future challenges. Providers also satisfy staff demand by acquiring the necessary competencies from the world of work or from other education and training providers.

Providers are aware of the current and future skills needs of their teaching and other staff and ensure continuous maintenance, development and acquisition of their staff's competence in line with their strategic objectives. In addition, providers encourage staff to develop and make extensive use of their own competence and create frameworks for transfer of knowledge and competence and for staff involvement and well-being.

Planning

VET providers plan and develop their human resources based on changes occurring in the operating environment as part of their strategic development.

VET providers:
- draw up a human resources strategy or an equivalent plan, where they determine those objectives and measures targeting their teaching and other staff that aim to support achievement of objectives set for operations (such as the number, recruitment, quality and structure of staff, development of their competence, staff involvement and well-being at work, and human resources management);
- make sure that staff are consulted and that they can participate in drawing up the human resources strategy;
- ensure that the objectives related to human resources strategy are tangible and measurable.

VET providers chart their staff's current competence level and future skills needs on a regular basis and, based on these, draw up staff development plan.

VET providers:
- anticipate and chart the skills needs (core competence) of their teaching and other staff as part of their strategy process;
- chart their teaching and other staff's current competence level in relation to skills needs (competence mapping);
- draw up annual development plan covering the entire staff, according to which teaching and other staff's competence will be developed in line with strategic objectives.

VET providers create opportunities for teaching and other staff to develop and maintain their professional competence, participate and look after their well-being at work.

VET providers:
- make sure that sufficient resources (such as time, money, substitute arrangements) have been reserved for all staff groups to achieve the objectives set out in the human resources strategy and plans based on it;
- determine responsibilities, organise work assignments and develop organisational structures such that these support all staff groups' skills development, involvement and well-being at work;
- make sure that plans relating to well-being at work and equal treatment of staff have been prepared and are kept up-to-date.

Implementation

VET providers ensure operating conditions for teaching and other staff and development of these operating conditions in accordance with the human resources strategy or equivalent plan.

VET providers:
- ensure that staff are aware of the objectives defined in the human resources strategy and plans based on the strategy and that people commit to these in all units and at all levels;
- make sure that performance and development reviews are conducted regularly in all units and with all staff groups;
- encourage staff to develop, share and make use of their competence;
- support staff's involvement and well-being at work, using various means and incentives agreed together with staff.
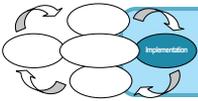
VET providers offer staff diverse opportunities to maintain and develop their competence.

VET providers:
- make sure that teachers are provided with opportunities to participate in continuing training on a regular basis;
- create conditions for teachers on the-job-learning periods and enable continuous development of contacts with the world of work as well as job rotation;
- offer teaching staff opportunities to develop their competence by participating in projects and other such undertakings;
- encourage and support involvement in international co-operation, staff exchanges and vocational skills development networks.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers assess achievement of objectives set out in the human resources strategy and other staff-related plans on the basis of monitoring and feedback data, other performance data and good practices, using these as a basis to develop their operations.

VET providers:
- regularly collect monitoring and feedback data concerning the status of their teaching and other staff from all units and levels;
- draw up annual human resources balance sheets based on monitoring and feedback data concerning staff;
- make use of monitoring and feedback data concerning teaching and other staff to review their human resources strategy and plans based on this;
- improve procedures relating to staff development, involvement and well-being at work and their application on the basis of monitoring and feedback data and good practices.

7 Effective processes

An excellent education and training organisation is characterised by the fact that it structures its operations as processes (chains of operations). A typical process could be an education and training process, which may include phases linked to one another in chronological terms, such as student recruitment – planning of education and training – implementation of education and training – evaluation. Examining operations as processes helps VET providers to focus their attention on aspects that are essential in terms of customers, to streamline their operations to clarify responsibilities and to direct resources to what is relevant in terms of achieving objectives. In addition, a process-based procedure helps providers to examine their operations as a whole and analyse connections between related functions (such as theoretical education and supervision of work-based learning, teaching and guidance counselling, student welfare services).

VET providers' operations can be divided into different processes according to the type of added value that they generate for customers. By means of core processes, providers produce those services that external customers and stakeholders primarily expect (such as vocational skills and eligibility for further studies for students, or skilled labour for enterprises). Support processes are used by providers to create conditions for implementation of their core processes. These functions include guidance counselling, student welfare services, accommodation, office services, as well as management and human resources development. Correspondingly, providers have supplier and partner processes (such as co-operation with stakeholders) to plan, manage and develop external partnerships (such as acquisition of products and services and co-operation with workplaces, other education and training institutions and other partners).

Processes are an important management tool, which enables VET providers to convert their strategic objectives into practice and to carry out their basic mission. Process management requires that objectives, responsibilities and control and monitoring mechanisms relating to processes are clear and that processes are developed on a continuous basis.

It is essential in terms of decision-making and management of processes and other operations that VET providers have access to reliable information covering both current and anticipated performance.

Planning

VET providers determine their key processes on the basis of their basic mission, specified strategic objectives and policies.

VET providers:

- identify their external and internal customers (such as various student groups, including young people, adults and special needs students, as well as employers and the labour administration) and education, training, development and other services provided for these customers on the basis of their basic mission;
- define key processes and their interconnections based on customer analysis;
- define core processes, which may include planning of education, training and other services, provision of education and training (teaching) and supply of commercial services and products;
- define support processes, which may include functions relating to support for teaching, institutional administration, staff and management;
- define supplier and partner processes, which may include co-operation with materials and equipment suppliers as well as with the world of work and various stakeholders.

VET providers structure their processes in terms of subprocesses as required.

VET providers:

- identify and describe subprocesses included in core processes; the processes for planning of education, training and other services, cover among other things anticipation of skills needs, planning of education and training services, preparation of curricula, planning of teaching arrangements, organisation of work-based learning and preparation of individual study plans and individual educational plans;
- identify and describe subprocesses included in support processes (such as guidance counselling, accommodation services, office services);
- identify and describe the subprocesses included in supplier and partner processes as a functional whole to fulfil the basic mission, such as co-operation processes with suppliers, the world of work, other education and training institutions and various stakeholders.

VET providers secure sufficient resources for achievement of process objectives.

VET providers:

- ensure that the core, support and supplier and partner processes form a continuum between provider and unit levels: in terms of pedagogical activities, for example, the common section of the curriculum, prepared at the provider level, steers different units and levels in their curricular development, preparation of individual study plans and individual educational plans, teaching and other pedagogical activities;
- make sure that principles to be complied with in co-operation with the world of work or other stakeholders are determined in support of processes;
- create conditions for compliance with processes by means such as sufficient material and human resources.

Implementation

VET providers convert their strategic objectives, goals and policies into practical terms by means of processes. VET providers also use processes to manage and steer their operations.

VET providers:

- manage and steer different processes by means of specified objectives and related indicators and other monitoring tools;
- set objectives and indicators derived from the strategy for different processes and explain these to their staff;
- appoint people or parties (process owners) to be responsible for different processes and continuous development of them;
- ensure that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in implementation and development of processes;
- use processes to ensure that curricula are kept up-to-date, that agreements to organise competence tests are valid and that education and training is carried out to a high quality standard;
- take the needs of the world of work and individual students into account when planning and implementing VET provision;
- develop clear and effective procedures to recognise students' previously acquired skills and individualise studies;
- make sure that co-operation with the world of work or other stakeholders complies with jointly agreed principles in different units and at different levels.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers evaluate and improve their processes regularly on the basis of monitoring and feedback data, good practices and changes occurring in their operating environments.

VET providers:

- make use of monitoring, feedback and evaluation data acquired from different processes when developing their operations;
- acquire information about processes and their performance through self-evaluation and internal and external auditing of operations;
- acquire up-to-date, reliable and comprehensive information about the status of their external and internal operating environments in support of process development;
- make use of good practices created in their own and other organisations when improving their pedagogical and other activities;
- develop the whole made up of core, support and supplier and partner processes such that it meets the constantly changing challenges of the operating environment.

8   Relevance to the world of work and partnerships

Relevance to the world of work and effective partnerships are the prerequisites of high-quality vocational education and training. VET providers work together with their partners in order to achieve common goals. They support each other through their professional skills, resources and competencies, aiming to meet the needs and expectations of customers and various stakeholders as effectively as possible.

VET providers need a diverse network of partners, in order for their education, training and competence services to be able to meet the changing needs of students and the world of work. Providers are also playing an increasing role as developers of the world of work. This calls for strong and multidisciplinary regional co-operation networks linking education, training, research and the world of work.

In addition to workplaces, enterprises and other partners (such as the labour administration, regional Employment and Economic Development Centres and the municipal social administration), a VET provider's partner network may include other education and training providers and units. From the perspective of the internationalisation of vocational education and training and the world of work, it is also important to create and maintain partnerships with education and training institutions and labour markets abroad. These facilitate promotion of mobility among students and teaching staff and development of the provider's operations.

Planning

VET providers have defined co-operation with business life, other sectors of the world of work and other partners and its objectives as part of their strategy or other strategic plans.

VET providers:
- set objectives relating to partnerships in their operational strategy and define policies and procedures for management and development of partnerships;
- identify and prioritise their key partners that support achievement of strategic objectives;
- actively seek new partners to help respond to change challenges in the operating environment;
- use strategic goals as a basis to set objectives concerning development and outcomes of partnerships as part of their operational and financial planning.

Implementation

VET providers develop work-based learning, learning environments and different ways to demonstrate skills and competences in co-operation with the world of work and other stakeholders.

VET providers:
- develop pedagogical methods and approaches that make it possible to strengthen work-based learning and workplaces as learning environments;
- organise vocational skills demonstrations and competence tests in co-operation with enterprises and other workplaces in keeping with jointly agreed principles;
- ensure that workplace instructors have sufficient capabilities and opportunities to provide learners with instruction at the workplace;
- support workplace instructors' work in order to improve the quality of learning at the workplace and arrange training for workplace instructors in co-operation with the world of work;
- make extensive use of competence test assessors or bodies involved in vocational skills demonstrations in order to develop education and training services relevant to the world of work;
- support staff in consolidation and updating of their working life skills and continuous development of contacts with the world of work;
- co-operate in providing of apprenticeship training.

VET providers actively co-operate with other education and training institutions involved in the same sectors and within their own area.

VET providers:
- develop partnerships with a view to making it possible to support students' transition from one level of education to another or consolidation and specialisation of competence;
- actively engage in co-operation with comprehensive schools within their own area, thus supporting pupils' transition to vocational studies and comprehensive school teachers' knowledge of the labour market;
- co-operate with general upper secondary schools and other education and training institutions in order to diversify study opportunities stemming from students' individual needs;
- actively engage in co-operation with those education and training providers that are potential providers of their students' further education;
- agree on the necessary field-specific specialisation with other VET providers, such that their services can meet the needs of vocational competence specialising in a specific sector as a whole.

VET providers co-operate with partners operating in other sectors in order to provide services for students and the world of work.

VET providers:
- co-operate in order to offer support services to special needs students and to implement preparatory education and guidance;
- co-operate with parties such as the labour administration and the regional Employment and Economic Development Centres in providing training services for unemployed job-seekers and for people at risk of unemployment;
- co-operate in providing training and support services required by enterprises;
- co-operate with different authorities and other parties in areas such as anticipation of education and training needs, prevention of social exclusion and promotion of accessible study opportunities and students' well-being and sense of community.

VET providers participate in development of the local world of business and work together with other education and training providers and parties operating in the area.

VET providers:
- co-operate in anticipating education, training and skills needs;
- support workplace instructors' work in order to improve the quality of learning at the workplace;
- promote innovation activities in workplaces and develop of operations and working communities within SMEs in particular through their responsibility to support and develop the world of work.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

VET providers have in place an evaluation and feedback system, which includes plans to evaluate and develop performance of partnerships and relevance of education and training to the world of work.

VET providers:
- make sure that key stakeholders (such as the world of business and work, students, the labour administration) participate in planning and implementation of evaluation;
- develop partnerships continuously and review related strategic objectives based on performance and feedback data and on changes occurring in the operating environment;
- develop arrangements and support forms relating to implementation of work-based learning, vocational skills demonstrations and competence tests in co-operation with the world of business and work on the basis of assessment results and feedback.

9   *Social responsibility*

In addition to meeting the skills needs of individuals and the world of work, taking individual education and training needs into account and developing the world of work, the basic mission of vocational education and training also includes attending to equal opportunities for education and training, preventing social exclusion, supporting active citizenship and providing education and training for special needs students. It is typical of vocational education and training to bear social responsibility beyond its basic mission, which is broadly visible throughout all the operations of VET providers. Building a future on solutions that are simultaneously sustainable in economic, ecological, social and cultural terms calls for perception and understanding of integrated wholes. Creating an atmosphere that supports participation, sense of community and influence within a VET provider's organisation and its individual units strengthen its capacity to bear social responsibility and promote sustainable development.

Planning

VET providers define the priorities of social responsibility in strategies and operational plans. Staff are involved in defining priorities.

VET providers:
- take social responsibility into account in their values and strategies;
- draw up a plan or a programme to promote sustainable development as part of their operational system, including aspects such as environmental responsibility, sense of community, tolerance, equality and prevention of social exclusion.

Implementation

VET providers make sure that the principles of sustainable development are taken into account in all their operations.

VET providers:
- act in an ethically sustainable manner by ensuring aspects such as transparency of operations and openness of communication;
- actively seek opportunities to participate in projects that promote achievement of the objectives of sustainable development;
- promote socially sustainable development by attending to the well-being and equality of staff and students, strengthening a sense of community and preventing exclusion and discrimination as well as mental and physical violence;
- ensure realisation of ecologically sustainable development throughout all functions of their organisation.

VET providers comply with statutes in a responsible manner.

VET providers:
- make sure that all staff members and students are aware of key statutes and standards governing their sector and any changes made to these, while also ensuring that staff comply with these;
- attend to the health and safety of working and learning environments within their own premises and, during periods of work-based learning, in workplaces as well.

VET providers play an active role in national and regional development of education and training.

VET providers:
- offer staff and units opportunities to participate in activities such as development of National Core Curricula and Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications and in other VET development projects;
- offer staff and students opportunities to prepare for and participate in vocational skills competitions and play an active role in promotion of competitive activities;
- co-operate with the labour administration in development of services to promote employment opportunities.

Evaluation and assessment; feedback and procedures for change

The VET providers evaluation and feedback system covers evaluation of fulfilment of its social responsibility. VET providers take social responsibility into account in all their development activities.

GLOSSARY

This appendix includes key quality management concepts used in this document. Some definitions are based on terms listed in the SFS-EN ISO 9000:2005 standard (Quality management systems. Fundamentals and vocabulary.), published by the Finnish Standards Association SFS. Definitions based on the ISO standard are marked with an asterisk (*).

Benchmarking
means learning from best practices, systematic comparison of the operations of an organisation or a unit with those of other organisations or units. Benchmarking can be used to compare aspects such as strategies, procedures, processes and indicators.

Characteristics of excellence
are those organisational properties that can generally be considered as being prerequisites of excellent performance. These characteristics are included in the EFQM model (Fundamental Concepts of Excellence), for example.

Copenhagen process
is a measure to improve the quality of vocational education and training within EU countries, with the following main objectives: improving the quality of vocational education and training, increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training, and promoting mobility among vocational students and qualification-holders.

Customer focus
means awareness and anticipation of customer needs and continuous improvement of operations based on their needs, expectations, feedback and suggestions for improvement. In addition to external customers, organisations also pay attention to their internal customers when developing their functions.

Customer
is an organisation or a person that receives a product.* In vocational education and training, customers are considered as being active participants, rather than just recipients of services. Key customers of an education and training organisation include users of education and training services (students and working life organisations) and bodies purchasing and paying for education and training.

Education and training provider
may be a local authority (municipality), a joint municipal authority, a registered association or a foundation authorised by the Ministry of Education to provide (vocational) education and training. Vocational education and training may also be organised at a state-owned vocational institution.

Evaluation and assessment
is interpretive analysis of a target or action under review.

External audit
refers to a systematic and independent review conducted by parties external to an organisation in order to establish whether organisational operations are efficient, in line with objectives and suited to their purpose.

External evaluation
refers to interpretive analyses of an organisation's status and operations conducted by parties external to the organisation. Evaluation may focus on a specific operational area or process, or on the entire organisation.

Human resources balance sheet
means an annual report consisting of monitoring data on human resources, which provides an overview of the status and development of an organisation's human resources and which is used in development of human resources.

ISO 9000 standard system
consists of a series of standards setting out requirements for quality management systems with a view to helping organisations produce the quality that their customers require.

Learning organisation
is an organisation that develops and adapts its procedures on a continuous basis. A learning organisation is characterised by aspects such as continuous learning, an inclusive operational culture, continuous assessment of operations, and commitment by staff and management to operational objectives.

Lisbon strategy
refers to a change strategy determined for the European Union by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, which was subsequently named after the venue of the summit. The strategy is a shared vision of the direction in which EU countries want to develop their economies and societies over the next ten years. The core of the Lisbon strategy is to strengthen competitiveness, pursue full employment and support social cohesion.

Maastricht communiqué
was adopted at an informal ministerial meeting held in Maastricht in December 2004. The Communiqué examines the progress made as part of the Copenhagen process and achievement of its objectives. It aims to promote achievement of a European labour market and to build an open and flexible European Qualifications Framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences.

Mission
explains why an organisation exists.

Operating environment
refers to everything that may influence an organisation's operations. Analysis of the operating environment is a point of departure for developing organisational operations. The operating environment covers both the external and internal operating environment of the organisation. A vocational institution's operating environment includes areas such as education, training and social policies, the world of work and its developments, as well as internal factors.

Operational plan
is a document drawn up for the purposes of implementing the organisational strategy and improving its quality, which covers specified performance targets, procedures, their timing and resources.

Operational unit
is an education and training provider's unit responsible for organising education and training, such as a vocational institution or its individual branch.

Peer Review
is an external evaluation aiming to support quality assurance and improvement in the organisation being reviewed. Such reviews are conducted by teams of peers. Peers – or 'critical friends' – are individuals who are external to the education and training organisation, but who work in a similar environment and have specific professional expertise and knowledge of the subject being evaluated.

Performance assessment of education and training
means interpretive analysis of the degree to which the objectives of education and training have been achieved. Performance can be assessed from the perspectives of efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

Process
means a set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs.* Processes can be divided according to their significance into core processes, support processes, and supplier and partner processes.

Core process means a set of actions and use of related resources and methods used to provide a customer with a specific product or service. A core process starts from customer needs and ends at a service or product deliverable to the customer. The core processes of vocational education and training are related to teaching and support for learning.

Supplier and partner process is a chain of operations representing the services and products provided for an organisation by its suppliers and partners. Examples of vocational institutions' supplier and partner processes include services relating to property maintenance and health care, co-operation with the world of work, and co-operation with other education and training institutions in areas such as study arrangements.

Support process means an operational chain or procedure focused on supporting smooth implementation of an organisation's core processes. A support process primarily caters for internal customers. Support processes at education and training institutions include student welfare, office and library services.

Process description
is a graphical or verbal representation that covers the different phases of operations as a chronologically progressing chain of operations. The description indicates responsibilities relating to working phases, inputs and resulting outputs.

Process owner
is a person assigned with overall responsibility for process development. A process owner is often supported by a team that shares his or her responsibility for the task assigned to the team.

Product
means the result of a process.* An example of a vocational institution's product is an education and training service made available to a student.

Quality
refers to the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements.* The quality of education and training means the ability of education and training to meet specified objectives and customer needs.

Quality assessment
means an activity involving interpretive analysis of the degree to which the target of assessment meets the quality requirements specified. In vocational education and training, assessment may focus on aspects such as the quality of plans for arranging competence tests, student performance and education and training, effectiveness of co-operation with the world of work, correspondence between demand for and supply of education and training, or organisational operations as a whole.

Quality assurance
is that part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled.* Examples of quality assurance in vocational education and training include vocational skills demonstrations at upper secondary level and competence tests in vocational adult education and training.

Quality award
is an award granted by an external organisation to an organisation that has achieved the quality requirements set for its operations and that demonstrates a better standard of quality than the other organisations that participated in the quality awards competition. A quality award may also be granted for excellent performance and good results achieved based on this in some area of operations. Quality awards may be tangible or symbolic.

Quality criterion
is a criterion on the basis of which quality is judged. Examples of quality criteria in vocational education and training include student employment, for example.

Quality improvement
is an activity focused on enhancing functions and processes in order to increase the benefits provided by these both for the organisation itself and for its customers.

Quality management
means co-ordinated activities to direct and control an organisation with regard to quality.*

Quality management system
means a management system to direct and control an organisation with regard to quality.*

Quality manual
is a document specifying the quality management system of an organisation.* A quality manual may consist of several documented records and it aims to facilitate the daily work carried out within an education and training organisation. Nowadays, the same document is also referred to as an 'operational manual'.

Quality system
is a mechanism used to systematically filter the quality policy and objectives defined by the management throughout the organisation. The system is organisation-specific and consists of elements such as the ground rules and procedures to be observed within the organisation. These may be documented in a quality manual, but more important than the form is that the system is practical and encourages to systematic action. Nowadays, the term 'operational system' is also used when the intention is to emphasise quality management as being an integral part of operations.

Quality work
covers all activities focused on improving the quality of organisational functions and assuring their quality.

Self-evaluation
means interpretive analysis of the operations of an organisation and of people operating within it. Self-evaluation examines whether operational objectives are being achieved and whether this is taking place in the most sensible manner possible. Self-evaluation helps the organisation to recognise its current status, set new objectives and launch development activities in order to achieve these objectives.

Strategy
sets out the means by which goals are pursued, thus providing guidelines for organisational operations aiming to achieve the goals. Based on the strategy, each organisation draws up its operational plans and decides on the concrete means applied to implement them.

Values
express what is important in an organisation's operations and what the operations are based on. The values of vocational education and training may be relevance to the world of work and a student-centred approach, for example.

Vision
is a perception of an organisation's desired future state that is justified in terms of the organisation's raison d'être and values.

The Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training is designed to serve as a strategic tool for developing quality management among all types of VET providers' organisations, their units and forms of action. The publication consists of both the quality management recommendations and the relevant introductory texts. The publication also contains a glossary.

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