Quality Assurance and Checklist

Co4 Health

Co-funded by the European Union

Project Coordination

BGZ Berliner Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit mbH

https://bgz-berlin.de/en

Project Partners:

Vocational Training Institution of the Construction Industry Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. (BFW-BB)

Vocational Training Centre JEDU Nivala

Construction School Andrea Palladio (SCVAP) Vicenza

Stichting CHAIN5

Construction School Complex No.1 (ZSB1) Poznań

University of Technology (PUT) Poznań

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2025

Co-funded by the European Union

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Recommendations / Suggestions for quality assurance

Professional development faces the challenge of meeting the accelerating pace of change in competency requirements with innovative and flexible formats.

In the interest of securing skilled workers and maintaining international competitiveness, it is essential to offer both employed individuals and job seekers tailored opportunities to meet their individual qualification needs in a targeted and needs-based manner, while simultaneously documenting existing competencies for ongoing skills development.
The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of flexibility in working life and the ability to quickly acquire new skills that are in demand. Due to business closures, many people have lost their jobs (e.g. in the hospitality and cultural sectors).

They were not the only ones forced to reorient themselves and acquire new skills, including digital skills. The pandemic has also highlighted gaps in continuing education.

In an increasingly mobile labour market and with the rise of cross-sectoral skills, permeability and micro-credentials are therefore of great importance. Consequently, they should not be neglected with regard to internationalization and inclusion.

The following aspects should be considered when ensuring quality in vocational education and training:

Quality assurance criteria:

1. Recognition of practical skills
2. Learning environment
3. Quality check list

The specific nature of collaboration in vocational education projects lies in the fact that the approach is geared towards the efficient management of cooperation between heterogeneous actors and the quality and adaptation of innovative methods and content.

This allows the quality assurance concepts to be applied to other areas of collaboration and management (teams in companies, schools, etc.).

Microcredentials

The importance of lifelong learning has grown.
In this context, permeability concepts, enable bilateral recognition agreements and micro-credentials have also opened up new perspectives for the acquisition and recognition of practical skills, which have led to new career opportunities.
In contrast, micro-credentials exist in higher education
An example of this can be found in bilateral agreements between technical universities and vocational training institutions, which are based on jointly developed permeability concepts and enable bilateral recognition agreements (see the permeability concept of the Erasmus+ project
Micro-credentials in higher education usually exist outside the formal qualification network of traditional universities.
In an international comparison, micro-credentials are already well established, particularly in North America and Australia. In European countries, they still play a minor role.
As our Co4Health project focuses on the field of vocational training, we will concentrate our remarks on our findings and insights gained in the field of education and training and the project topic of healthy building with regard to micro-credentials.
During the implementation of the project, we found that the use of microcredentials is not widespread, especially in smaller construction companies, where there is a lack of knowledge about the tool.
The potential of microcredentials has therefore not yet been fully exploited and needs to be developed further.
https://www.micro-quest.eu/wp-content/uploads/MicroQuest_Guideline_DE.pdf

The acquisition of a micro-credential opened up new opportunities for learners in the short to medium term to improve their skills in a shorter period of time, as well as their employability and their chances of finding or keeping a new job.
This is increasingly changing the perception of the added value of micro-credentials in vocational education and training, as learners from different backgrounds and traditions can be included in the learning environment.
Traditionally, the documentation of the validation of acquired skills has played a role primarily in higher education within the framework of credit point systems.
Microcredentials represent one of the possibilities.

Microcredentials-Definition

A microcredential is a document that certifies skills in a specific area that have been acquired with minimal effort and based on established standards. Microcredentials are usually collected and provided in digital form. Their use is a response to changing learning methods and labour market requirements.
Features of a micro-certificate
A document that provides evidence of the acquisition of skills in a specific area with minimal effort. The skills are verified on the basis of transparent criteria by an institution that applies defined quality assurance standards, e.g. schools, universities, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, sports clubs and associations, and companies.
Micro-certification is the property of the learner and can be acquired individually or in combination with other certifications. It can be collected and made available in digital form, for example.
The use of micro-certifications is a response to changing educational methods and the needs of the labour market.
They provide information that their holder has acquired certain knowledge, knows certain terms and can apply them in practice, and can perform certain activities.
It is important to note that the skills confirmed by micro-certificates are not necessarily limited to the field of education.

Examples of microcredential certificate

In Germany

https://certifier.io/de

Examples of microcredential certificate designs

In Poland

https://certifier.io/pl https://certifier.io/pl/blog/8-najlepszych-programow-do-tworzenia-certyfikatow-online-za-darmo (for free)

https://microcredentials.pl/mikroposwiadczenia

You can find further information in the Co4Health Competence Matrix and the Mini-Guide for Level 5 in VET and HE.

The Mini-Guide broadly discusses a number of issues in the Netherlands surrounding the offering of level 5 qualifications, with regard to ensuring a flexible approach, but taking into account what is going on in the business community. As the project also shows, there is more and more dynamism within the field, in such a way that educational institutions must take this into account. This is primarily about maintaining their own programmes, based on that dynamic situation, but also about the consequences for the positioning of them in learning paths.

In the Netherlands, formal courses at level 5 are included in higher professional education. They therefore form a link between courses at levels 4 and 6, but also between the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education sectors.

Learning environment

A high-quality learning environment requires regular monitoring.
VET personnel management must ensure systematic review of:

- the methodological and didactic work,
- the relevance of educational offerings
- the technical condition of learning spaces, including
- their accessibility and safety, as well of necessary technical equipment.

The hiring of teachers and staff must comply with applicable regulations.
Continuing education opportunities for training staff must be guaranteed and conducted according to transparent rules.
The organization of teaching must be analysed and evaluated, as must the teaching style and working methods of teachers/trainers.
Quality assurance should include a systematic assessment of the knowledge and competence levels of students and trainees.
Identifying problems in the pedagogical area and providing preventative measures are also part of this process.
This process requires close cooperation with the relevant supervisory authorities, as well as regular exchange of experiences with teaching staff and learners.
(You can find more information in our Capacity Building Concept).

Quality Management

The specific nature of projects in the international cooperation is characterised, among other things, by their time-limited and one-off nature.

This results in the need to determine individually and uniquely for each project which quality management measures are to be taken.

Quality management (QM) means checking the project processes for compliance with the content, organisational, scheduling and financial specifications/agreements and project objectives.

Quality management in projects has two objectives:

- high quality (reliability) of project processes and
- high quality of project results (products).

Quality management in projects comprises three main processes:

- Quality planning: Determining which quality objectives are necessary for the project and ensuring how and that these objectives can be measured. In addition, defining measures that preventively ensure better quality.
- Quality assurance: Analytical quality assurance (QA) involves the ongoing measurement of project quality (based on the metrics defined in the planning phase). Constructive QA measures increase quality.
- Quality control: (External) control procedures (inspection, etc.) are used to check the extent to which the project results achieved meet the quality criteria.

Quality assurance is a key management task in implementation.

It comprises the following steps:

- Evaluating processes and products in terms of the criteria (indicators) that define their quality
- Identifying deviations/problems
- Determining the causes of the identified deviations and weighting the causes
- Determining corrective measures
- Implementing these corrective measures
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the corrective measures

Quality assurance is an iterative process
(i.e. it is repeated throughout the course of the project).

The specific nature of collaboration in vocational education projects lies in the fact that the approach is geared towards the efficient management of cooperation between heterogeneous actors and the quality and adaptation of innovative methods and content.

This allows the quality assurance concepts to be applied to other areas of collaboration and management (teams in companies, schools, etc.).

Quality assurance tools

Steps 1 and 2

A quality checklist is used to evaluate the quality of processes and products and to identify deviations.

Based on predefined and agreed indicators, the individual processes and products are evaluated in terms of their degree of coverage with the indicators. For simple and comprehensible use, the list allows for simple yes/no questions. This provides a quick overview of the quality status.

Deviations are identified and marked. An initial evaluation/weighting of the deviations is carried out. Those with a high weighting/risk potential are included in the root cause analysis (step 3). For deviations relevant at the national level, the addressee is the local partner; for deviations relevant to transnational cooperation, the entire partnership is involved (here, BGZ assumes the steering function).

Steps 3 and 4

In the next step, the causes of deviations are determined based on the data from the quality checklist. There can be many different causes.

As a rule, a list of possible causes is drawn up through brainstorming or other suitable methods (cause-and-effect diagram, etc.). Those that have the greatest impact on the processes/products are filtered out from this list. This ensures that the important causes of problems are eliminated first and prevents valuable resources from being spent on eliminating unimportant causes while the problem remains.

Corrective measures are then developed in a discussion process with the respective project experts and possible stakeholders. A problem decision plan can be used as a tool to support this process.

Steps 5 and 6

Each partner implements the agreed corrective measures within their area of responsibility. They promptly check whether the measures have had the desired effect. Various feedback tools can be used for this purpose. Repeating step 1 of the quality assurance process then shows the extent to which the deviations have been corrected.

The structure of the quality checklist

The checklist should

- be easy to use,
- be suitable for the various processes and products, and
- make it easy to identify deviations/problems.

We have therefore decided on the following structure:

1) The processes or products to be assessed in terms of quality are defined.
2) Indicators for evaluation are defined for each process/product. A question is formulated for each indicator.
3) The answer to the respective question (yes/partially/no) provides information about the fulfilment of the respective indicator. The answers 'No' or 'Partially' indicate deviations/potential problems with regard to the quality of the process/product.
4) Finally, an initial assessment of the significance/risk potential of the identified deviations is provided.

The information from the checklist can then be used to determine the causes and to plan and implement corrective measures.

For reasons of user-friendliness, the quality checklist consists of three parts.

- Part 1 deals with the management processes in the project.
- Part 2 covers the project products.
- Part 3 contains specific test questions on documentation.

Co4Health - Quality checklist 1: Project management processes

Process	*Questions*	*Yes*	*Partially*	*No*	*Weighting of deviation*
Management of project content, quality, time					
	Has a schedule and activity plan been agreed upon? (Timetable)				
	Are all partners aware of the objectives, planned results, approach and schedule? (Tasks to be performed by each partner, as specified in the cooperation agreement)				
	Are the planned actions consistent in order to ensure that results are achieved?				
	Are the planned activities actually being carried out?				
	Is the progress of the project being evaluated regularly to ensure consistency with the project plan?				
	Is the schedule being adhered to/regularly revised?				
	Have the quality management procedures been agreed upon within the partnership?				
	Have monitoring procedures been agreed upon, e.g. regular reviews?				
	Are there persons responsible for monitoring?				
	Is there a procedure for testing/accepting the products?				
	Are the reviews being carried out and documented?				
Process **Management of communication/cooperation in the partnership**	*Questions*	*Yes*	*Partially*	*No*	*Weighting of deviation*
	Is the distribution of tasks between the partners clear?				
	Are the cooperation mechanisms and communication within the partnership coordinated?				
	Are the communication channels/procedures adequate?				
	Is all relevant information available in a timely manner?				
	Is there regular exchange within the partnership and are all partners involved?				
	Are agreements documented?				

	Are the agreements made adhered to?	*Yes*	*Partially*	*No*	*Weighting of deviation*
Management of project personnel: personnel deployment, team development and team evaluation	Are the planned human resources available?				
	Are the team members adequately prepared for their roles, do they have the necessary qualifications, and are they familiar with the educational guidance approach?				
	Are the team members motivated for the project and do they feel responsible for it?				
	Do the team members exchange ideas regularly?				
	Are suggestions for process improvement made and taken up?				
	Is the performance of the team/individuals evaluated regularly?				
Management of stakeholders/target groups	Are the key stakeholders/target groups for the project known?				
	Are they regularly involved and is there a strategy for this?				
	Are these target groups being reached in the required numbers?				
Financial Management	Is there a detailed cost and financing plan?				
	Are the procedures for cost planning and accounting agreed upon and documented?				
	Are project expenditures regularly reviewed?				
	Are the accounting guidelines being followed (use of templates)?				
	Is the accounting done on time and is it accurate (in terms of content and calculations)?				
Risk Management	Are project risks regularly identified and addressed?				
	Is an impact assessment conducted?				
	Are countermeasures developed and implemented?				
Dissemination Management, Reporting	Is there a plan for disseminating information?				
	Are the project partners using their existing networks and events for dissemination?				
	Are the target audiences being reached to the necessary extent?				

	Are the dissemination measures documented?	***Yes***	***Partially***	***No***	***Weighting of deviation***
	Are the contributions from experts/partners to the reports submitted on time?				
	Are the reports accurate and complete?				
Change Management	Has a procedure been agreed upon for handling deviations?				
	Are corrective actions developed and implemented in the event of deviations?				
	Are the measures effective?				
	Are opportunities for improvement regularly identified and utilized?				

Co4Health - Quality checklist 2: *Project results*

Process	***Questions***	***Yes***	***Partially***	***No***	***Weighting of deviation***
Situation and needs analysis (construction trades/construction sector) regarding action requirements 1. Labor market 2. Learning needs for skills acquisition 3. Capacity building of VET institutions	Have methods for situation analysis been selected and prepared (document research, key questions for expert interviews/questionnaires for written surveys)?				
	Have the analysis measures been carried out as planned?				
	Have the results been documented?				
	Does the analysis provide sufficient answers to the questions posed?				
	Have the results been documented?				
	Does the analysis provide sufficient answers to the questions posed?				
	Has the target group been sufficiently involved?				
Awareness raising, activation and network building	Is there a strategy for raising awareness/activation/network building?				
	Have working groups (DE, FI, NL, PL) been formed for networking?				
	Has work begun with stakeholders (raising awareness/activation of multipliers/supporters) to expand networks?				

	Have supporters been identified, communities approached, workshops with stakeholders held?				
	Have potential supporters been identified?				
	Have potential settings for the supporters of the pilot actions been identified/selected? Is the work with stakeholders continuing: raising awareness/activating				
	Is the work with stakeholders continuing: raising awareness/activating multipliers/supporters, identifying further users?				
	Have initial workshops for potential supporters taken place?				
	Have the final areas of application for the actions been determined?				
	Is there a work plan for the training sessions, tests, webinars, etc.?	***Yes***	***Partially***	***No***	***Weighting of deviation***
	Have the training materials been completed?				
	Have the handouts for the pilot actions been completed?				
	Have the tests with the learners started?				
	Have the pilot actions been carried out with trainers?				
	Have the tests and pilot actions been documented?				
Capacity Building in VET					
	Is there a list of good practices for adaptation in each country?				
	Are there surveys and an evaluation of surveys as a working template for the partners involved?				
	Has work on the CB concept begun?				
	Is there a quality assurance concept?				
	Is there a strategy for long-term cooperation between vocational education and training and industry, science and research?				
	Are there proposals for the internationalisation of VET institutions?				

	Are there proposals for the implementation of inclusion (in the construction sector)?				
	Have the proposed solutions been consulted with education officials from other VET institutions and decision-makers?				
	Is the concept been finalised? Has the work with stakeholders on institutional anchoring been completed?				
Recommendations for Institutional anchoring	Has work with stakeholders begun to establish institutional anchoring? Have discussions with actors/stakeholders begun?	***Yes***	***No***	***Partially***	***Weighting of deviation***
	Have possible applications been identified for after the project ends?				
	Have supporters been gained or collaborations with educational institutions and local authorities or institutions etc. been developed				
	Has the development of recommendations for action for individual stakeholder levels begun (based on the conclusions from the work with stakeholders/actors/multipliers)?				
	Have the recommendations for action for individual stakeholder levels been finalised				
Validation					
	Are there any proposals for evaluating learning outcomes?				
	Have measurement instruments been identified? Standardised?				
	Are there any proposals for recognising learning outcomes?				
	Have the suggestions been discussed (e.g. with certification authorities)?				
	Has a validation concept been finalised?				
Transfer and Public Relations	Is there a strategy/work plan for developing a concept for dissemination and public relations, setting up a media distribution list?				
	Is there a flyer, information material, website?				

	Has the concept for dissemination and public relations been finalised?				
	Are there project presentations, PR material, etc.?				
	Has work with the media begun?				
	Has work with the media begun?				
	Has information material for addressing the target groups and working with other stakeholders been finalised?				

Co4Health - Quality checklist 3: *Documentation*

Process	*Questions*	*Yes*	*No*	*Partially*	*Weighting of deviation*
Relevance / Usefulness	Is the content relevant and up to date?				
	Is the content tailored to the user and their needs/interests?				
Completeness	Is all the information/content required by the user included?				
Clarity / Accuracy	Is the content correct?				
	Is the content understandable?				
	Is the content structured logically and coherently?				
Design / Style and Language / User-friendliness	Are the language and style appropriately tailored to the content and users?				
	Is the content easy to read, and are there subdivisions (headings, lists, tables)?				
	Are appropriate visualisations used to appeal to/engage users?				
	Is the medium up-to-date and user-friendly?				
Visibility	Are visibility guidelines being followed?				
Data Protection	Are data protection guidelines being observed?				
Program Specifications	Are the programme's specifications being observed?				

Root Cause Analysis and Corrective Action

The Cause-and-Effect Analysis

For deviations that require action based on the quality check, a brief, understandable problem description is developed, containing the most precise information possible about the content, time, location, and extent of the problem. In a discussion process, possible causes for the problem are identified. The collected causes are evaluated and prioritized. Problem interrelationships are also clarified (to what extent is one problem caused by another, or is one problem unsolvable without another?).

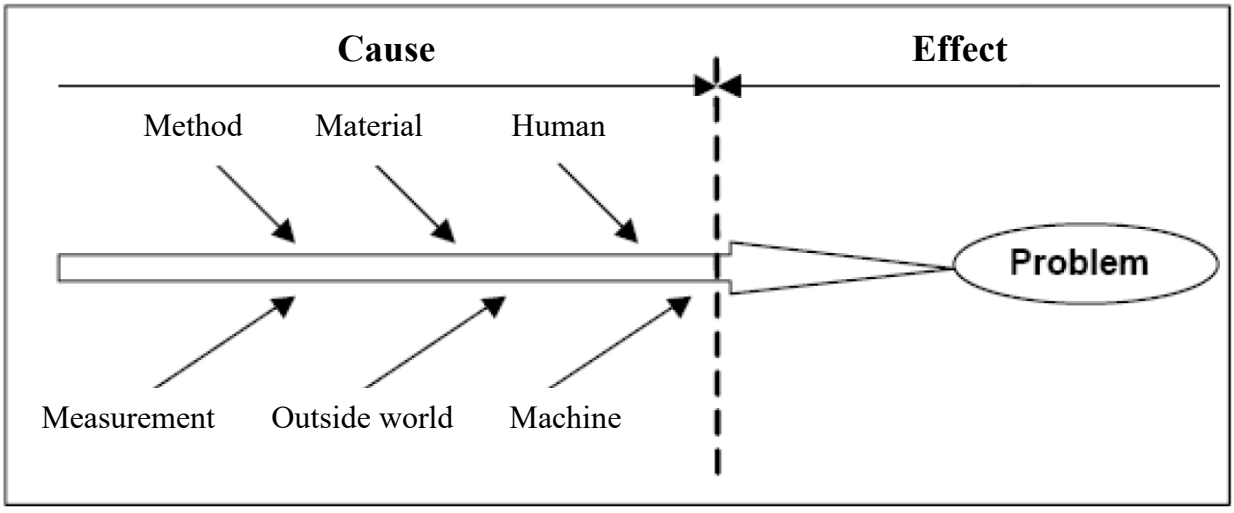
Problem List: The problems are listed in a simple table, and possible causes are assigned. The identification of causes is rather unsystematic. This approach is perfectly adequate for most deviations. However, in the case of serious problems, there is a risk that not all causes will be identified.

Problem	*Possible causes*	*Weighting*

In such cases, a cause-and-effect diagram can be helpful.

In a first step, categories of causes are formed, and in a second step, possible causes of problems are defined for each of these categories.

This process uncovers more potential causes – including hidden ones.



Here, too, a subsequent weighting according to relevance takes place.

Corrective measures

For the causes with high relevance, corrective measures are developed and responsibilities are assigned

Cause of problem	*Corrective measure*	*Responsible*

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