



# PROJECT WEEK REPORT

3rd project week | 29 – 31 October 2019 (ATEC,  
Portugal)

## ABSTRACT

The demands of general industry are for employees with increased levels of knowledge and skills applicable to each sector. ATEC has developed an integrated examination approach designed to add value to the qualification and improve the probability of superior employment opportunities for students

## QUALITY CATEGORY

- Guidance
- Learning
- Examination

## QMS4VET Consortium

The partners within the QMS4VET project are:

- Aventus ([www.ventus.nl](http://www.ventus.nl))
- ATEC ([www.atec.pt](http://www.atec.pt))
- BBS Syke EUROPASCHULE ([www.bbs-syke.de](http://www.bbs-syke.de))
- bit Schulungscener ([www.bitschulungscener.at](http://www.bitschulungscener.at))
- West Lothian College ([www.west-lothian.ac.uk](http://www.west-lothian.ac.uk))
- Kainuun ammattiopisto ([www.kao.fi](http://www.kao.fi))

## INTRODUCTION

ATEC is a private Training Academy certified by ISO 9001:2015 with its headquarters located in Palmela, south of Lisbon, and with a delegation in the North region of Portugal in Matosinhos, Porto. ATEC is focused in providing EQF level 4 and 5 technical vocational training to youngsters and adults, and also to employees from companies that select ATEC as their training provider.

During the QMS4VET third project week, ATEC put together a team of colleagues from the IT area to showcase the German Examination process from AHK, which is integrated in the level 5 Network and Systems Administration Specialist curriculum.

For more information about the QMS4VET project and other project week reports see <https://www.ventus.nl/qms4vet>

## OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were set for best practice with respect to the ATEC integrated examination approach:

1. Certify that learners have acquired a widely recognised high quality level of competences;
2. Add value to an existing qualification;
3. Introduce a certificate which is transferable internationally in the relevant subject area;
4. Enhance the probability of superior employment opportunities for students;
5. Address an identified market need.

## METHODOLOGY

The overall aim of the ATEC integrated examination approach is to allow all students to gain a qualification which is recognised and valued in all countries with presence of German Industry in order to expand their employability opportunities, especially in Europe. In order to ensure this, the following objectives have to be met:

### **1. Certify that learners have acquired a widely recognised high quality level of competences**

In the context of the ATEC integrated examination approach, the exam system ought to be designed in such a way that all requirements of the awarding body are fully realised.

An efficient examination system should ensure that, at the end of the learning programme, each student has acquired all the skills necessary to perform the duties expected by the awarding body and the employer, according to the ECVET standards (knowledge, skills and competences).

### **2. Add value to an existing qualification**

The ATEC integrated examination approach should be implemented in such a way as to enhance the content of the existing qualifications.

### **3. Introduce a certificate which is transferable internationally in the relevant subject area**

The students should be able to gain knowledge and qualifications which will allow them to work within the same sector across different countries.

The integration of the German standards into the Portuguese education system allows

international employers access to employees who combine the best of both systems.

**4. Enhance the probability of superior employment opportunities for students;**

Students achieving the qualification would have more chances of employment with companies across multiple countries, in better positions and with improved promotion opportunities.

**5. Address an identified market need**

The organisation should undertake sufficient research in the market with all stakeholders including employers and prospective students in order to make sure that there is a demand for the integration.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

The following analyses the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the ATEC case study.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry relevant</li> <li>• Based on skills and competences (learning outcomes)</li> <li>• Simple and effective structures</li> <li>• Included in the education programme</li> <li>• Unique selling point for ATEC</li> <li>• Improved and strengthened relationship with important stakeholders</li> <li>• Increasing international employability chances</li> <li>• ATEC is sector role model for innovative integration practice</li> <li>• ATEC staff and technical resources are top class and high quality</li> <li>• Student levels of knowledge are validated by external AHK assessment requirements</li> <li>• Transferability of integrated AHK programme system to other sectors (best practice)</li> <li>• Certain parts of teaching are online leading to self-learning and independence</li> <li>• ATEC can pick the motivated students and deny/ reject others</li> <li>• AHK is recognised within sector circles and secures a certain quality standard worldwide</li> <li>• ATEC provides everything the student needs</li> <li>• Small number of students allows a high-quality standard because of limited availability of high-quality teachers</li> <li>• Close co-operation between teachers provides a high standard and AKH standard support</li> <li>• Close cooperation with companies allows to be up to date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time gap between teaching and assessment</li> <li>• Higher risk of failure with condensed exam period</li> <li>• Exam times not student centred</li> <li>• Only 50% success rate of programme</li> <li>• Students don't understand the value attributed to AHK qualification</li> <li>• Soft skills are not officially assessed in the AHK certificate</li> <li>• Assessment is too heavily end-loaded</li> <li>• Fixed programme does not specifically adapt to student's needs</li> <li>• No formal standardised quality management process to gather student feedback and allow changes</li> <li>• No formal standardised process to gather companies' feedback and allow changes</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexible adaptation to new standards, programmes and customer demands</li><li>• Roll out AHK system throughout Europe and beyond</li><li>• ATEC system can be adapted for other industry assessments</li><li>• Include German language program in AHK program – more job opportunities</li><li>• Use the potential for growth</li><li>• Improve ATEC brand by raising AHK awareness with non-German companies</li><li>• Include AHK programme in commercial programme?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is programme flexible enough to adapt to changing AHK and sector requirements</li><li>• Political and trade relationships (Portugal/Germany) may change and affect attractiveness of qualification</li><li>• Government financial decisions could remove funding for exam after 2023</li><li>• Overflow of information: how to select and gain without information?</li><li>• System could be too rigid for some students: requires complete commitment</li><li>• Student retention negatively impacted by condensed examination period</li><li>• Students can be deterred because of extra work and unknown added value</li><li>• How to keep the motivation level throughout the course – threat of paid job alternative</li></ul>
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### Reflection and awareness on possible weaknesses and threats

In the preceding SWOT analysis an overview was given of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the ATEC integrated examination approach. In the following section, the strengths and opportunities are integrated in a Step-By-Step Implementation plan which can be used in implementing all or parts of the system. However, in doing so, it is important to be aware of the weaknesses and threats ATEC faces in implementing this integrated examination approach. Therefore, in the following paragraph a reflection can be found on the main and most important potential weaknesses and threats based on the results of the SWOT-analysis. This reflection serves to inform potential users of some vital basic steps to put in place when considering implementation of all or part of the ATEC integrated examination approach.

1. Evaluate continuously market needs and advantages of such an approach
2. Collaborate with awarding bodies, decision makers and stakeholders to ensure that integration will add value and is agreed by all stakeholders
3. Identify your capabilities in terms of teaching, equipment, funding and facilities
4. Identify where staff and resources can be repurposed
5. Create the course content according to market needs and quality standards of the awarding body
6. Train staff according to their needs and the requirements of the awarding body
7. Keep students well informed about the advantages of such an approach
8. Identify and target potential sources of applicants
9. Arrange for exam materials from awarding body and adapt for use within training programme
10. Train students focusing on examination criteria/standards
11. Evaluate students and success of training
12. Get feedback from external stakeholders on quality of students
13. Integrate external stakeholders feedback into the teaching system when needed.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR STEP BY STEP IMPLEMENTATION

The following recommendations can be used when implementation of all or parts of the ATEC integrated examination approach is considered.

- Identify relevant market indicators including stakeholder feedback and potential applicant availability and apply an appropriate research model
- Ensure that all required awarding bodies and employers have given input to the programme content and agree that value has been added to the qualification. Focus on pointing out the added value of the integrated approach in comparison to the standard approach in order to emphasize your unique selling point (USP)
- Refer to staff skills matrix, equipment and facilities logs and ensure that sustainable funding is in place before marketing the programme to applicants
- Ensure that staff training is available if necessary and that facilities are appropriately equipped
- For the content of the training programme a detailed and well-prepared curriculum, which also includes preparatory time for the final exam, is mandatory
- Develop advertising for the programme which will reach and attract your target applicants
- Ensure that an evaluation tool is developed which will effectively cover all areas of the programme and give required insights into results and value
- Gather feedback from external stakeholders using an effective mechanism to ensure that all relevant data is retrieved and analysed to inform improvement actions if necessary

## EVALUATION

After analysis of the ATEC integrated examination approach the following conclusions can be drawn:

### **Advantages:**

The approach facilitates an education which is currently not available anywhere else in Portugal. It provides students with a quality standard that is recognised throughout different countries and increases their employment opportunities.

The approach also gives students a high-quality delivery and assessment of the learning programme and the model can be transferred to other education providers.

### **Disadvantages:**

The approach requires engagement from external stakeholders and successful marketing of the unique selling point. It is dependent on market demand and sufficient high-quality applicants capable of completing the course. Resources must be committed to the approach and funding must be sustainable. Substantial time and effort would be required to implement or to make changes once the approach has been established.

### **Tips for implementation:**

Create a plan to define the learner journey to include targets, finances, planning and resources, and only proceed if the support of internal and external stakeholders for the approach can be guaranteed.



QUALITY MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEMS  
FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING

/PROJECT  
Integration of Learning Outcomes  
into Quality Management  
& Harmonization of Quality  
Standards in Vocational Education  
and Training in Europe

## APPENDICES

1. Agenda and Minutes 3rd QMS4VET project week
2. ATEC presentations