

# Good practice in validation of learning outcomes

Iceland

## Qualification "Car mechanic"



*Good practise in validation of learning outcomes. Iceland. Qualification "Car mechanic"*

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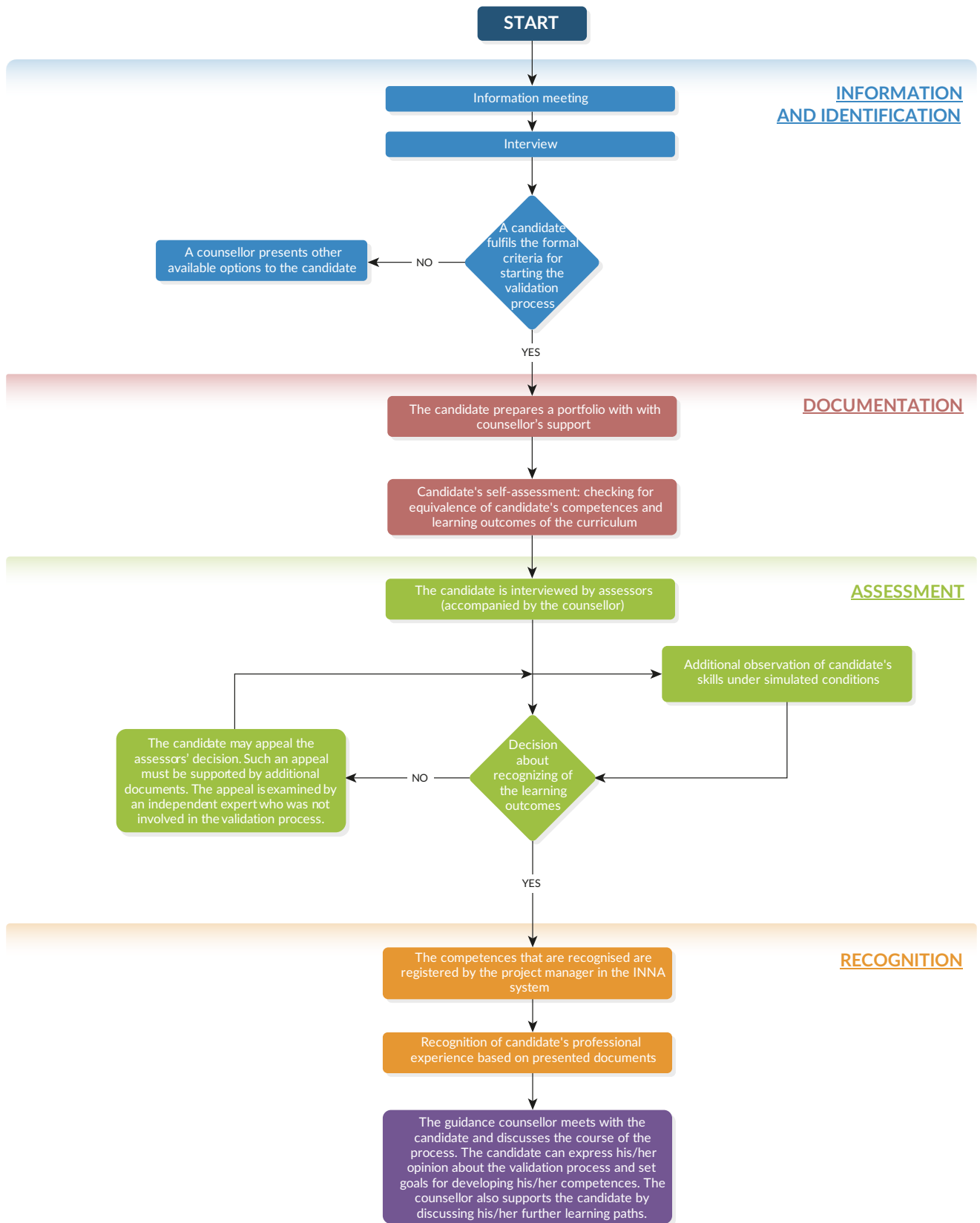
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## 1. Country, institution name

- Iceland
- IÐAN Fraedslusetur

## 2. Institution website

<http://idan.is>

## 3. Qualifications

Car mechanic (Icelandic: *Bíll vélvirki*)

Level 3 of the Icelandic Qualifications Framework (ISQF)

Level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

## 4. Short description of the validation process

Validation in Iceland is understood as the process of recognising competences acquired outside the system of education, i.e. through informal or non-formal learning (validation of prior learning).

In order to attain qualifications in Iceland, credits for specific courses and the completion of a vocational internship as part of formal education are required. Some of these requirements may be recognised in the process of validation, which shortens the time of attaining qualifications.

Therefore, validation does not end with the direct attainment of qualifications, but with the recognition of prior learning, i.e. determining correspondence between a candidate's confirmed competences and the learning outcomes of course units, as well as the vocational experience a person has and the vocational internship required for a given qualification.

In Iceland, validation consists of the following stages:

- information and identification
- documentation
- assessment
- recognition
- final activities

## 5. Detailed description of the validation process

The candidate is led through all stages of validation by a specially designated project manager, who is responsible for the smooth course of the process.

### 5.1. Information and Identification

Validation starts with an **information meeting between the candidate and a project manager**. The project manager provides the candidate with all the necessary information about validation in order to help him/her make an informed decision about participating in the process. Initial requirements, the course of the validation process, and the benefits resulting from it are described.

Subsequently, a **guidance counsellor invites the candidate to a qualification interview**, during which the entire process is discussed in detail and it is determined whether the candidate fulfils the criteria for starting the validation process. In line with the Icelandic Adult Education Act (2011), persons who wish to start

validation for the “Car mechanic” qualification should be 23 years old and have at least 3 years of experience in the industry.

If a person does not meet the criteria, the counsellor analyses other options available to him/her.

## 5.2. Documentation

Documentation occurs at IÐAN in group sessions provided by a guidance and career counsellor.

During the first two sessions, lasting for two hours each, the participants develop their **portfolio**: they write down their competences and collect evidence confirming their experiences relating to work and other tasks. At this stage, the counsellor’s support is very important, because candidates tend to underestimate their competences rather than overestimate them.

When they have finished, the counsellor reviews the portfolio together with the candidate to ensure that the compiled documents and their description reflect in detail the candidate’s experiences and knowledge.

At the next two sessions, lasting for two hours each, the candidates perform a **self-assessment**, which they first must complete independently at home. This consists of an evaluation of the competences included in their portfolio in relationship to the learning outcomes of the curriculum and the occupational profile of car mechanic [1].

Over 70% of the competences declared in the self-assessment are usually confirmed in the assessment stage.

## 5.3. Assessment

After preparing the portfolio and completing the self-assessment, each candidate is interviewed by a designated assessor(s). Multiple subjects are usually assessed simultaneously with the participation of several assessors. When the candidate is interviewed by the assessors for the first time, he/she is accompanied by a guidance counsellor who helps him/her match the content of the portfolio with the assessment criteria.

During the interview, the assessor analyses the documents submitted by the candidate. The assessor tries to create the fullest list of the candidate’s competences. To this aim, the assessor uses various methods in order to bring out the depth and breadth of the candidate’s competences. These can include interviewing, drawing, demonstrating, using case studies, problem solving, etc.

Sometimes the interview with the assessor is not sufficient. In such cases, the assessor judges a candidate’s skills by observing him/her in the performance of relevant tasks and problem solving. This usually occurs in a car repair shop under simulated conditions.

When the assessment is complete, the assessor provides the project manager with his/her conclusions from the assessment.

## 5.4. Recognition

In the case of the Icelandic “Car mechanic” qualification, there are various ways of confirming the learning outcomes corresponding to specific course units in education or training. The required vocational experience can also be assessed and recognised by using various methods.

### Learning Outcomes

In Iceland, as part of vocational education or training, it is only possible to credit a given course unit in its entirety, that is, including both the practical and the theoretical part. This is also the case for validation.

The competences that are recognised (as credited course units) are **registered by the project manager in the INNA**, a central administration system for secondary schools in Iceland. In this way, informal learning

and acquired professional experiences are treated as the equivalent of formal education.

The results are immediately registered in the INNA. The candidate does not receive documents in paper form.

Entering data in a central system allows the candidate to have free access to his/her accumulated credits, e.g. when starting new training.

### Professional Experience

The vocational internship required as part of education or vocational training (in the case of a car mechanic, 48 weeks completed in the workplace) is not registered in the INNA. If the candidate has at least 3 years of vocational experience in the industry and can confirm it, e.g. with a pension fund or employment certificate, the IÐAN training centre concludes an agreement with the candidate regarding the internship on behalf of the workplace, which is issued with a retroactive date. Such an agreement allows the candidate to achieve formal recognition of the professional internship requirement listed in the curriculum of a given qualification. In this way, the candidate does not have to complete the internship and can shorten the time it takes to attain the qualification by 48 weeks.

## 5.5. Final Activities

At the end of the validation process, the guidance counsellor meets with the candidate and discusses the course of the process. The candidate can express his/her opinion about the validation process and set goals for developing his/her competences. The counsellor also supports the candidate by discussing his/her further learning path. The candidate is informed on how to appeal the assessors' decision. The right to appeal is specified in Art. 15 of Adult Education [Regulation](#) No. 1163. Such an appeal must be supported by additional documents. The responsible party (in this case IÐAN), supported by the Steering Committee (representatives of the automotive industry), reviews the appeal and notifies the candidate about its decision, which is final.

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[1] The general document is prepared by the Occupational Council, and describes the competences that an employee must have. The occupational profile is the binding reference for the vocational education and training system.

## 6. Validation methods

In Iceland, the following methods are used in the process of validating the “Car mechanic” qualification, depending on the stage of validation:

- analysis of evidence
- interview
- observation in simulated conditions (as an additional method)

These methods were described in a handbook prepared by the Education and Training Service Centre [2], which contains important guidelines for persons performing validation, as well as checklists (including measurable methods of assessing competences) and assessment forms.

### 6.1. Analysis of Evidence

In the documentation stage, the candidate's competences are compiled with the use of a portfolio. They are compared with the competences specified for the given qualification. First, the candidate does this independently by performing a self-assessment, and then an assessor conducts an interview on this basis. Preparing the portfolio consists of writing down the competences acquired through formal education, non-formal and informal learning (work, studies, social activities, interests and family life). The candidate is provided a special [template](#) to present this information. At the very beginning, the term “competence” is

explained so that candidates can compile all necessary documents confirming that they have actually attained the reported competences (e.g. certificates from work, various school or training certificates). Once this is done, the counsellor reviews the portfolio together with the candidate in order to check if its content exactly reflects the candidate's experiences and knowledge.

Subsequently, the candidate, as part of the self-assessment, independently analyses whether the experiences and knowledge described in the portfolio correspond to the learning outcomes for the "Car mechanic" qualification. He/she is assisted by the assessor and guidance counsellor, who primarily clarify the terms used in the learning outcomes.

## 6.2. Interview

The interview method is mainly used in the assessment stage. It may also be used to a limited degree in the information and identification stage. During the initial interview and the qualifying interview with the project manager and the counsellor, apart from verifying the formal requirements for starting the validation process, the meetings are also used to initially determine the candidate's learning outcomes.

In the assessment stage, the assessor interviews the candidate about his/her submitted portfolio and the self-assessment. The purpose of the interview is to compare the candidate's competences with the learning outcomes specified for the given qualification; this is done with the use of a checklist. Various techniques are applied during the interview, e.g.:

- unstructured conversation
- sketching
- demonstrating
- case study
- problem solving

The selection of a technique depends on the specific nature of the competences of a given subject. Furthermore, it is also adjusted to the individual candidate to make it easier for him/her to demonstrate their acquired competences.

The assessor(s) may hold several interviews with the candidate - their number depends on the number of subjects which the candidate would like to have credited.

If the assessor determines that he/she was unable to confirm that the candidate had the relevant competences during the interview, a supplementary plan is prepared, in which they determine together which competences should still be confirmed and which other methods should be used to accomplish this (e.g. work sample, demonstration of a technique, in-depth structured interview, etc.).

## 6.3. Observation in Simulated Conditions

The assessor uses this method in the assessment stage when the interview is not sufficient to confirm the candidate's competences. The assessor evaluates the candidate's skills by observing how he/she performs specific tasks and solves problems. This usually takes place in a car repair shop in simulated conditions.

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[2] The Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) is the agenda of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ), the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA), the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRD), and the Ministry of Finance, and Association of Local Authorities in Iceland. It was established in 2002 by the Icelandic government and began operating in 2003. ETSC receives funding under a service agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to operate the Education Fund, which finances education and training courses, counselling and validation by accredited education providers, as well as developing quality standards in consultation with the Ministry. For more information, see <https://frae.is/um-fa/about-us/>



## 7. Validation results

### 7.1. Recognition

As mentioned above, validation in Iceland does not end with the awarding of qualifications and a certificate. Due to the fact that the validation outcome is registered in the centralised INNA system and the internship is credited on the basis of past vocational experience, the candidate can enrol for training and have some of the qualification's requirements immediately fulfilled as a result of validation. In this case, the candidate only has to supplement the training and pass those subjects that are missing. This enables the candidate to attain the desired qualification as quickly as possible.

### 7.2. Appeals Procedure

Art. 15 of the Adult Education Regulation specifies that IÐAN and an independent expert should act in line with the Icelandic administrative law on the appeals procedure (transparent procedure of examining the appeal, time for supplementing and registering the appeal). However, no special provisions have been set forth for validation.

The candidate learns about the appeals procedure during the information meeting. The candidate can apply for a renewed evaluation of the results. In such a case, the candidate's application must be supported by detailed supplementary documents. The awarding body appoints an independent expert to examine the appeal, a person who was not involved in the validation process. The expert reviews the application for the appeal, the attached documents and the validation outcomes. Subsequently, the expert sends a report to the awarding body (in this case - IÐAN VETC) which, in turn, provides the candidate with the decision.

## 8. Human resources

The following persons are involved in the validation process:

- project managers
- vocational counsellors
- assessors
- stakeholders from a given area

### 8.1. Project Manager

The project manager is an employee of IÐAN VETC, responsible for supervising a specific validation process (e.g. for the car mechanic qualification).

The role of the project manager is to:

- organise and perform the validation process for a given candidate, namely supervise the timely completion of the stages and finances, ensure the proper flow of communication and resolve potential problems;
- cooperate closely with the Steering Committee, consisting of stakeholders of a given industry (in this case the automotive industry) in order to ensure their approval of the proposed methods and framework of the process, as well as to implement the quality assurance mechanisms.

In the majority of situations, the manager is a trained guidance counsellor by profession and often performs this role also.

### 8.2. Guidance Counsellor

Guidance counsellors are employed directly by IÐAN VETC.

The role of the guidance counsellor is:

- to support the candidate during validation, from the moment of holding the information meeting to the end of the process, particularly during the assessment stage;
- to assist in preparing the portfolio;
- to review documents and the information provided by the candidate;
- to provide guidance on options for completing the car mechanic qualification upon completing validation.

A vocational counsellor should:

- have experience in the specific profession (counselling is a regulated profession in Iceland);
- have a positive attitude about the validation process;
- have excellent communication skills (empathic attitude towards candidates, the ability to listen);
- be capable of offering neutral and individual counselling;
- possess thorough knowledge about validation, portfolio design, the learning outcomes of a given qualification and about the personal development options available to candidates after the validation.

### 8.3. Assessor

The assessors are external experts hired by IDAN VETC. Many of them are experienced teachers, but persons performing a given profession can also become assessors.

The assessor's tasks include:

- assisting in the design of assessment checklists based on the learning outcomes defined in the car mechanics curriculum;
- providing candidates with all necessary information about the beginning of the process during group sessions, including preparation of the self-assessment;
- reviewing candidates' portfolios and performing interviews in the assessment stage;
- registering assessment results and informing candidates about them.

The assessor should:

- have in-depth knowledge about the given field (in this case - car mechanics);
- possess high level communication skills;
- be broadminded and tolerant;
- have experience with different assessment methods appropriate for diverse groups of candidates;
- have a positive view of the concept of validation.

### 8.4. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the automotive industry decides on the organisation of the validation process performed for the qualifications from this sector. Its members are employers, representatives of professional associations, labour unions, upper secondary schools, training institutions, occupational councils and lifelong learning centres.

The role of the Steering Committee is:

- to plan the process of validation in cooperation with the project manager and to prepare the assessment methods and criteria;
- to protect the rights of every candidate, and primarily, to examine appeals pertaining to validation outcomes;
- to ensure the quality of a specific validation;
- to ensure that the car mechanic occupation is a respected and reputable trade in Iceland.

## 9. Organizational and material conditions

IDAN VETC employs qualified persons who perform the work of project managers, guidance counsellors and assessors. IDAN VETC currently employs a total of 22 persons.

The IDAN VETC website presents detailed information about validation and contact details to schedule guidance counselling.

The entire process of validation organised by IDAN VETC usually lasts 3 months. It starts as a group process, and then it is continued individually.

The validation outcomes are registered in the INNA - the central administration system for secondary schools in Iceland. Candidates have access to INNA, and it also allows for smoother communication among various institutions, particularly in cases when a candidate is planning to enrol in additional training.

## 10. Quality assurance

Neither the Adult Education Act nor the adult education regulation stipulate in detail how to ensure the quality assurance of validation.

The process is supervised by the Education and Training Service Centre, which prepared guidelines for the quality of validation and ensures that validation is implemented in line with the act and the regulation. The quality assurance methods used in the validation process in Iceland are consistent with the guidelines specified by Cedefop: *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*.

ETSC has developed an accreditation system for providers of adult education services in Iceland as part of the *European Quality Mark* (EQM). The EQM is a transparent procedure that education service providers can use to evaluate their own methods in line with quality standard requirements. Self-assessment is subsequently verified by an accredited external party. Only accredited education service providers can offer validation and receive co-financing from the Education Fund.

The Education and Training Service Centre is responsible for:

- coordinating the development of validation practices;
- training validation practitioners;
- awarding funds to training institutions;
- preparing quality assurance criteria and methods;
- accrediting training institutions.

In spite of the fact that the validation process is transparent, there is a risk that the functions performed by the Education and Training Service Centre may create a certain conflict of interest.

Therefore, discussions are being held in Iceland to identify the best solutions for addressing this issue. Plans are underway to make the Education Directorate responsible for ensuring the quality of validation in the future.

It is worth emphasising that along with the majority of institutions of this type, the Education and Training Service Centre is also subject to external control audits.

## 11. Financing

Candidates do not incur fees for validation. Validation in Iceland is financed jointly by the state and employers.

The key source of financing is the Education Fund, funded from the state budget for adult education and managed by the Education and Training Service Centre.

Employers co-finance validation by paying a specified percentage of their income for this purpose.

## 12. Context of good practice

The concept of validation started to be developed in Iceland between 2004 and 2006 when pilot projects were launched for persons with low levels of education, including persons who had not finished upper secondary school. These projects were managed by social partners and the Education and Training Service Centre. Since the very beginning, validation was perceived as a tool allowing persons to return more easily to education and vocational training and to shorten the time of attaining qualifications.

In 2007, a system of public financing for the services provided by the Education and Training Service Centre was established. The next step towards popularising validation was the adoption of an act in 2010 on adult education. It includes the right of persons who have not completed upper secondary school to use validation and vocational counselling. The act stipulates that validation is free of charge.

A regulation was passed in 2011 that changed the 2010 adult education act. The scope of activities of the Education and Training Service Centre was extended; it was entrusted with the preparation and coordination of a comprehensive validation system for the country.

Social partners play an important role in the system. Twelve Occupational Councils are responsible for preparing and supervising teaching and vocational training programmes. The Councils propose general study objectives and define the needs for knowledge and skills and learning outcomes by developing occupational profiles for specific occupations within their respective trades (what course participants should know, be able to do and understand upon graduation). They further devise criteria for the division of study between school-based and workplace learning, and certify workplaces for learning and on-the-job training.

IDAN VETC, an important part of the system, was established in the spring of 2006 as the result of the merger of four education centres, with a fifth joining later that same year. IDAN VETC is jointly owned by: The Federation of Icelandic Industries, The Federation of Vocational Trade Unions (Samidn), The Association of Food and Hospitality Trades (MATVIS), The Association of Book Creators (GRAFIA), The Association of Engineering and Metal Trades (VM), The Association of Technology Trades (FIT), The Association of Automotive Trades, The Icelandic Travel Industry Association and the Association of Master Builders. IDAN VETC has the status of a non-profit corporation. It was the first training centre in Iceland to receive the European Quality Mark for the provision of adult learning. IDAN VETC is a certified training provider registered with the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The main objective of IDAN VETC is to support the development of human capital in companies, including the development and improvement of employees' competences. IDAN VETC offers a variety of training courses to craft and trade professionals, as well as various services to companies, such as skills assessment, customized training offers, and the development and implementation of a training policy. IDAN VETC is also responsible for organising journeyman (apprentice) examinations under a contract with the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. It offers skills assessment and promotes career opportunities through its education and career advice learning centre.

Validation is free of charge and is offered exclusively to persons who already have professional experience. Since 2007, approx. 2,000 people completed the validation process at IDAN VETC in 26 different trades, of which 547 persons progressed towards completion of the national journeyman examination and attained qualifications.

IDAN VETC also supports the Ministry of Education in recognising foreign vocational education qualifications (with the exception of the electrical trades).