

## **The structure of the High Vocational-Professional Education (HVPE) Area** **Ideas for international common names and terms**

### *Learning paths and differentiation within the HVPE Area*

**Part 3b**  
**January 2025**

#### **Preamble**

This document concerns proposals relating to the international Tertiary Education Area, based on all types of formal and non-formal qualifications at levels 5 to 8 of the EQF. This TEA is divided into a number of sectors. These can be clearly defined on the basis of a number of criteria and with the use of instruments that explicitly determine such a sector.

This is an approach that applies to the international classification of the TEA and the sectors indicated therein. In addition, English names are given that are proposed to be used in the international context. These can be used in international cooperation and agreements based on this between countries, institutions and organizations, as the associated sectors have their own defined characteristics.

Every country that wants to participate in this process in one way or another has complete freedom to design its own 'National Tertiary Education Area', with a self-chosen subdivision and appropriate criteria. Choices are made regarding having names for all kinds of concepts, often in the national language. If the government then uses English translations within one's own official communication about the national system, it can also choose one's own approach. There is no international body that can prescribe and enforce this.

We hope that in the coming years more and more countries will base themselves on our proposal and work with it. This can be compared to the Bologna Process that led to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Voluntary agreements have been established that people can adhere to in all kinds of partnerships. It is true that there are still countries that design certain deviating constructions, for all kinds of reasons. Countries can address each other within the EHEA about these matters, but never force each other to make the right adjustments. This can lead to misunderstandings and less transparent constructions and that is why we hope that our initiative will also lead to a form of harmonization for every National HEA.

In short, we work with international proposals and every country may and may participate in the process that we intend to initiate.

#### **1 Introduction**

This document of the series on the HVPE Area specifically discusses the learning paths that can be designed. The aim is to create a flexible system in order to best substantiate the choices that learners can make at the start of a study within High VPE.

This is a proposal that can be included in future discussions and also included in the process we have in mind. This is an international approach, such that each country can use it to determine what suits its own possibilities within national tertiary education.

#### **2 Learning paths within the VPE Area around levels 5 and 6**

As has been indicated elsewhere, our plans initially focus on levels 5 and 6, leading to HVPE-A and HVPE-B respectively. The other levels will be discussed at a later stage.

##### **2.1 Differentiation in learning paths**

The basis for flexibility within and with levels 5 and 6 is the following structure:

1. The programme that belongs to HVPE-A (level 5), as an independent qualification;
2. The programme that belongs to HVPE-B (level 6), as an independent qualification;
3. The programme that can be followed after obtaining HVPE-A, to obtain a HVPE-B diploma, and as such to be seen as an independent programme.

## **2.2 Differentiation within the final level (learning outcomes)**

Levels 5 and 6 are discussed, but it is of course not about fixed programs for a particular field of study, with associated learning outcomes. Such a course will have a fixed core of units, in order to clarify its relevance for the labour market.

But in addition, providers work with: elective subjects, minors, specific projects and learning paths in the final phase of a course, as a 'graduation'. This allows them to respond to the variety of functions within the working field.

A distinction can also be made based on the programmes for certain target groups. For example, full-time students will be able to fill a starting position with the help of the diploma, and then possibly take courses, in-company training and other forms of training in addition to the job. These can also be higher level certificates.

But in addition, someone who has reached level 5 and wants to achieve level 6 as worker and taking a part-time course (we will discuss this below) can do this in a different context. This is possible because the variants such as full-time, part-time and work-based (dual) learning can have their own design and approach, within the general learning outcomes of the course. This means that this 'working student' can grow within a working environment to a position at a higher level, also with the appropriate qualities. It means that the freedom available for completing all kinds of units can be used specifically for this purpose. This also means that these positions are not primarily intended for graduates with HVPE-B, if they have followed the undivided route to this level.

In short, the system fits the situation on the labour market where individuals can get to a certain place via different routes. This can be as a graduate, without little work experience, but also as a worker who has further trained and can tackle specific issues within that place because of work experience. In this way, various learning paths within the HVPE Area can be used to respond flexibly to the demands of the labor market, also in the longer term.

## **2.3 Learning paths reviewed**

These learning paths are further explained here.

### **1. HVPE-A**

This is an independent programme of 1,5 to 2 years, with the regular full-time bandwidth, and is further dependent on the further organization of the national education system. It is a program at level 5 of the EQF and leads to a diploma.

### **2. HVPE-B**

With a diploma at level 4, one can also opt for an independent HVPE programme of 3 to 4 years, leading to level 6, and therefore a diploma for HVPE-B. Here too, the length and embedding partly depend on the organization of the national education system.

### **3. HVPE-B via HVPE-A – with lateral inflow**

An option that is normally used when there are parallel education sectors is the switch from one area to another, seen as a form of 'lateral entry' into the receiving program. All kinds of constructions are possible:

- There is an agreement between the institutions involved so that a large part of the exemption is granted.
- It may also be decided to have an assessment carried out by the receiving examination committee, leading to the determination of a program that still needs to be followed.
- There is a switch from one variant to the other. In that case, a separate agreement and an including procedure will be necessary, given the design.
- A minor will be set up within the HVPE-A course that is intended to streamline the transition to VPE-B.

### **4. HVPE-B via HVPE-A – with a completely independent follow-up/matching programme**

This is the most interesting option. After obtaining the HVPE-A diploma, a so-called supplementary HVPE-B programme can be followed immediately or later. This is a programme that

specifically builds on what has been done within HVPE-A and as such can be regarded as independently developed in the formal context. Registration for the HVPE-B course is required, but the programme can be seen as a 'graduation differentiation' with its own status within the HVPE course profile. It is therefore particularly suitable for part-time and dual institutions.

This means that in the event of changes within the HVPE-A course, the independent additional programme will also be adjusted, under the direction of the management of this course.

Both management teams will also be jointly responsible for this. The education team for the additional programme will also mainly consist of teachers who are also deployed for the HVPE-A training and education.

#### **2.4 After HVPE-A continue with certificates**

We will discuss this in a separate document in this series. It concerns the possibility for holders of a HVPE-A diploma to subsequently follow training based on pathways that lead to a certificate. This can happen at all levels, partly in view of the fact that within a position all activities and the required competencies do not have to be mastered at the same level. With a position at level 5, there may also be a need for some form of additional training at other levels, lower and higher. This does not always require full training, given its necessity for the job. Of course, a 'full diploma' can certainly fit in with personal development.

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The topics within this series are:

1. Classification of tertiary education, the positioning of the HVPEA and the use of international common names
2. A closer look at the division of tertiary education
3.
  - a Levels within the HVPEA
  - b Learning paths within the HVPEA
  - c Progression from 5 (HVPE - SCHE) to 6 (First Cycle)
  - d Top-up programmes at level 5
4. Subdivision within the HVPEA and certificates
5. The positioning of the L5A
6. Use of credits in tertiary education, linked to sectors
7. Harmonization of instruments for the EHEA and the HVPEA – for example looking at the European Standards and Guidelines, the Dublin Descriptors and the ECTS for the EHEA, EQAVET, EQF-LLL descriptors and ECVET respectively.
8. Use of micro-credentials in the EL5A
9. Why having the EHEA and the HVPEA next to each other...