

Good practice in validation of learning outcomes

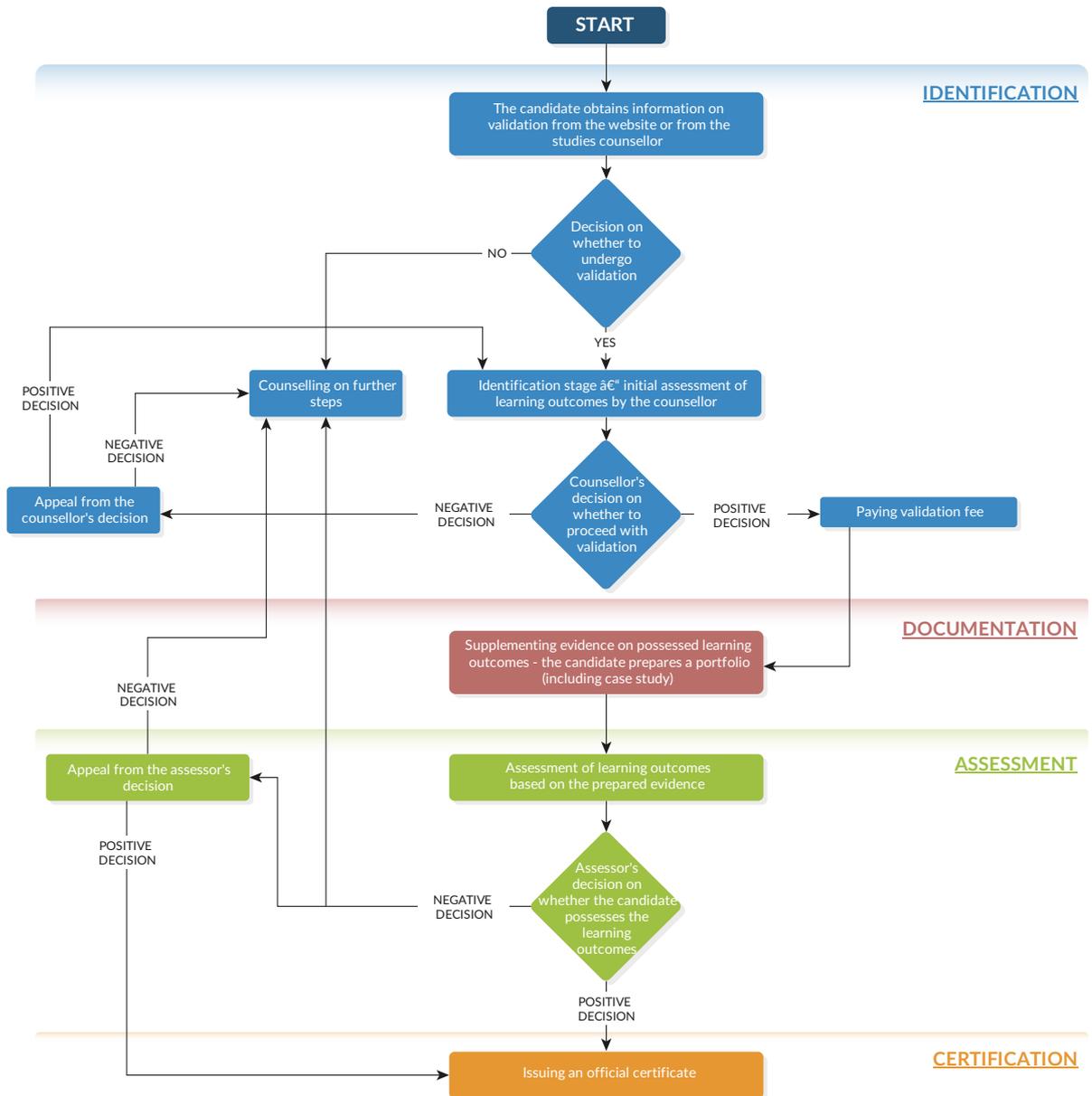
Denmark

Qualification "Leadership and coaching"



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1. Country, institution name

- Denmark
- VIA University College (VIA UC), Continuing Education Department

2. Institution website

<https://en.via.dk/>

3. Qualifications

“Leadership and coaching” is implemented as part of postgraduate studies (Diploma Degree Programme Leadership).

Level 6 of the Danish Qualifications Framework (in Danish: Danske Kvalifikationsramme for Livslang Laering)
Level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework

4. Short description of the validation process

Comment

Candidates for the post-graduate studies described in this good practice should meet two conditions: 1) have completed at least short cycle studies (at the level of an Academy Degree Programme) and 2) have at least 2 years' experience in a management-related field. If a candidate does not have the appropriate education but has the required professional experience, he/she can demonstrate through validation that he/she has already acquired the required knowledge, skills and social competence.

Validation begins by determining whether a candidate's knowledge, skills and social competence correspond to the learning outcomes acquired after completing a given education programme (the stage of identifying learning outcomes). If so, the validation process can proceed; if not, the process ends at this stage and the candidate is informed about other possibilities (counselling).

The candidate, with the support of the higher educational institution (studies counsellor and assessor), gathers evidence to prove that specified learning outcomes have been acquired. The assessor determines, on the basis of the evidence presented, whether the candidate's knowledge, skills and social competence correspond to the learning outcomes acquired upon completion of the given educational module. In rare cases, the assessor interviews the candidate. A successful validation results in the awarding of the “competence certificate for recognised prior learning” - an official certificate of possessing the required learning outcomes, which corresponds to the learning outcomes achieved in a given studies module.

5. Detailed description of the validation process

Comment

Validation at VIA UC takes place in several steps, which roughly correspond to the typical stages of validation. However, it should be remembered that in the procedure described, the stage of the identification of learning outcomes moves smoothly to the documentation stage and then to assessment. The whole process is based on the cooperation of the candidate, counsellor and assessor; it is possible to go back to a previous stage at any time.

5.1 Identification of learning outcomes

The university website provides information on validation, including an instructional video. Before proceeding with validation, a candidate may seek advice from the studies guidance unit. The counsellor provides information on the possible validation aims and its procedure and helps in deciding whether this is the optimal path for the candidate. If not, the counsellor can suggest other options, such as enrolling in

studies and postponing validation (in Denmark, validation in higher education is also available to persons who, for example, want to shorten their studies or obtain exemptions from examinations and classes). The counselling session usually takes place through a telephone call. After attending an information and advice session, the candidate completes an application to undergo validation, the "Application for validation to obtain a competence certificate for recognised prior learning" (in the format available on the VIA UC website) and submits it together with a CV and formal education diplomas. He/she provides basic information about his/her competences, previous education, work experience, hobbies, etc. The candidate is then contacted by telephone by a studies counsellor who helps to gather the evidence that best reflects his/her learning outcomes. During this time, great emphasis is placed on the candidate's self-assessment.

On the basis of the documentation prepared in this way, the studies counsellor assesses the probability that the candidate actually possesses the required learning outcomes and whether it is possible to move ahead with the process. The counsellor may find that the candidate is not yet ready for validation. A justification for the decision not to proceed with validation is issued, together with advice on what steps should be taken in order for validation to be successful in the future.

The candidate has the right to appeal the decision of the counsellor.

5.2 Documentation of learning outcomes

If the studies counsellor decided that the validation process can continue, the candidate pays a validation fee at this time

The studies counsellor and assessor, e.g. an academic teacher, help the candidate prepare more detailed information about his/her learning outcomes. These are included in a portfolio developed by Undervisnings Ministeriet (Ministry of Education), <https://www.minkompetencemappe.dk/>.

5.3 Assessment of learning outcomes

Based on the submitted documents, the assessor determines whether the candidate has demonstrated possession of the learning outcomes corresponding to the curriculum/module that he/she is seeking to confirm.

First, the assessor makes a formal assessment – ensuring that the documentation is complete and includes a sufficiently detailed description of the learning outcomes. He/she may ask the candidate to supplement some information, provide further evidence, etc. The candidate is assisted with this by the studies counsellor.

The assessor then performs a substantive assessment, analyses all the documentation and determines whether the candidate actually has the required learning outcomes.

5.4 Certification of learning outcomes

If the decision of the assessor is positive, the counsellor informs the candidate of this and presents him/her with a certificate of possessing the learning outcomes for the module "Leadership and coaching". The certificate obtained from validation is no different from the document issued upon graduation.

In the case of a negative decision, the assessor prepares a written justification. The candidate has the right to appeal such a decision.

6. Validation methods

Comment

The following methods are used during validation:

- guidance conversation,
- unstructured interview,
- case study prepared by the candidate (included in the portfolio),
- analysis of evidence and statements (portfolio).

7. Validation results

The outcome of validation is the certification of the learning outcomes included in the optional module “Leadership and coaching” (part of the curriculum for postgraduate studies in management).

At VIA UC, it is possible to validate all the learning outcomes present in the curriculum and obtain a diploma of having completed the studies, but this is relatively rare. More often, this is how one to several modules are attained.

If the counsellor considers that the candidate does not meet the requirements for validation in the initial phase of the process, he or she offers advice on further action.

8. Human resources



A studies counsellor and assessor (most often an academic teacher) are involved in the validation process.

A person acting as a **counsellor** should have knowledge, among others, about:

- the Danish education system, including higher vocational education,
- the profession for which the studies programme is preparing learners,
- conducting validation at a higher education institution (legal basis, aim, procedure, results),
- the counselling process.

The counsellor should have the following skills, among others:

- the ability to conduct the counselling process,
- the ability to assess candidates' competences on the basis of analysing documents and interviews,
- the ability to communicate in an understandable way,
- the ability to work in a team.

Typically, the counsellor has a higher education degree in the social sciences or education as well as a master's degree in counselling or adult education.

The function of an **assessor** is performed by an academic teacher from the given subject/module being validated. a person performing this function should have in-depth knowledge of, among others:

- the academic subject/module,
- the profession (theory and practice) for which the studies programme is preparing learners,
- adult learning.

The assessor should have, among others, the following skills:

- the ability to apply validation methods, with an emphasis on analysing evidence and statements – the portfolio and case study,
- the ability to assess a candidate's competences on the basis of documents,
- the ability to provide counselling.

Typically, the academic teacher – the assessor – has a university degree in the area of the studies programme. He or she may also have a doctorate.

The validation application is accepted by an **administrative staff person** – his/her role is to refer the candidate to a counsellor and ensure that all formalities are fulfilled (e.g. accepting the fee, issuing documents, etc.). a person fulfilling such a role in the validation process does not need additional competences beyond those required for office work.

Evaluation interviews with VIA UC staff are held once a year. Particular emphasis is placed at this time on identifying development needs, including the acquisition of competences in the field of validation. An agreed plan of action may include: on-the-job training, participation in validation training, conferences and the cooperating validation network.

9. Organizational and material conditions

9.1 The course of the process and involvement of staff

Validation at VIA UC takes place in several steps, described in detail above. The university staff participating in the process includes:

- administrative staff,
- studies counsellor,
- assessor – usually an academic teacher.

The scope of their activities is presented in Table 1:

Action	Administrative staff	Candidate	Counsellor	Assessor (expert in the given field)
<p>Step 1</p> <p>Submittal of a validation application</p> <p>duration: about 10 days</p>	<p>Refers the candidate to a counsellor or to the institution's website</p>	<p>Sends a completed application form/description of learning outcomes – “Application for validation to obtain a competence certificate for recognised prior learning” and CV to a designated e-mail address or to an e-box (i.e. digital mail, correspondence from government bodies)</p>		

Step 2			<p>Receives the application and CV and sends a confirmation of their receipt;</p> <p>if the application needs to be supplemented, he/she asks the applicant for additional information (orally or in writing)</p>	
Step 3	<p>Issues an invoice for the validation – payment should be made before proceeding to further stages</p>	<p>Receives a response in his/her e-box</p>	<p>Issues a decision on whether or not to proceed with validation</p> <p>Sends the candidate a response to his/her e-box</p> <p>If the decision is positive, provides information on the further steps to be taken</p>	
<p>Step 4</p> <p>Assessment of learning outcomes</p> <p>duration: about 20 days</p>	<p>Informs the candidate about the validation results and sends him/her the certificate together with the remaining documents</p>	<p>Sends the required documents: properly described specific information about the learning outcomes (certificates and diplomas of formal education may be attached)</p>	<p>Obtains material from the candidate and sends confirmation of its receipt; asks for additional information if required</p> <p>Assesses the documents received and issues a decision based on the results of the assessment of the learning outcomes performed by the assessor</p>	<p>Performs an assessment of the learning outcomes based on the documentation submitted by the candidate</p>

Table 1. Organisation of the validation process at VIA University College

9.2 Duration of the procedure

The procedure of applying to undergo validation takes an average of 10 working days. The candidate must devote about 3 working days to preparing the case study (an in-depth description of the learning outcomes), which is part of the documentation evaluated by the assessor. The assessment process (formal and substantive assessment) usually takes up to 20 working days.

An average of 8 working days are needed to acquire and confirm the learning outcomes when taking the studies module "Leadership and coaching": 4 days are devoted to classes, 1 – to one's own work, 3 – to prepare for and take an examination.

9.3 Material resources

The validation process mainly uses digital tools: the publicly available electronic portfolio prepared by the Ministry of Education, e-box.

Communication between individuals involved in the process usually takes place by telephone or electronically – via e-mail and the university website. If necessary, it is also possible to arrange a face-to-face meeting.

9.4 Collecting and storing data

The following documents are collected and stored by the university during validation:

- information about the candidate,
- application to undergo validation,
- all evidence about the possession of learning outcomes prepared by the candidate,
- correspondence between the parties (candidate – adviser – assessor),
- eventual documentation relating to an appeal.

Only designated university employees have access to the documents.

10. Quality assurance

The principles for the quality assurance of validation are established at the central level. They are regulated by an act from 2017 and regulations from 2007 on the continuing education of adults.

Each validation provider is responsible for implementing quality assurance procedures on its own. This is conducted by the VIA UC, Faculty of Continuing Education for Adults . This department prepared a manual for VIA UC staff on quality assurance in validation. In addition, university staff maintain an official validation information portal on behalf of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (<https://viden-om-realkompetence.via.dk/>). This enables knowledge and good practices to be exchanged with other universities.

VIA UC regularly holds discussions on conducting validation and improving its procedures. a candidate can appeal an assessor's decision within four weeks of receiving his/her validation results. VIA UC examines the course of the procedure, the assessment criteria, the candidate's portfolio and the results of the assessment and either upholds or revokes the negative decision. In the former case, the university must inform the Public Appeals Unit at the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and provide it with all documentation of the case and the reasons for rejecting the appeal. This institution makes the final decision, which, together with its justification, is sent to VIA UC and the candidate. There is no further appeals process after this decision has been issued.

VIA UC performs internal and external evaluations.

The internal evaluation assesses the course of validation and its results. It is conducted by each assessor at the end of the process, and addresses such issues as:

- the effectiveness of the counselling and identification of learning outcomes,
- the effectiveness of the communication with the candidate, including the provision of clear and understandable information,
- adaptations to candidates' needs,

- the relevance of the validation methods used,
- cooperation between validation practitioners,
- the transparency and ease with which procedures are adapted to the needs of the person concerned,
- the overall satisfaction with the course of the validation.

The external evaluation is performed by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) as authorised by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

11. Financing

Undertaking validation to be able to enrol in a studies programme (to be admitted to higher education) is free of charge. In other cases (e.g. seeking exemption from classes/examinations or to graduate more quickly), a fee is charged for validation. The candidate pays the fee before entering the learning outcomes assessment stage. Its amount depends on the number of ECTS credits allocated to the programme. This is a typical practice in higher education in Denmark.

Confirmation of learning outcomes for a module of 5 ECTS points costs DKK 2200, and for a module of 10 ECTS points – DKK 3000. Confirmation of learning outcomes for the whole qualification (60 ECTS points) would cost about DKK 9000.

There are several possibilities for financing validation. If a candidate is taking up studies under a contract with an employer, the employer often covers the costs. Candidates can also benefit from public funds. The amount of funding depends on the group to which the candidate may belong to. Persons with a low level of professional skills or skilled workers are entitled to up to DKK 4700, while persons continuing vocational training after having completed their compulsory education can obtain DKK 1700.

It is worth noting that for people with secondary education (including vocational secondary education), validation performed outside higher education is usually free of charge.

12. Context of good practice

Activities relating to the validation of learning outcomes acquired outside formal education have been conducted in Denmark for more than 20 years – it is an important part of the country's lifelong learning policy.

The objectives of validation include, among others:

- to enable every person who has relevant knowledge, skills and social competences but does not meet the formal requirements to participate in a training programme,
- to enable persons to obtain exemptions from the requirement to take parts of classes or to adapt the education programme to an individual's needs,
- to enable adults to obtain a certificate of competence so that they may enrol in education programmes or receive exemptions from taking parts of classes,
- to enable a certificate (education certificates) to be obtained confirming the learning outcomes of formal education based on validation.

Since 2007, Denmark has had a law in force which states that any adult wishing to achieve one of the above objectives should be able to undergo validation. This is conducted by formal education providers.

General guidance on validation is provided by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Industry Committees, which bring together labour market actors and set standards for validation conducted for adults. Each educational institution prepares its own validation process.

VIA University College is one of Denmark's 6 vocational higher education institutions. More than 38,000 people are currently attending VIA University College:

- at the general and vocational secondary school level,
- in adult vocational training,
- at the level of higher education, including the short cycle and vocational licentiate level.

The university has an extensive validation programme. Its department responsible for validation represents Denmark in the Nordic Expert Network for Validation.

13. Comments

Every adult in Denmark has the right to undergo validation.

Under the tripartite agreement on continuing vocational education and training, the Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet (Ministry of Higher Education and Science) established a special working group to operate between 2018 and 2021 for the purpose of analysing solutions for validation and preparing guidelines for the further development of the system.

Comments

Short cycle studies

short cycle studies

Short cycle studies offer the specialist knowledge, skills and social competence needed to perform professional tasks. As a rule, they are based on practical training and are intended to prepare graduates for rapid entry into the labour market. These types of studies are at around level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (i.e. lower than a licentiate degree and higher than a secondary school completion diploma) and last up to 5 semesters. They are very popular in the United States (Associate Degree) and in the European Union (Bologna short cycle). In Poland, a short cycle in higher education is known as specialist education (lasting not less than 3 semesters), after which one can obtain a certificate as a qualified specialist or a certificate as a qualified specialist technologist (at level 5 of the Polish Qualifications Framework).

Validation

validation

The author of the Danish expertise used the term “validation of prior learning” (VPL), which refers to non-formal and informal learning. It is often found in sources describing the Danish solutions in English. In Poland, we refer to the validation process as “validation of learning outcomes”, as it may encompass all knowledge, skills and social competences (including those attained in formal education).

Portfolio

portfolio

The Danish Ministry of Education has developed an online portfolio app called “Min Kompetencemappe”, which can be translated as “My portfolio of qualifications and competences”. Using the app and setting up an account is free of charge. Once a person has registered, the tool collects information about the certificates and diplomas obtained in formal education after 2005. In addition, the user completes a questionnaire, which allows the information about his/her learning outcomes to be appropriately arranged and described. The tool is helpful in the validation process as well as in preparing a CV.

The following methods

following methods

Methods named here were distinguished in accordance to the typology developed specifically for the Catalogue of Validation Methods. The author of the Danish expertise used the following: guidance conversation, prose presentation, interview and assessment of documentation.

Cooperating validation network

cooperating validation network

Members of the Danish validation network in higher education meet once a year to exchange knowledge and good practices as well as to discuss legal solutions relating to validation. In addition to university representatives, the network also includes persons from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.