



Guidelines on the Drafting of Interim and Final Reports for Individual Research Projects on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET)

1. Introduction

1.1. Basis for VPET research

Within the context of federal government research, the Swiss Federal Administration supports or initiates scientific research whose findings may be used to perform its tasks. Research provides, for example, the scientific basis for policy development and design in the various policy areas. It can also be used to enforce legal requirements, respond to and implement parliamentary procedural requests, or for legislative work. Federal government research finds its legal basis in the Research and Innovation Promotion Act (RIPA) as well as in special legal provisions.¹

In the policy area 'vocational and professional education and training (VPET)', research is managed and coordinated by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).² The aims of funding are set out in Article 4 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA) and Article 2 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Ordinance (VPETO) and are described in the document entitled, 'Vocational and professional education and training (VPET) policy area: Research strategy paper 2017-2020'³:

- Development of sustainable structures that pursue research on VPET at internationally recognised standards of scientific excellence.
- (Further) development of the Swiss VPET system through the use of VPET research findings.
- Use of knowledge gained from VPET research for evidence-based management of Swiss VPET policy.

¹ Federal government research: www.ressortforschung.admin.ch/rsf/de/home.html

² SERI research on VPET: <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/vet-pet-research.html>

³ Vocational and professional education and training (VPET) policy area: Research strategy paper 2017-2020: <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/vet-pet-research.html>

1.2. Research funding mechanisms

SERI uses two approaches to achieve these objectives. On the one hand, it provides funding to competence centres – referred to as ‘Leading Houses’ – linked to university professorships. These Leading Houses conduct research in a clearly defined area deemed relevant to VPET. Leading Houses also work with other university professors or higher education institutions. Leading House research funding is long-term and is intended to bring about sustainable research structures that conduct research on VPET in Switzerland. Leading Houses are tendered as required.

Moreover, research on current issues relating to VPET is subsidised by way of grants for less extensive ‘individual research projects’. Individual research projects serve as a complement to the work done by Leading Houses. Thus, they deal with VPET research topics that are not already addressed by the Leading Houses. Individual research projects may be tendered by SERI or applied for by interested researchers on a bottom-up basis.

1.3. Quality control

The demands placed on the research projects funded under this programme are high. When assessing and maintaining quality, SERI is advised by the Scientific Advisory Committee for VPET Research. This body is comprised of renowned experts from various fields and scientific disciplines. New research proposals and - if a project is funded - regular reports are submitted to the Scientific Advisory Committee for review. In addition, research proposals and, if necessary, ongoing projects are submitted for international review.

1.4. Purpose of guidelines

For the purpose of quality assurance, SERI regularly requires progress reports on funded projects. As a rule, these interim and final reports also serve as a prerequisite for the disbursement of further funding and are therefore examined in detail.

In order for the reporting process to run smoothly, it is important that reports satisfy a number of formal and scientific criteria. This document is intended for those responsible for individual VPET research projects to help them to prepare interim and final reports. This document thus provides information about the expected content of reports on individual VPET research projects as well as on the report examination process.

2. Submission of reports

Interim and final reports for individual VPET research projects provide information on the state of progress, the results achieved during the reporting period, any difficulties encountered and how to resolve them. The following information and guidelines are intended to assist researchers in writing and submitting reports.

2.1. Address for submissions

Interim and final reports must be submitted to SERI in both electronic (bbfo@sbfi.admin.ch) and hard-copy form:

State Secretariat for Education,
Research and Innovation SERI
VPET Research
Einsteinstrasse 2
CH-3003 Bern

2.2. Reporting form

The 'Reporting Form for Individual Research Projects' is available for download on the SERI webpage for VPET research⁴. This reporting form should be used when submitting reports on individual research projects.

2.3. Scope and level of detail of reporting

Interim reports for individual research projects (excluding all appendices and enclosures) should comprise a maximum of 10 pages in front size 11 or 12 pts. The final report should be a maximum of 20 pages.

The reports should be drawn up in such detail that they are understandable without knowledge of the funding application and appendices. References to appendices should be avoided and key points from the funding application should be briefly reiterated in the report (questions, hypotheses, theoretical and methodological aspects, etc.).

The wording and terminology used should be chosen so that the reports are easily understood by experts from other scientific disciplines.

2.4. Content

The various fields making up the structure of the 'Reporting Form for Individual Research Projects' (Section 2.2.) should be filled out with the following content:

1. Individual research project

1.1. Line of inquiry update

What research questions are currently being addressed? Do they depart from the line of inquiry initially presented in the funding application? If so, what developments gave rise to a change in line of inquiry? (see next item if there were theoretical and methodological considerations)

1.2. Theoretical and methodological aspects

How successful has the research design presented in the funding application been? Have the theoretical and methodological approaches proved their merit? What aspects were adapted and developed further?

1.3. Adherence to research schedule

Could the schedule be adhered to? If not, why not and how did it have to be adapted?

1.4. Research outcomes

What results can be presented at the present time?

1.5. Conclusions

What benefits does the research project bring in terms of the management and further development of the Swiss VPET system and VPET research? What questions remained unanswered or arose again? Which of the unanswered questions will be pursued further?

2. Use of research findings and knowledge transfer to practitioners

The interim or final report must be accompanied by an additional written statement containing a list of publications and presentations showing how new knowledge gained has been transferred to practitioners.

The following questions should be answered:

⁴ 'Reporting Form for Individual Research Projects': <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/vpet-planning-and-policymaking/vet-pet-research/individual-projects.html>

- What international publications have resulted from the research project?
- What researchers have presented or published information about the project?
- Were you able to adhere to the publication plan from the funding application?
- How has cooperation with the partners described in the funding application evolved?
- Were any other cooperation initiatives launched with researchers, schools, teachers, professionals, industrial companies, professional organisations or other stakeholders during the reporting period?
- If so, what benefits were derived from these initiatives?
- What reasons prompted individuals or institutions to work with the lead researcher?
- What other transfer activities was the lead researcher also involved in?
- What findings can be used for VPET policy and practical developments of the VPET system and in what way?
- How well have the results been received?

3. Data management

The following questions should be answered:

- Was it possible to prepare the data as intended in the Data Management Plan?
- If not, why not?

4. Additional information

Here you may provide additional information.

5. Appendix

A written list of all activities in connection with the research project (publications, visits to conferences and symposiums) must be enclosed with the interim or final report. This list does not replace the report on the use of research findings, which must be submitted to SERI after work on the research project is complete. This report will then be posted on SERI's VPET webpage.

Here you may include additional documentation.

2.5. Enclosures

Each report must be accompanied by an updated abstract of the individual research project. The length of this extract should be between 150 - 200 words. The abstract should include the project title, objectives, research questions and results obtained. SERI will have the abstract translated into the national languages German, French and Italian, as well as into English. The abstracts will be posted on SERI's VPET webpage as well as on the ARAMIS information system website⁵.

In addition, a financial report and/or a report on the use of research findings must be submitted at contractually agreed times.

2.6. Submission deadline and extension of deadline

Generally speaking, the contractually agreed submission deadlines shall apply.

Because scientific evaluation of reports takes place at the meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee for VPET Research, it is usually possible to request an extension of the deadline up to at least five weeks before the next scheduled meeting. Longer deadline extensions must be contractually agreed.

⁵ ARAMIS Information System on Research and Development:
<https://www.aramis.admin.ch/>

Researchers wishing to apply for an extension of the deadline are requested to contact SERI in good time. The dates for the meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee are posted on the SERI⁶ website.

3. Reviewing of reports

After SERI receives the report, it will be examined both by SERI and members of the Scientific Advisory Committee for VPET Research. A report may be accepted without further comment or returned for revision:

Report accepted

If the submitted report is well received, then the work on the project can be continued according to plan.

If grants are contractually contingent upon acceptance of the report, then an invoice may now be sent to SERI.

Report returned for revision

If the report is returned for revision, this means that certain improvements are necessary. The letter announcing the decision made by SERI and the Scientific Advisory Committee lists the various improvements to be made.

Researchers are expected to provide SERI with a revised draft of the report (unless otherwise agreed) no later than five weeks before the next scheduled meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee for VPET Research. Text passages revised in the report must be highlighted in colour. In addition, researchers must submit a letter presenting their stance on the various objections raised and the requested improvements.

4. Contact

The Education Management and Research Unit will gladly handle any other questions that you may have:

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⁶ SERI Research on VPET, 'Meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee, 20xx': <https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/education/berufsbildungssteuerung-und-politik/vet-pet-research.html>