

Stylman, V. & Jalolahti, J. 2018. Vocational competence in Vocational Qualification in Building Maintenance Technology. Helsinki: Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

The evaluation focuses on vocational competence in the upper secondary level Vocational Qualification in Building Maintenance Technology. The evaluation data was obtained from vocational skills demonstrations and supplementary material describing the arrangement of such demonstrations. The results describe grades awarded for the vocational skills demonstrations and the activities relating to the arrangement of the skills demonstrations. The evaluation focused on all students who had started studying towards a Vocational Qualification in Building Maintenance Technology in vocational upper secondary education and training (VET) in autumn 2014 and on all units providing such VET programmes. The evaluation data was collected over the entire duration of the programme until the end of spring term 2017. Information on grades and quantitative data on the arrangement of vocational skills demonstrations were supplemented with the self-assessments of VET providers. In addition, the evaluation involved analysing the vocational skills demonstration and assessment plans as well as the descriptions of demonstration contents approved by the institutional bodies. In the analysis of the data and results, the evaluation team drew on the expertise of teachers working in the field.

The evaluation of learning outcomes was based on vocational skills demonstrations, thus focusing on vocational competence. The evaluation was based on the vocational skills requirements and the assessment criteria specified for the programme in the Qualification Requirements. In the demonstrations, the assessment of skills focuses on mastering the work process, mastering the working methods, mastering the equipment and materials, as well as the knowledge forming the basis of the work and key competences for lifelong learning. In other words, the Qualification Requirements functioned as a key starting point for evaluation.

Evaluation of learning outcomes in vocational education and training is development-oriented by its nature, and the implementation of the evaluation emphasises VET providers' active involvement and the interactive nature of evaluation. The data was collected directly in vocational skills demonstrations organised by VET providers. This development-oriented nature is also reflected in the self-assessments conducted by the VET providers and the feedback reports submitted to them, which the providers can use to compare their own results with national results.

The evaluation data was collected from all training providers (40). The data covered 931 students and 5,375 skills demonstrations. The evaluation also focused on special needs students. The data covered 668 skills demonstrations performed by special needs students. It included skills demonstration plans from 35 VET providers and a total of 5,362 descriptions of skills demonstrations. Self-assessment data was submitted by 34 providers.

Nearly a third of the students (30%) were awarded the grade “excellent” for the demonstration part of the qualification, 55% the grade “good” and 15% the grade “satisfactory”. The greatest number of “excellent” grades (37%) was awarded for key competences for lifelong learning. The greatest share of “satisfactory” grades was awarded for mastering the knowledge that forms the basis of the work. The averages of the assessed VET providers varied from 2.02 to 2.25, on a scale from 1 to 3. The average of final grades awarded for the demonstrations was 2.15. There were no major gender-based grade differences. On the other hand, differences in the grades awarded were observed between VET providers and locations.

Special needs students had more “satisfactory” and fewer “excellent” grades than other students. The most common grade awarded to special needs students was “good” for all competence areas, and all special needs students managed the demonstrations without using individually adjusted objectives.

The VET programmes leading to a Vocational Qualification in Building Maintenance Technology show a reasonably low level of working life relevance. The majority (73%) of the Building Maintenance Technology skills demonstrations were performed at educational institutions. Also of the demonstrations given by special needs students, the majority were carried out at educational institutions. According to VET providers, the availability of workplaces in line with the Qualification’s objectives and suitable for the acquisition of skills is quite good, whereas the availability of workplaces fulfilling the Qualification’s objectives and suitable for skills demonstrations was estimated to be quite low.

The grades for skills demonstrations are dependent on the evaluators. The students reached the highest grades when a working life representative participated in the assessment, and the students performing their demonstrations in the workplace, rather than at educational institutions, were awarded significantly better grades. The evaluation highlighted development needs related to workplace instructors’ assessment skills and teachers’ working life competence. Development needs were detected also in the integration of vocational subjects and common qualification units, the use of the monitoring and feedback information collected by VET providers, as well as the development of skills demonstrations.