



Peer Review
VNFIL Extended

*European Quality Areas
for the Validation of Non-Formal
and Informal Learning (VNFIL)*



Peer Review
European Network



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European Quality Areas for VNFIL

European Criteria for the Quality Development of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL)

Final version

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Preface

Quality assurance in VNFIL at provider level

The nine European Quality Areas for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) were devised for use in Peer Reviews and are geared towards VNFIL providers in the participating countries. VNFIL providers are responsible for initiation, development, implementation and operation of validation. They operate with different scopes (international, national, regional, sector and local) and in different contexts (in public, private and voluntary sectors; in education and training and in labour market services).

The Quality Areas were developed as a comprehensive framework and are applicable for the different forms of VNFIL provision in the partner countries. They constitute a “maximum standard” for VNFIL provision in the partner countries of the project and thus will need to be adapted to national or sector conditions and requirements. During the Peer Review, providers can choose those criteria that apply to their provision.

While the main aim of the Quality Areas is to support Peer Review, they can also be used by providers or responsible authorities for other purposes, e.g. for guiding quality development of VNFIL, for conceiving institutional or national quality frameworks or for internal assessment.

Purpose

The purpose of the Quality Areas is to support VNFIL providers in conducting a Peer Review, they are an integral part of the European Peer Review Manual and the Toolbox: The Manual describes the Peer Review procedure; The Toolbox provides the instruments and the Quality Areas support the provider and the Peer Team to engage in a systematic and criteria-based evaluation. A quality framework needs to be used in order to ensure transparency and coherence of Peer Reviews. For transnational Peer Reviews, the European Quality Areas are mandatory.

The Quality Areas aim to clarify the conditions for implementing validation and to highlight critical choices to be made by stakeholders at different stages of the process. Validation arrangements must be fit for purpose and designed according to their particular operational context, so the Quality Areas do not promote a single ‘correct solution’ but strive to identify relevant criteria and outcomes to create sustainable solutions. They also point to possible quality improvements.

Development

The Quality Areas are based on a first quality framework developed in the project ‘Europeerguid-RVC’ (2014-2015). In this project, an inventory of national quality systems in VNFIL in France, Portugal and the Netherlands was carried out. Results of this inventory were analysed together with the Quality Areas of former Peer Review projects and the first version of the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, published jointly by the European Commission and Cedefop in 2009 (Cedefop and European Commission, 2009).

In the current project, this first set of Quality Areas was further developed – both in terms of content and structure. Information on quality assurance in VNFIL in Austria, Slovakia and Lithuania (IO 1 national reports) and feedback from partners was collected and used to revise the quality criteria. The updated “European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning’ published in 2015 BY Cedefop were used to restructure the Quality Areas in order to ensure compatibility and alignment with existing European quality requirements for VNFIL.

Structure

The Quality Areas described in this document comprises two chapters that define the key processes of VNFIL provision (chapter 1), the supporting processes (chapter 2).

Chapter 1 contains the four basic features of validation, identified in distinct phases:

QA1: **identification**; QA2: **documentation**; QA3: **assessment** and QA4: **certification**. These four phases serve the individual whose learning is validated.

Chapter 2: Conditions for developing and implementing validation contains the Quality Areas

QA5: **information, guidance and counselling**, QA6: **stakeholder coordination**, QA7: **professional competences of practitioners**, QA8: **quality assurance** and **QA9: Organisation of VNFIL provision**.

The first 4 Quality Areas are the “core” Quality Areas, at least one of the core areas needs to be tackled in a European Peer Review (cf. European Peer Review Manual).

The Quality Areas are elaborated in outcomes, criteria, and suggestions for sources of evidence.

Use

The Quality Areas should not be read in isolation but as building blocks which, when combined, can provide the basis for a coherent approach to validating non-formal and informal learning. Since Peer Review is a voluntary procedure, Providers are free to choose the Quality Areas, criteria for the Peer Review and also adapt the to national or sector needs and requirements (see above).

The Quality Areas are to be used throughout the Peer Review:

During the preparation for the Peer Visit, VNFIL providers select the Quality Areas to be investigated in the Peer Review. The possible underlying rationale(s) for the choice of Quality Areas is described in detail in the European Peer Review Manual.

VNFIL providers will usually choose not more than 2 Quality Areas in order to ensure an in-depth analysis. A possible strategy (which was found to be helpful in past Peer Reviews) is to choose one area where the provider has major strengths and another one where the organisation feels more insecure. Another advice is to choose areas that are under (some) control by the VNFIL provider in order to be able to act upon them. (In some countries part of the VNFIL provision is organised centrally and VNFIL providers are not in the position to make changes. In that case these areas should not be chosen – unless it is planned to forward the Peer feedback to the responsible entities on regional or national level.)

The chosen Quality Areas then guide the internal analysis and help to describe the current situation in the Self-Report.

The Peer Team then uses the information described in the Quality Areas to structure the Peer Visit and to write the Peer Review Report.



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1. Basic validation features

Validation is, first, about making visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals. This learning frequently takes place outside formal education and training, at home, in the workplace or through leisure time-activities. Validation is, second, about attributing value to the learning of individuals, irrespective of the context in which this learning took place. Going through validation helps a learner to 'exchange' the outcomes non-formal and informal learning for future learning or employment opportunities. The process must generate trust, notably by demonstrating that requirements of reliability, validity and quality assurance have been met. These elements of visibility and value will always have to be taken into account when designing validation arrangements, although in different ways and combinations.

The above definition does not limit validation to a particular institutional context. Several institutions and stakeholders carry out validation; education and training, labour market authorities, economic sectors, enterprises and voluntary organisations. The multiple outcomes of validation, ranging from formal qualifications to enterprise internal proofs of acquired competences, are all united through their efforts to increase the visibility and value of the learning.

Validation aims at empowering the individual and can serve as a tool for providing second chance opportunities to disadvantaged individuals. Validation is (normally) voluntary and it is up to the individual to take the first step and decide whether she or he wants to enter the process of identification, documentation, assessment and certification of learning. The individual should be able to take control of the process and decide at what stage to end it. However, the individual has to receive adequate information and guidance not only through the entire process, but also before the decision to seek validation is taken. Candidates need to know what to expect, which requirements to meet and what evidence to provide. It is also necessary to inform individuals of the costs and benefits of validation, allowing them to make informed decisions on whether to proceed or not.



QA 1 Identification

Validation necessarily starts with the identification of knowledge, skills and competence acquired and is where the individual becomes increasingly aware of prior achievements. This stage is crucial as learning outcomes differ from person to person and will have been acquired in various contexts: at home, during work or through voluntary activities. For many, discovery and increased awareness of own capabilities is a valuable outcome of the process.

Outcome

The candidate is aware of the value of her/his prior achieved knowledge, skills and competences

Examples of criteria

- Methods and approaches for identification are 'open to the unexpected' and not designed to narrow down the range of knowledge, skills and competences that may be considered.
- There is a good balance of use of (ICT) standardised tools and identification approaches based on personal dialogue.
- Diagnose the candidate's possibilities towards suitable VNFIL procedures.
- Clear connection between VNFIL and other career development activities of the candidate.

Sources of evidence

- (Digital &/or physical) filed identification report



QA 2 Documentation

Documentation will normally be part of or follow the identification stage and involves provision of evidence of the learning outcomes acquired. This can be carried out through the 'building' of a portfolio that tends to include a CV and a career history of the individual, with documents and/or work samples.

Outcome

The candidate has a personal data store (e.g. a portfolio) that identifies relevant connection and insight.

Examples of criteria

- Clear guidelines on what criteria are used for documenting non-formal and informal learning, admitting evidence on acquired competences in the documentation:
 - CV, career history
 - Certificates from previous education and training courses, including short learning
 - Licences to practice; professional registration,
 - Employment related documents such as resumes, performance appraisals,
 - Statutory declaration outlining previous types of work and experience;
 - References from current and past employers, supervisors and colleagues;
 - Testimonials from persons holding relevant qualifications in the area being assessed;
 - Testimonials from supervisors indicating skills and knowledge in work practice
 - Photographs and /or samples of work certified by a referee or accompanied by a statutory
 - Reports, critiques, articles to indicate level of knowledge and assess analytical and writing skills and issues involved in the current debate on the subject
 - Declaration; and if self-employed in the past, evidence of running a business using the skills and knowledge being claimed.

Sources of evidence

- Document with documentation guidelines
- Beneficiaries' portfolio (or comparable data store)



QA 3 Assessment

Assessment is normally referred to as the stage in which an individual's learning outcomes are compared against specific reference points and/or standards. This can imply evaluation of written and documentary evidence but might also involve evaluation of other forms of evidence. Assessment is crucial to the overall credibility of validation of non-formal and informal learning. In some cases, certificates based on validation are perceived as inferior to those awarded by traditional courses and programs. To counter such perceptions, tools and processes must be presented in as transparent a way as possible. Building mutual trust is closely linked to the existence of robust quality assurance arrangements ensuring that all phases of validation, including assessment, are open to critical scrutiny.

Outcome 1

The assessment is customised to the capacities and needs of the candidate.

Examples of criteria

- The candidates' documentation is adequately transferred to the assessment phase
- The VNFIL Centre informs the candidate about the requirements, reaches agreement on the assessment instruments to be used and the level of performance expected.
- The assessment design accords with the needs and possibilities of the candidate, reflects the learning environment, including a balance between assessment and self-assessment. Alternative forms of assessment may be appropriate.
- The assessment is conducted in an appropriate and enabling environment.
- The judgement is made in accordance with the pre-agreed criteria.
- Feedback includes a discussion of the results of the assessment, guidance, further planning and post-assessment support (if required).

Sources of evidence

- Filed personal assessment plans



Outcome 2

The assessment design is based on adequate use of assessment methods

Examples of criteria

- The assessment methods must be:
 - **Valid:** measure what it is intended to measure;
 - **Reliable:** identical results achieved under the same conditions;
 - **Fair:** decision is free from bias
 - **Within cognitive range:** judge the breadth and depth of candidate's learning;
 - **Fit for purpose:** the assessment tool matches the use for which it is intended
- Examples for assessment methods are:
 - **Portfolio analysis** to validate applicant's learning by providing a collection of materials that reflect prior learning and achievements.
 - **Observation workplace** to check basic skills and applications using practical examples, test the quality of work and authenticity of production, to test applications of theory in a structured context in correct/safe manner.
 - **Simulations methodologies**, individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competences assessed.
 - **Presentation** to check the ability to present information in a way appropriate to subject and audience.
 - **Interview** to clarify issues raised in evidence presented and/or to review scope and depth of learning, to check deep understanding of complex issues and ability to explain in simple terms.
 - **Debate** to confirm capacity to sustain a considered argument demonstrating adequate knowledge of the subject
 - **Tests and examinations** have the advantage of being familiar, socially recognised as valid and reliable. Tests are also relatively cheap and quick to administer.
 - **Validation of workplace based training programmes** through an evaluation of such programmes

Sources of evidence

- Analyse the personal assessment plans on criteria



Outcome 3

Assessment is conducted by an assessor / validating body / jury concerning the national regulations and the regulations that belong to the standard.

Examples of criteria

- For the sake of the objectivity, persons or organisations involved in the previous phases are not involved in the assessment.
- Stakeholders are involved in the assessment (e.g. employers, professionals, recruiters...)

Sources of evidence

- Comparison of the validating body with the acquired regulations.



QA 4 Certification

The final phase of validation is linked to the certification – and final valuing – of the learning identified, documented and assessed. This can take different forms, but is commonly the award of a formal qualification (or part-qualification). In enterprises or economic sectors, certification may also involve issuing a license allowing the individual to carry out specific tasks. Whatever the case, validation reaching the stage of certification requires a summative assessment officially confirming the achievement of learning outcomes against a specified standard. It is crucial that a credible authority or organisation manages this process. The value – or the currency – of a certificate or qualification acquired through validation largely depends on the legitimacy of the awarding body or authority.

Examples of criteria

- The standard that is used as a reference point is suitable for capturing the individual variation characterising non-formal and informal learning.

Outcome 1

The VNFIL outcomes are written down in a report and/or validated in a certificate and/or diploma

- The outcomes of validation (documents, portfolio's certificates, etc.) can be used for further (formal and non formal) education and/or job opportunities.
- The awarding body ensures that educational institutes, employers (organisations) accept the outcomes of validation and use them for exemptions in further education and/or job qualifications.
- Outcomes can be partial, validating a part of the standard.
- The decision made on the outcomes of the assessment is transparent and substantiated and according to the demands related to the standard.
- The candidate receives a document that reflects the input and outcomes of the VNFIL procedure

Sources of evidence

- VNFIL certificates/diplomas
- Use of VNFIL certificates/ diplomas by employers and/or educational institutions
- Number of VNFIL certificates/ diplomas that are accepted by employers/educational institutes



Outcome 2

Standards for a certificate / diploma are based on an agreed reference point.

Examples of criteria

Standards should be either:

- Occupational standards: following the logic of employment, these standards focus on what people need to do, how they do it, and how well they do it in an occupational context.
- Education/training standards: following the logic of education and training, these standards focus on what people need to learn, how they learn it, and how the quality and content of learning are assessed

It is recommended to use standards that are attributed to EQF/NQF

Sources of evidence

- Number of VNFIL certificates/ diplomas with an agreed reference point

Outcome 3

An appeal procedure exists.

Examples of criteria

- The VNFIL Centres appeal procedure provides candidates the possibility to challenge the decision of the assessor/validating body

Sources of evidence

- Information and documentation on the appeal procedure
- Awareness of candidates of the existence of an appeal procedure



2. Conditions for developing and implementing validation

QA 5 Information, guidance and counselling

National experience highlights the importance of providing impartial and comprehensive information, guidance and counselling throughout the entire validation process. Experiences also underline the importance of coordination: relevant information and advice must be offered close to where people live, work, and study and when they need it. Individuals need to be informed on the costs and benefits of validation, notably on how the process can influence progress in learning and employment. Guidance and counselling is of particular importance for reaching disadvantaged groups and for releasing their inherent potential. Existing guidance methods and tools devised to respond to the identified needs of specific target groups based on age, employment situation, socioeconomic background or migrant status can be incorporated in validation initiatives to assist in the definition of the purpose of the process.

Outcome 1

Well-informed candidates who voluntarily engage in VNFIL.

The added value of VNFIL for career development is clear to the beneficiary.

Examples of criteria

- The voluntary participation of the client and her/his ownership and ability to decide about the process is assured.
- Information about the VNFIL provider and process to potential candidates concerning the possibilities, timeline, costs, procedure, forms of evidence of learning outcomes, presentation of evidence, standards to be applied, assessment, support available, appeal procedures, result and outcomes of the validation
- Transparency and pedagogical value of the counselling process (e.g. promoting self-reflection, giving clear explanation of VNFIL according to the abilities of the candidate).
- Information and counselling addresses the invisible barriers to successful VNFIL. (This may include advising programmes, assistance with identifying equivalencies and preparation for assessment. This may also include dealing with the very significant anxieties, traumas and non-technical barriers that arise when adult learners enter the VNFIL arena.)
- Alternative pathways are offered in case VNFIL is not the appropriate way for the candidate.

Sources of evidence

- Evaluation survey of the welcoming phase
- Information material used
- Perception surveys, interview of counsellors/candidates.
- No. of people that choose an alternative pathway



Outcome 2

Candidates are sure that their individual rights are respected.

Examples of criteria

- Explicit procedures have been put in place to guarantee confidentiality.
- Ethical standards have been developed and applied.
- The outcomes of the process are the exclusive property of the candidate. If not, the implications are clear to the candidate and the candidate has given explicit approval for use by other parties.
- Arrangements to guarantee fair and equal treatment.

Sources of evidence

- Procedural standards on confidentiality and privacy
- Feedback from candidates

Outcome 3

A VNFIL work plan / agreement is drawn up concerning all steps and instruments in the VNFIL process and adapted to the needs and capacities of the candidate.

Examples of criteria

- VNFIL provider and candidate discuss and plan all tools, approaches, interactions and steps in the VNFIL process, adapt it to the needs and capacities of the candidate within regulations and financial limits.

Sources of evidence

- (Digital &/or physical) Filed work planning and reports on the execution of VNFIL
- Contract and / or report on these agreements
- Interviews with counsellors and candidates



Outcome 4

A continuously motivated candidate, with a clear understanding of the pedagogical value of her or his counselling process.

Examples of criteria

- Counsellor stimulates the candidate to maintain motivation in the counselling process (e.g. reminders, phone calls to candidates in case of missed sessions).
- The counsellor takes care of transfer of information and continuity of the process between other activities in which the candidate participates before or after VNFIL process (e.g. career guidance, labour office counselling, training...)
- The candidate is well supported in her or his choice for the appropriate standard (certification/diploma) for the validation.

Sources of evidence

- Feedback from candidates
- Self- or peer-assessment of involved staff
- Perception surveys, dropout percentage, interview of counsellors.

Outcome 5

Candidates use the outcomes of their guidance, recognition and validation to develop their personal development plan.

Examples of criteria

- Clear benefits for the candidates in terms of e.g. self-confidence, social recognition, access to further education and training and employability
- A personal development plan, which describes an individualised learning pathway containing further orientation, formal and informal learning, work, next VNFIL etc.
- A periodic evaluation on the candidates progress after a appropriate time e.g. 6 months, 1 year

Sources of evidence

- Personal development plans
- Perception surveys, number of complaints, drop-out percentage, interview of counsellors/candidates, participation/ production candidates, quality of the portfolio.



QA 6 Stakeholder coordination

Validation is a complex process that requires the involvement of many different actors with different responsibilities and functions. Communication and coordination are necessary to develop and implement guidance services able to serve and support validation. Validation in the different education and training sectors, for example, varies considerably from validation that is related to labour market services, in enterprises and in the voluntary sector. Bringing together the different stakeholders within a coordinated strategy is challenging.

Outcome 1

Stakeholders legitimise the VNFIL provider in its role and position in society. There is adequate contact with relevant stakeholders, open feedback lines, and mutual learning in developing better career opportunities of mutual target groups.

Examples of criteria

- The VNFIL provider is an active partner in institutional, policy and other networks (agencies of economic development...) that go beyond VNFIL (lifelong learning, labour market and employment, economic needs, qualification needs)
- Identify all relevant stakeholder groups, establish strategic and operational cooperation with stakeholders as education and training institutions (formal and non formal sector), employment services, companies, youth organisations, employment services, social partners, municipalities, regional development agencies, NGOs and civil society
- Analyse the local, regional and national needs of target groups for validation of informal and non-formal learning
- Arrange coordination of the network and relations between stakeholders on different levels (regional, national, public, private, etc.)
- Involve these stakeholders in the development of VNFIL (e.g. by the use of Peer Review).
- Identify validation arrangements (including standards for validation) for the stakeholder groups and identify a legal and political basis for validation.
- Establish cooperation with suitable partners; develop administrative processes (contact and information procedures, recording and monitoring of results, shared quality assurance etc.)
- Regular exchange of information with relevant stakeholders to obtain feedback on the cooperation with and results of the VNFIL provider.
- Tackle the problem of interfaces between 'supplying' and 'receiving' institutions.
- Maintaining the documentation up-to-date in cooperation with external institutions

Sources of evidence

- Cooperation agreements Stakeholder survey, formal recognition of the provider as a VNFIL provider, funding



Outcome 2

Promotion is attuned to the chosen target groups, access for disadvantaged is guaranteed.

Examples of criteria

- Develop method and contents of promotion that meet the needs of different target groups. Promote VNFIL with a personal approach (approaching people personally and in situations where they are likely to open up to the possibilities of VNFIL, e.g. in Adult Guidance Centres).
- Make the validation of informal and non-formal learning known to professional areas surrounding VNFIL-providers as intermediaries or “suppliers” (education and training, employment services, companies).
- Use different types of media (radio, newspapers, television, world wide web, leaflets, posters, billboards).
- Promote the added value of VNFIL for disadvantaged groups.
- Disadvantaged groups are reached in substantial numbers.
- Take care of clear information about costs, expected effort, and time investment for the potential candidate.
- Ensure easy access to the registration process (also for disadvantaged groups).

Sources of evidence

- Typology and documentation of outreach activities
- Feedback from candidates and stakeholders

Outcome 3

The foreseen target groups and numbers of VNFIL candidates come in. Achieve and sustain results that meet the needs and expectations of target groups of VNFIL candidates

Examples of criteria

- The characteristics of the candidates are in line with the strategic target groups
- The VNFIL provider takes care that VNFIL is part of a common approach on career guidance in cooperation with its stakeholders.
- Opening hours suit the needs and expectations of the target groups.
- The outcome of the VNFIL process is meaningful for candidates and empowers and motivates candidates to go ahead in her/his life professionally and personally in career development (employed, career step, new job, etc.) and professional development (start initial learning, exemptions in further learning, continuing learning, workplace based learning plan, etc.)

Sources of evidence

- Statistics on VNFIL candidates, divided in target groups, numbers of candidates who started and finished.



- Feedback on outreach (e.g. surveys, qualitative feedback from participants or cooperation partners)
- No. of potential candidates reached.
- Candidate survey

Outcome 4

Achieve and sustain results that meet the needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders within society.

Examples of criteria

- Society stakeholders are satisfied with the VNFIL provider's services and results.
- Retention of candidates throughout the process is satisfactory for stakeholders, i.e. an adequate number of candidates who started the process also finish it.
- Certificates/diplomas acquired through VNFIL are held in equivalent to those acquired through formal training.

Sources of evidence

- Society stakeholder survey



QA 7 Professional competences of practitioners

Trust in validation largely depends on the work carried out by ‘front-line’ practitioners and professionals directly involved with validation candidates at different stages of the process. These practitioners cover all aspects of validation and include those that offer information, advice and guidance (orientation), those that carry out assessment, the external observers of the process, the managers of assessment providers/procedures, and a range of other stakeholders that have an important but less direct role in the process. Such professionals should be equipped not only with validation competences but also soft skills such as intercultural capacity. This is essential in reaching out to prospective candidates.

Outcome

Professional conducted VNFIL procedures, unambiguous approach to the main VNFIL processes as counselling, assessment, handling of criteria. Achieve and sustain results that meet the needs and expectations of people working in/for the VNFIL Centre.

Examples of criteria

- Sufficient human resources in relation to the quantity of candidates (e.g. number of candidates per counsellor/assessor)
- Distinction of roles and possible conflicts of interests especially for counsellors and assessors
- Use of occupational standards for selection and professionalization of counsellors and assessors¹,
- Knowledge fields for a counsellor: Knowledge of the validation process, the educational system, certifications; capacity to rephrase learning experiences into learning outcomes; understanding of the labour market and career development.
- The assessor is familiar with the validation process (validity and reliability), has experience in the specific field of work, has no personal interest in the validation outcome (to guarantee impartiality and avoid conflicts of interest), is familiar with different assessment methodologies, is able to inspire trust and to create a proper psychological setting for the candidates, is committed to provide feedback on the match between learning outcomes and validation standards/references (via support systems), is trained in assessment and validation processes and has knowledge about quality assurance mechanisms, operates according to a code of conduct.
- Description of the knowledge fields of managers and other staff involved in the VNFIL provision.
- VNFIL professionals are continuously adequately trained via qualification progression routes
- VNFIL professionals establish a collective approach to VNFIL by systematic exchange of practices (e.g. peer learning, supervision, intervision, team development)
- Respect of ethical imperatives, e.g. the use of an ethical standard/code
- The majority of staff is satisfied with their work in/for the VNFIL provider.

¹ Examples of these standard can be found in the peer review manual for validation of informal and non-formal learning



- **Sources of evidence**
- Number of complaints
- Perception surveys
- Evaluation of staff
- Employee survey
- Peer meetings
- Proof of means that were mobilised for the professionalization of counsellors and assessors
- Number of training hours for counsellors and assessors
- Number of internal meeting
- Interviews with managers
- Turnover per counsellor / assessor
- Sick days



QA 8 Quality management

Quality management in validation must be systematic, take place on a continuous basis and be an integrated part of the process.

- systematic quality improvement requires an explicit and agreed quality strategy;
- a system for feedback from users/customers should always be considered;
- a quality plan/strategy must be known to the public, including candidates;
- a quality/plan strategy can prepare the ground for external quality assessment and review.

The overall quality of validation depends on a range of factors reflecting the character and complexity of the process. Ensuring and improving quality is complex but needs to be applied following the principles of the quality circle: plan, do, check and act (PDCA).

Outcome

A quality management system reflecting the legitimacy and strategic, tactic and operational results.

Examples of criteria

- The VNFIL provider maintains a fit for purpose quality management system, which is based on quality standards, agreed processes, continuous monitoring, complaint & appeal procedures, evaluation and follow-up.
- Self-evaluation and evaluation of the process by the candidates through feedback questionnaires, interviews, focus groups
- Self-reflection by staff
- Expert evaluation of VNFIL outcomes and procedures
- Evaluation of former candidates after e.g. 6 months
- Regular independent external evaluation of the VNFIL process, involvement of external stakeholders with legitimate interests i.e. through Peer Review
- The safety, security, confidentiality and consistency of the process must be ensured and continuously improved.

Sources of evidence

Evaluation reports



QA 9 Organisation of VNFIL provision

The last Quality Area concerns the organisation of the VNFIL provider. In some cases, VNFIL provision is part of a bigger organisation (education, employment services or guidance). Some of them are private, others public. Organisations establish the process, the people and possibly a physical or virtual provider where candidates, counsellors and assessors come together. Process managers can have responsibilities for the public profile of the validation provider, for ensuring equality of access to validation, managing an appeals process and ensuring external review. One key role is financial management. Whether privately or publicly funded, minimising costs and creating a sustainable operation is challenging.

Outcome 1

Positive image of VNFIL provider that shapes the future of the provider, leaders acting as role models for its values, ethics and inspiring trust.

Examples of criteria

- Role model: showing respect of ethical imperatives
- Privacy: adequate protection of personal data
- Creating equal opportunities for all candidates
- Showing personal commitment to VNFIL and candidates
- Social responsibility of the provider
- Positioning/visibility the added value of the VNFIL provider in society

Sources of evidence

- Reviews from relevant stakeholders, publications



Outcome 2

Strategy is focussed on increasing public value on inclusion of vulnerable groups, participation of adults in lifelong learning, inclusion in labour market

Examples of criteria

- Strategy is based on an inventory on the local/regional/national target groups for who the validation of informal and non-formal learning has added value
- The VNFIL provider has analysed the local, regional and national needs of target groups.
- The VNFIL provider has an institutional development plan with a mission statement, targets and concrete measures and working plans.
- Guarantees for equal access of all candidates (e.g. barrier-less access regional coverage, minimising potential financial or psychological obstacles)
-

Sources of evidence

- Demographic characteristics of candidates, Access and diversity results

Outcome 3

Flawless organisation of VNFIL process, flexible, enabling the organisation to anticipate and react in a timely manner to ensure on-going success

Examples of criteria

- Clear, rational and effective organisation of the VNFIL process.
- Case management to manage the interfaces in the VNFIL process and keep the process client-driven.
- Clearly defined professional requirements for VNFIL professionals, clear distinction of roles between guidance and assessment, avoiding any conflict of interest
- Ensuring the support function/staff (people giving out information, people registering candidates, directing them to services etc.)
- Ensuring appropriate administration, delivery of materials, books, certificates, recurrent work procedures, office capacity, technical equipment
- Ensuring the validity, reliability and fairness
- Enabling reaction to market developments
- VNFIL provision is well functioning within the larger organisation, if applicable.

Sources of evidence

- Number of internal conflicts, number of complaints concerning the VNFIL process, number of complaints on internal organisation



Outcome 4

Availability and sufficient use of resources so that VNFIL professionals can work in an efficient, flexible and effective way.

Examples of criteria

- Rooms and common areas are adequately equipped
- Reference documentation like qualification standards, occupational systems are available
- Computers, internet access and relevant software are in place
- Documentation from external organisations is available
- Sufficient finances available for VNFIL
- Up-to-date information resources on available certifications and validation requirements are accessible to counsellors and candidates. Appropriate tools and procedures to support identification of knowledge, skills and competences are used, with a balance of standardised and dialogue-based identification approaches.

Sources of evidence

- Number of internal conflicts, number of complaints concerning the VNFIL process, number of complaints on internal organisation

Outcome 5

Business impact

Examples of criteria

- The organisation knows and evaluates economic criteria: profitability, break-even point etc.
- Sustainability: Rationality of economical management, in terms of strategic sustainability

Sources of evidence

- Financial year reports