

2.1. STRATEGIC GUIDELINES AND MECHANISMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

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This section outlines the strategic guidelines for the development of a quality assurance system for vocational education in Ukraine, ensuring its integrity, adaptability and effectiveness in response to current socio-economic challenges, sustainable development principles and European quality standards. The tools, procedures and measures of the external quality assurance system that influence the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system in vocational education are examined. The requirements and rules governing the organization of educational and managerial processes for the development of a quality assurance system in vocational education institutions are analyzed, including the educational environment; the system for assessing students; the pedagogical activities of teaching staff and the management processes of vocational education institutions. Mechanisms for improving the internal quality assurance system have been identified, including compliance with and implementation of current legislation; the application of a competency-based approach to assessing learning outcomes and recognizing professional qualifications; the development of partnership models between vocational education institutions and business to create an innovative learning environment; systematic updating of teaching staff's professional competencies in light of digitalization, technological transformation and sustainable development principles; digitalization of management and educational processes; the formation of a quality culture in vocational education based on best international practices in vocational education and training quality assurance.

Keywords: *quality assurance system in vocational education; vocational education institution; vocational education students; teaching staff*

In today's environment the development of all sectors of the economy is characterized by instability, dynamic changes and the need for rapid adaptation under conditions of uncertainty. The war in Ukraine has significantly affected the supply of qualified professionals to the labor market and the shortage of such specialists is constraining national economic development. The importance of vocational education in addressing current challenges and rebuilding the country in the post-war period is unquestionable and reinforces the need to expand the capacity of vocational education institutions to provide high-quality educational services to youth, adults and vulnerable population groups in order to meet their needs for training, employment and decent work.

A flexible response of the vocational education system to societal demands requires defining strategic guidelines for the development of a quality assurance system that ensures its integrity, adaptability and effectiveness, taking into account current socio-economic challenges, sustainable development principles and European quality standards. Such a system should be aimed at achieving quality in vocational education, understood as “the alignment of learning outcomes with the requirements established by law, vocational education standards, professional and/or international standards (if applicable) and/or educational service agreements, as well as the needs of stakeholders and society, ensured through internal and external quality assurance procedures” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2025c).

In Ukrainian research the features of the vocational education quality assurance system have been studied in the following areas: theoretical substantiation of key concepts within the context of education quality and the competency-based paradigm (Nychkalo, 2014); improvement of regulatory components of the vocational education quality system, including standardization, qualifications, professional standards and educational programs (Radkevych, 2021); modernization of management processes in the context of digitalization, particularly for the development of internal quality assurance systems (monitoring, self-assessment, management decision-making and human resources) (Yelnykova et al., 2023); adaptation of the national quality assurance system to international quality standards and harmonization of quality criteria (Verbovskyi, 2024); development of partnerships between vocational education institutions and employers and implementation of new mechanisms to ensure quality in vocational education (supervisory boards, advisory bodies, dual vocational education, etc.) (Kravets et al., 2023).

These research directions form the basis for specifying the strategic guidelines for the development of a vocational education quality assurance system in the context of updated legislation, which drives transformations in the interconnected subsystems of vocational education quality assurance. The vocational education quality assurance system is structured around three main components (Table 2.1).

In practical terms the components of the vocational education quality assurance system function in an integrated manner, ensuring that a holistic, open and dynamic quality management model, together with its mechanisms, tools, procedures and measures, meets the current requirements of the economy and society.

The provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational Education” (2025c) are being gradually implemented in the process of training future specialists in accordance with subordinate legislation. The introduction of legislative innovations in vocational education highlights the growing role of the labor market in ensuring education quality.

Table 2.1. Components of the vocational education quality assurance system

System name	Characteristics and instruments
Quality assurance system in vocational education institutions (internal quality assurance system of vocational education)	is established by a vocational education institution; <i>includes:</i> mechanisms for ensuring academic integrity; types of responsibility of teaching staff and vocational education students for specific violations of academic integrity; a system for assessing learning outcomes of students according to the relevant educational program; a system for evaluating the performance of teaching staff and other procedures, instruments and measures to ensure education quality defined by the vocational education institution.
External quality assurance system for vocational education	is implemented by the central executive authority in the field of education and science and the central executive authority responsible for ensuring education quality; <i>includes:</i> instruments, procedures, and measures aimed at ensuring and improving the quality of vocational education: standardization; licensing of educational activities; institutional audit; monitoring of education quality; attestation of teaching staff; certification of teaching staff.
Quality assurance system in the activities of management bodies, institutions, and authorities that perform external quality assurance of vocational education	<i>includes:</i> policies and procedures to ensure the quality of their own activities; necessary resources for organizing processes and procedures; external independent audit of the activities (processes and procedures) of the respective bodies and institutions.

For example, as of today, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has approved the Model Regulations on the Supervisory Board of a Vocational Education Institution and the Model Procedure for the Formation of a Supervisory Board of a Vocational Education Institution (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2025). At the same time, several regulatory documents are under development, including: the procedure for practical training of vocational education students, a model student employment contract, regulations on the organization of dual vocational education, vocational education standards and others. This process involves engaging business representatives in the development of professional standards and educational programs,

the assessment of learning outcomes, the organization of dual vocational education and practical training and the establishment of qualification centers. Ensuring high-quality vocational education requires systematic alignment of training content for future specialists with the actual needs of the labor market, which is facilitated by partnership-based cooperation between vocational education institutions and businesses. The outcome of such cooperation is the development of modern professional standards included in the Register of Qualifications of the National Qualifications Agency. The content of professional standards is designed in accordance with the competency-based approach and defines professional competencies described through learning outcomes, the attainment of which certifies an individual's ability to successfully perform professional tasks and/or continue further education. Professional standards serve as the foundation for developing educational programs for specific full or partial professional qualifications and act as benchmarks for achieving high-quality training of future specialists.

Partnerships between vocational education institutions and the labor market provide broad opportunities for ensuring the continuous professional development of teaching staff. Professional development, attestation and certification of teaching staff (in accordance with current legislation) internships at enterprises, participation in master classes, training sessions, and innovative educational projects are the main forms of systematic upgrading of teaching staff professional competencies, taking into account technological advancements, digitalization of production processes and international trends.

The continuous enhancement of the professional, pedagogical and subject-specific competencies of teaching staff demonstrates their capacity to develop and implement pedagogical and production innovations in the educational process; create new educational resources, including digital ones; update educational programs, including short-term and inclusive programs, to ensure accessible and flexible learning opportunities and support the social integration of vulnerable groups; establish and sustain career guidance centers, training and practical centers, qualification centers and related structures. The expansion of international investment in the development of national vocational education contributes to the growth of partnership initiatives, grant programs and projects aimed at ensuring vocational education quality in accordance with European standards. Institutional mechanisms for quality assurance in vocational education and training in the European Union and Ukraine demonstrate significant similarities, including: professional standards, educational programs, competencies, qualifications, learning outcomes, internal monitoring criteria, self-assessment procedures, staffing and development of the educational environment.

In the context of ensuring high-quality vocational training for future specialists, it is important that vocational education institutions actively participate in international

projects aimed at modernizing institutional infrastructure and establishing centers of vocational excellence; updating vocational education content; strengthening cooperation with partners; developing educational resources, including digital materials; integrating advanced teaching methods and production technologies into the educational process; supporting the professional development of teaching staff.

Strategic guidelines for ensuring the quality of vocational education are aligned with the directions of modernization of the vocational education system in the context of contemporary transformations and are aimed at developing specific subsystems to achieve high-quality outcomes in the professional training of students. This approach involves not only maintaining an appropriate level of quality in the educational process but also establishing a system capable of responding effectively to labor market transformations, technological advancements, and social challenges (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2. Strategic guidelines for the development of the vocational education quality assurance system in Ukraine

Guidelines	Impact on the vocational education quality assurance system
Compliance with legislative acts and regulatory documents	interconnection of the components of the vocational education quality assurance system; transparency and academic integrity; openness and accessibility of educational programs; unified approaches to the formation, monitoring and self-assessment of the internal vocational education quality assurance system.
Competency-based approach to designing the content of professional standards and educational programs	alignment of educational program content with the requirements of professional standards; orientation toward learning outcomes; harmonization of procedures for assessing learning outcomes with legislation in the field of the national qualifications system.
Cooperation with employers and development of dual vocational education	introduction of new mechanisms for ensuring vocational education quality; participation of business representatives in the development of professional standards and educational programs; improvement of forms of practical training for vocational education students; implementation of dual vocational education; shared responsibility for the quality of specialist training; expansion of opportunities for the professional development of teaching staff.

Table 2.2. Strategic guidelines for the development of the vocational education quality assurance system in Ukraine

Guidelines	Impact on the vocational education quality assurance system
Innovation, digitalization and sustainable development	introduction of new professions and professional qualifications for priority economic sectors; implementation of innovative educational projects in partnership; modernization of material and technical resources in line with technological changes; application of digital tools in management and educational activities.
International integration	orientation toward European quality assurance standards in vocational education; participation in international projects and academic mobility programs; mutual recognition of qualifications.

The strategic guidelines for the development of a quality assurance system for vocational education in Ukraine are aimed at creating a comprehensive, adaptive, innovative and partnership-based model that ensures the relevance of vocational education to the current requirements of the economy and society. These guidelines form the foundation for the development of an internal quality assurance system, which is established by vocational education institutions and includes: “mechanisms for ensuring academic integrity; types of responsibility of teaching staff and vocational education students for specific violations of academic integrity; a system for assessing the learning outcomes of vocational education students under the relevant educational program; a system for evaluating the performance of teaching staff; and other procedures, tools, and measures to ensure education quality, as defined by the vocational education institution” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2025c).

In vocational education institutions the establishment of an internal quality assurance system is regulated by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine “On Approval of the Methodological Recommendations on the Formation of an Internal Quality Assurance System in Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education Institutions” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021a).

In accordance with this Order, heads of vocational education institutions are recommended to approve Regulations on the internal quality assurance system, which provide for the development of a quality assurance strategy (policy) and related procedures. These Regulations define the guidelines for the functioning of the internal quality assurance system, take into account the interests of participants in the educational

process regarding the quality of educational services and the realization of their rights and comply with the principles of state education policy and educational activity.

The Regulations on the internal quality assurance system in vocational education institutions define the areas of assessment (the educational environment of the institution; the system for assessing students; the pedagogical activities of teaching staff; the management processes of the vocational education institution) and the requirements/rules governing the organization of educational and management processes and the functioning of the internal quality assurance system (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Areas of evaluation and requirements/rules for the organization of educational and management processes of an educational institution and its internal quality assurance system

Evaluation area	Requirements / rules
Educational environment of the institution providing vocational education services	Ensuring safe and harmless conditions for learning and work (internal educational environment of the institution)
	Ensuring safe and harmless conditions for learning and work (external educational environment of the institution)
	Ensuring safe and harmless living conditions in dormitories (if applicable)
	Creation of an educational environment free from all forms of violence and discrimination
	Formation of an inclusive, developmental and motivating educational space
	Provision of distance learning (if necessary)
Pedagogical activity of teaching staff	Effectiveness of teachers' planning and application of modern educational approaches to develop general professional, key and professional competencies of students
	Continuous professional development and improvement of pedagogical and professional skills of teaching staff
	Establishing cooperation with students, their parents (or legal guardians) and staff of the educational institution
	Organization of pedagogical activities and learner training based on academic integrity principles
	Availability of a transparent and clear procedure for evaluating the professional performance of teaching staff

Table 2.3. Areas of evaluation and requirements/rules for the organization of educational and management processes of an educational institution and its internal quality assurance system

Evaluation area	Requirements / rules
Management processes of the educational institution	Organizational and legal foundations of the institution's activities
	Formation of the learner contingent
	Availability of a development strategy, program and planning system, with monitoring of goal and task implementation
	Formation of trust-based relationships, transparency and adherence to ethical standards
	Effectiveness of personnel policy and provision of opportunities for the professional development of teaching staff
	Organization of the educational process based on a learner-centered approach and management decisions grounded in constructive cooperation among participants in the educational process and interaction with the local community
	Organization of the educational process based on constructive cooperation with employers (and employers' representatives), their organizations and associations
	Effectiveness (quality) of educational activities
	Formation and implementation of academic integrity policy
	Availability of a transparent and clear procedure for evaluating the managerial performance of senior staff of the educational institution
	Scholarship provision and social protection of students
	Rationality and efficiency in the use of available resources and material-technical base
	Students' assessment system
Application of internal monitoring that provides systematic tracking and adjustment of each learner's academic progress	
Orientation of the assessment system toward fostering students' responsibility for their learning outcomes and their ability to self-assess	
Academic integrity of students	

When defining the guidelines for the functioning of the internal quality assurance system it is essential to consider both current and future transformations in the field of vocational education, as well as labor market trends in today's dynamic environment. The establishment of policy priorities and procedures for the functioning of the internal quality assurance system in vocational education institutions requires the integration of modern approaches to quality assurance – including transformational, competency-based, European integration, systemic, regional (structural), partnership-based, and predictive approaches. These approaches are characterized by the adaptability of educational services to economic needs and regional demand for qualified specialists, as well as the flexibility of educational processes and mechanisms that ensure students' rapid access to the labor market and active participation in civic life (Kravets, 2025b).

Within the strategic development plans of vocational education institutions, ensuring the quality of professional training is defined as a key objective, supported by specific goals aligned with societal needs, labor market demands and trends in education and scientific development. The implementation of strategic plans aimed at improving the quality of professional training for future specialists requires the consolidation of efforts, expertise and innovation from both administration and teaching staff to achieve sustainable institutional development in partnership with employers. It also involves aligning learning conditions with real production environments, introducing innovative pedagogical and production technologies into the educational process and optimizing the allocation and use of resources.

The functioning of the internal quality assurance system in vocational education depends on the availability of effective tools, procedures and mechanisms associated with the external quality assurance system, including standardization, licensing of educational activities, institutional audits, monitoring of education quality and the attestation and certification of teaching staff. The internal quality assurance system is effective only when it is aligned with external control and evaluation mechanisms that define the standards, criteria, and directions for the continuous improvement of educational activities in vocational education institutions.

The strategic guidelines for the development of the national vocational education quality assurance system (compliance with legislative and regulatory acts; the competency-based approach to the design of professional standards and educational programs; cooperation with employers and the development of dual vocational education;

innovation, digitalization and sustainable development; international integration) are aimed at ensuring strong interconnections and mutual influence between the instruments of the external quality assurance system and the improvement of internal quality assurance mechanisms within vocational education institutions.

Systematic monitoring of the educational process based on surveys of all participants, timely self-assessment of management and educational processes and their continuous improvement in accordance with the development strategy of vocational education institutions and updated external quality assurance instruments constitute key drivers for enhancing the overall quality assurance system.

The integration and implementation of innovations that reshape approaches to the functioning of the vocational education quality assurance system require institutional strengthening of internal quality assurance mechanisms through: compliance with and implementation of current legislation; adoption of a competency-based approach to assessing students' outcomes and recognizing professional qualifications; development of partnership models between vocational education institutions and businesses to create innovative learning environments; systematic upgrading of teaching staff competencies in light of digitalization, technological advancements and sustainable development principles; digitalization of management and educational processes; formation of a quality culture in vocational education based on best international practices in vocational education and training.