

STATE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

The State Educational Standards (SES) for acquiring professional qualifications are core regulatory documents in the Bulgarian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system that define the essential knowledge, skills and competences required to practise a profession included in the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training (LPVET). SES are developed and periodically updated by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) and approved by orders of the Minister of Education and Science, in coordination with relevant line ministries and administrative units, in accordance with the Vocational Education and Training Act.

Following the 2024 amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act, significant updates in the regulatory framework further modernise the design and implementation of vocational standards. These include a newly organised List of Professions for VET (LPVET), introduction of flexible and modular learning pathways, enhanced validation of prior learning, and strengthening alignment with labour market needs and EU-level frameworks.

Purpose and Legal Basis

Under Art. 42, paragraph 3(b) of Vocational Education and Training Act, SES define mandatory professional competencies that are required for performing a profession and are binding for all licensed training providers authorised to deliver vocational education and training and issue Certificates of Vocational Qualification or Training upon successful completion.

Key Components of State Educational Standards

State Educational Standards by profession include comprehensive and modernised elements such as:

- Minimum entry-level qualification and education requirements for both learners and adult trainees.
- Updated professional activity descriptions, responsibilities, working conditions, tools and equipment.
- Competences aligned with European and national qualification frameworks (EQF/NQF) and labour market needs.
- Units of Learning Outcomes, specifying knowledge, skills, and competences in modular form for greater flexibility and adaptability
- Set of Units of Learning Outcomes for acquiring qualification in a part of a profession
- Requirements for theoretical and practical training facilities and training infrastructure.
- Trainer and assessor requirements, including professional and pedagogical competencies, with provisions for dual and blended delivery models.
- Assessment procedures and tools that support objective competence evaluation.

Learning Outcomes Approach

SES set learning outcomes by units, each describing:

- Knowledge – what the learner should know.
- Skills – what the learner should be able to perform.
- Competences – how the learner applies and integrates knowledge and skills in workplace contexts.
- Assessment methods and evaluation criteria.

Relevance and Application

The modernised SES framework ensures consistency and quality in:

- Curricula and syllabus development
- Individual career planning and guidance
- Human resources and workforce development in enterprises
- Selection and placement of personnel
- Training needs analysis and competence assessment
- Continuous improvement of vocational education content

The 2024 reforms also support a more flexible VET system, including opportunities for distance learning, modular programmes, and easier validation of prior learning, making vocational qualifications more accessible and responsive to both learners and employers.

Example of an ULO from the profession "Hairdressing"

Unit of learning outcome 6	Barbering and Hairdressing Services
Learning Outcome 6.1	Performs analysis of hair and face for male clients
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiates types of male hair, beard, and scalp • Explains the importance of face shape when choosing a hairstyle and beard • Describes style preferences and their influence on appearance • Is familiar with trends in men's grooming
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observes density, growth direction, and texture • Analyzes facial features and proportions • Conducts a focused consultation with the client • Selects an appropriate service based on the analysis
Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulates a professional service proposal based on analysis of the client's hair, scalp, and face shape
Learning Outcome 6.2	Performs men's haircuts using classical and modern techniques
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiates between classical and modern men's haircutting techniques • Explains specifics when working with silhouettes • Describes the sequence of performing a men's haircut
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses scissors, clippers, and a razor with precision • Creates clean lines, fades, and contours • Maintains symmetry and desired volume • Maintains ergonomic posture and safety

Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs a professional haircut tailored to the individual head shape, hair, and style of the client
Learning Outcome 6.3	Shapes beard and mustache according to facial features and preferences
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is familiar with beard and mustache styles and shapes • Explains rules of symmetry and proportions in shaping • Explains the effect of different lengths and lines on the facial silhouette
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses clippers, scissors, razors, and combs precisely • Shapes contours and length according to the desired look • Works with attention to detail and hygiene
Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates an aesthetically pleasing and harmonious beard/mustache, tailored to the client's individual features and preferences
Learning Outcome 6.4	Performs facial shaving and contour shaping
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the stages of traditional shaving • Explains health requirements • Explains the differences between wet and dry shaving • Is familiar with cosmetic products for skin preparation and soothing
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares the skin with a warm towel and cosmetic products • Uses a razor safely and effectively • Creates clean lines and contours • Maintains calm and confident interaction with the client
Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs barbering services with attention to hygiene, safety, and client comfort
Learning Outcome 6.5	Applies hygienic and safe practices in barbering and hairdressing services
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists risks when working with sharp tools • Differentiates methods of disinfection and sterilization • Describes rules for personal protection and protective equipment • Is familiar with regulatory safety requirements
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleans, disinfects, and stores tools • After each use, cleans tools and equipment with appropriate detergent, rinses, and disinfects with biocides approved for product type 2 under the Law on Protection from Harmful Effects of Chemical Substances and Mixtures and/or Regulation (EU) No 528/2012, in compliance with authorization conditions and label requirements • Checks blades and technical condition • Uses personal protective equipment • Documents or reports incidents or deviations

Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures safety and hygiene during barbering services by applying established rules and procedures
Assessment Criteria for ULO	<p>Theory of the profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains the sequence of haircutting, shaping, and shaving • Differentiates styles and techniques in men’s services • Knows hygiene requirements and safety rules <p>Practice of the profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs men’s haircuts using appropriate techniques • Shapes beard/mustache and performs shaving according to requirements • Maintains a safe and hygienic working environment
Assessment Methods	<p>Theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exam <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance of a practical task based on an individual assignment