Type	Policy and Procedure
Subject	Learning Works Validation Assessment Centre (VAC)'s Internal Quality Assurance Policy on the Principles and Mechanisms of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Education (VNFIL)
Reference	LWP 25
Date	15th November 2022
Last Reviewed	3rd April 2023
Approved by	Board of Directors

Purpose

This Internal Quality Assurance Policy aims to present the principles and mechanisms that Learning Works will be adopting when implementing VNFIL for its role as a Validation Assessment Centre. The policy will include details on how quality assurance is maintained throughout the validation process including the three phases; identification and documentation, assessment and certification.

Learning Works shall carry out the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) based on a set of core principles intended to ensure a fair and transparent process.

Glossary

Formal Learning	Formal learning can be described as learning which takes place in a structured manner and in organized environments such as universities, educational institutions, or the workplace. This is normally structured in a way where time, objectives, tasks, and resources are clearly set by the educational institution. Candidates will apply to participate in this learning experience thus, demonstrating that learning is intentional from the candidate's end.
Non-Formal Learning	Non-Formal learning is defined as learning that takes place within planned activities. It generally takes place outside formal learning environments but may also take place in a formal institution or in a structured manner in terms of specified time frames, listed objectives and provided support.
Informal Learning	Informal learning is not intentionally organized or structured in terms of main objectives, tasks and time constraints. Informal learning normally occurs during various daily activities resulting from the place of work, and other leisure and family activities. Objectives may be achieved without the students' knowledge or perspective. Informal learning is achieved through experience which can be random, incidental learning.
Work-Based Learning	Work-based learning is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and

	technical skills and develop their employability. Work-based learning can be achieved using alternate methods in a vocational context between VET institutions and or on the job.
Lifelong Learning	The rationale behind lifelong learning is the continuous personal and professional development undertaken throughout life with no age limit with the aim of acquiring a certification and improving attitudes, values, knowledge, skills, and competencies, and acquiring qualifications that enhance an individual's personal and social dimension as well as the prospects of a better career.
Knowledge	Knowledge is the outcome of the collection and assimilation of information through learning. In the EQF, knowledge is described as being theoretical or factual.
Skills	A skill is an ability to apply knowledge and the use of know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive, and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials and tools, and instruments)
Competence	The proven ability to use knowledge, skills, and other abilities to perform a function against a given standard in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development.
Interviews/Debates	Generally, a formal meeting during which the candidate or applicant is asked questions orally, sometimes discussing technical situations or different case scenarios. This can also include debates where candidates demonstrate the depth of their knowledge and communication and social skills.
National Occupational Standards (NOS)	Standards which describe what an individual in a particular occupation should know and be able to do to be formally recognized as competent in a given occupation. A list of all published NOS may be found in the MFHEA website and is also reproduced, in part, in Appendix 1 of this Policy.
Portfolio of Evidence/Logbook	A portfolio is a collection of objects, items, and materials compiled by the applicant to substantiate/demonstrate that learning has been achieved through different learning processes. A portfolio(or proof of past experience) is where candidates demonstrate critical reflection while making evidence-based statements about the competencies they possess.
Sectoral Skills Unit	An industry-focused unit established by the Authority that develops occupational standards and designs qualifications to improve the workforce's skills. Units are made up of stakeholders with technical expertise in a particular sector or area. In conjunction with experts, these publish NOS and guide appropriate Validation Assessment Centres.
Technical Experts/ Validation Practitioners	VNFIL Technical Experts/ Validation Practitioners are experts in a particular subject or area and possess sound knowledge and competence. Technical experts possess a formally recognized qualification in their area of expertise.
Staged Assessments	Any form of organized assessment under supervision.
VNFIL Facilitator/Co-Ordinator	The VNFIL facilitator/coordinator is the person or contact who facilitates the VNFIL procedures within the Validation Assessment

	Centre. This is the office or person/s indicated in the application which is the first point of contact for candidates seeking VNFIL. The VNFIL facilitator shall offer support to applicants throughout the whole process.
Practical Test	Where candidates' behaviour is observed and assessed, either through a simulated or a real-life work scenario.
Written or Oral Test	Where candidates demonstrate, orally or in writing, their competencies on a specific subject for the purposes of assessment.

VAC Principles and Processes for the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

As a Validation Assessment Centre, Learning Works ensures to implement VNFIL with transparency and fairness and follows the set standard procedures as described below for all candidates. This document ensures that the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning is carried out in accordance with S.L. 607.02 and the Validation Assessment Guidelines issued by MFHEA (September 2022). Furthermore, it is to be ensured that all staff is updated accordingly with the implemented process of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

1. Identification and Documentation

The Pre-Application process ensures that the identification of knowledge, skills and competences is effectively implemented since it is crucial to establish a candidate's prior achievements. Prior to receiving an application, Learning Works has to ensure that all the necessary documentation, and resources required are set.

1. Learning Works will ensure the website is updated with the correct information when it comes to VNFIL, this includes information on the application process, the benefits of obtaining a VNFIL award, what it means to obtain an MQF-level rated award and the glossary section with the key terms used within validation.

2. The validation application form will also be uploaded on the website and easily downloadable. Additionally, candidates will have access to the contact details which Learning Works will ensure that they are in working order.

3. It may be the case, that prior to formally submitting their application forms, prospective applicants will require an induction meeting to be able to understand the process. Thus, when needed, Learning Works will set a meeting for prospective applicants to address their queries on the application form in person. During this meeting, it is imperative that the following information is communicated:
   a. The benefits of applying for VNFIL and how it can help them in their job (e.g., obtain the skills card, be certified on the job, promotion etc.) and what it means to have an MQF level rated award.
   b. The requirements to be eligible for VNFIL (3 years' experience in the sector and MQF level rated Health and Safety Certificate).
   c. How to fill in the application form correctly.
   d. How they can obtain the requested information on their past job experiences.
   e. The VNFIL process in a nutshell (Application > Assessment > Results > Certificates)

    f.   Who the assessors shall be.

    g.   Whom they can contact throughout the process should they have any queries.

    h.   If any candidate does not make it for the induction meeting, it will be made sure that this information is provided by Learning Works through, an email, phone call or a one-to-one meeting.

4. Candidates will be able to apply online or in person at the offices of Learning Works. Applications shall be processed administratively at Learning Works and when necessary, reviewed by the VNFIL coordinator and by the relevant subject experts/assessors. Learning Works will ensure that candidates can contact Learning Works at any time throughout the application process and will be assisted accordingly. Learning Works can also work with the candidates' place of work if necessary to assist their HR department throughout their employees' validation application process.

5. It is ensured that an acknowledgment email is sent for each application received. Following this, the responsible officer shall review the applications to ensure that:
   - The contact details filled in are correct and sufficient.
   - The necessary documents (e.g., CV) were attached to the application or the work experience section is filled in correctly.
   - The declaration is duly signed.

   If the application form depicts that the candidate has the required three years' experience required, they will automatically proceed to the assessment.

6. The responsible officer together with the VNFIL Coordinator shall process the validation applications and the keeping of associated records. Records will be kept electronically.

7. If the application forms received are filled in incorrectly, Learning Works' responsible officer will contact the applicant and guide the applicant to fill in the application form correctly by filling in the missing information. If need be, a meeting can be held to offer further guidance. If the application form received is filled in correctly, the applicant is to be informed of the next steps either through an email sent to each and every applicant that their application form was accepted and include the next steps. It is important for this email to; inform candidates of the assessments that they are required to sit for according to their selected role, inform them that they shall be receiving the appointment for the next assessment in a week's time according to their and the assessors' availabilities and briefly describe the next steps of their VNFIL process. Certainly, a meeting can be held with any applicant where the next steps will be explained.

8. All applicants will be treated equally and fairly by ensuring that they are supported to enable them to identify the knowledge, skills and achievements they have acquired throughout the full validation process. All applicants will have the opportunity to ask the responsible officer or the VNFIL coordinator at any point throughout the application process for further information and guidance.

9. GDPR regulations and the privacy of candidates will be respected by having limited Learning Works' staff who will have access to records. Access will be available to the responsible officer and to the CEO.

10. The Administration Manager of Learning Works will ensure that documents required prior to validation will be collected, processed, and evaluated expeditiously. Once this is confirmed and the assessors have been informed accordingly, Learning Works shall email the appointment to all candidates including the following information (if any of the candidates do not have access to email, Learning Works will ensure that the candidate is informed otherwise):
   - Appointment information (date, time and place) of the first assessment.
   - The first assessment process (if an interview, they will be asked questions on their day-to-day work in their preferred language).
   - The assessment criteria
   - Information on the next steps, follow-up assessments, certification etc.

2. Assessment

The assessment process is the main part of the VNFIL process. At this stage, constant communication with the candidate is imperative. As stated above, prior to sitting for their assessment, candidates shall be informed of what the assessment process includes, the set assessment criteria based upon the relevant National Occupational Standards and how the results will be worked out and communicated to them to ensure transparency throughout the whole process.

1. The responsible officer from Learning Works shall ensure that the assessors are informed of the scheduled applicants. Furthermore, the responsible officer shall ensure that each candidate has received the information email prior to their assessment.

2. The IQA for Validation Policy includes the necessary standards for prior assessment of the portfolio of evidence, employment history, and other relevant documents as described above. The responsible officer shall ensure that all the necessary information is collected and correct. Whenever necessary, the responsible officer shall confirm this with the VNFIL Coordinator.

3. The IQA policy for validation identifies the different forms of assessment through the selection of technical experts and assessors depending on the role. Detailed information about each method of assessment was drawn up by these experts as per the below.

4. The interview assessment will either be carried out on the premises of Learning Works or on-site. The VNFIL coordinator shall draft interview sheets including questions based upon the knowledge section within the respective National Occupational Standards (a template of the interview sheet is found in Annex 1 of this document). Prior to the interview appointments, the assessors would review the interview sheets and ensure that the contained information is correct. During the interview, the assessors would prepare the interview sheets and fill in the information accordingly and award marks on the applicants' respective sheets accordingly. Throughout the interview, the assessors would make sure the candidate is following, is being spoken to in the language he/she prefers (Maltese or English) and is understanding the assessment process.

5. Following the Interview, the assessors shall meet to discuss the marks given in the separate filled-in interview sheets to discuss the average mark to award the applicants. Once agreement is reached, the mark is to be communicated to Learning Works to update the applicant accordingly. A sample of the filled-in interview sheets will be analysed by the QA staff or the VNFIL coordinator to ensure that all is in order and carried out in a fair and transparent manner. The involved staff (responsible officer, assessors, QA, VNFIL Coordinator, Head of Institute) shall meet to discuss who passed (over 60%) and should proceed immediately with the awarding of the VNFIL certificate and who is to sit for a second assessment such as an on-the-job assessment.

6. Preferably, the on-the-job assessment will be carried out through site visits at the place of work of applicants. Alternatively, if this is not feasible, applicants will be called to carry out practical assessments at the Vassallo Group building sites. The place of other types of assessments will be determined according to the nature of the assessment and what is best for the VNFIL candidate. Once this is set, the responsible officer shall inform the applicants of the date and duration of the on-the-job assessment, the number of assessors who will be reviewing them, and the criteria on which they will be assessed. During the on-the-job assessment, the candidate will be asked to carry out a task that is familiar to them or done during their day-to-day work. The assessors will then review the applicant and if necessary ask simple questions to invite the candidate to describe what they are doing. The assessors will then fill in the on-the-job assessment sheet (a template of this practical assessment sheet is found in Annex 2 of this document). The assessors shall pass on their filled-in assessment sheets to Learning Works, a sample of which shall be reviewed by the QA staff to ensure the assessment was carried out in a fair and transparent manner. A meeting can be held between the involved staff to discuss who is awarded the VNFIL certificate or not in case of any doubts.

7. It is important that at the end of each assessment phase, candidates are to be informed of what the next step is and by when they should expect the results (a specific timeframe) to keep them updated accordingly.

8. It is ensured that fairness, transparency and quality are maintained throughout the validation assessment process through observation of the stipulated procedure drawn up by the experts and through the keeping of written records. This is done through different processes such as QA staff within Learning Works will monitor the process through internal verification

9. It is ensured that practical or on-the-job assessments will pose no health and/or safety risk to candidates and third parties through the wearing of safety clothing and after the site safety officer has issued an all-clear go-ahead.

10. Technical experts (assessors) are selected to carry out validation assessments on the basis of their qualifications and experience as per the MFHEA guidelines on Validation (September 2022).

11. Records of the different forms of assessment that the VNFIL applicant sat for together with assessment sheets shall be available in paper format.

12. Learning Works will keep records of assessment sheets, data of validation assessments, and other relevant data. It will make these available when needed for data collection and auditing purposes.

13. VNFIL candidates shall be allowed to appeal the assessment and carry out another re-assessment after due notification. This will be against payment of the original fee. The procedure for appeals for VNFIL candidates will be the same for any candidate following a course at Learning Works. This is indicated in LW Appeals Policy number 14, found on the website of Learning Works. Should the candidate feel that any form of discrimination has taken place, an appeal can be lodged against a fee of Euro Twenty (20).

14. Learning Works Policy LWP05, Withdrawal, and Refund will apply in the case of candidates who apply for VNFIL assessments and then withdraw.

3. Results and Certification
Following the assessments, results should be communicated to the applicants in a timely manner as per the below set procedures:

15. Learning Works shall issue the results of the full cohort of applicants within 20 days of the last assessment held within the cohort. If the applicant sat for more than one assessment, the average of both assessments should be the final mark. The overall pass mark for the interview and on-the-job assessment will be 60% with the participants being required to obtain a minimum of 40% in either assessment provided that the overall mark will be 60%.

16. Results shall be communicated to applicants in a clear and easy-to-understand manner via email or by post (if no access to an email). If the result is successful, Learning Works should inform the applicant about the certificate as well as a brief explanation of what it means to have the MQF level rated VNFIL award and an invitation to email any queries in this regard. If the result is unsuccessful, Learning Works should inform the applicant of their right to appeal and the procedure, and the area in which they require more training and offer the possibility to them to re-sit the assessment to be able to eventually obtain the VNFIL Award.

17. Each successful validation award is to be confirmed with a certificate. The certificate template is to include Learning Works' log as well as MFHEA's logo and it needs to be signed by the Head of the Institution and an MFHEA representative. The certificate template was approved by MFHEA. Learning works shall issue and print certificates for each successful candidate and forward to MFHEA for signatures accordingly.

18. Each certificate will be accompanied by a transcript listing the criteria that the applicant has been assessed against. This document can be presented by the applicant together with his certificate whenever needed for ease of understanding of the validation award.

19. Candidates shall be notified upon the attainment of their certification by email or phone call. Certificates will be distributed within a month or two of candidates' obtaining passes in their practical and/or theoretical assessments.

Approved by:

_____

Charlo Bonnici

CEO

Annex 1: Interview Sheet Template

Candidate Details:

ID Number:	
Candidate Signature:	
Trade/ Occupational Standard:	
MQF Level:	
Date of Assessment:	
Name of Assessor:	
Assessor's Signature:	

A note to the assessor:

In the column 'Marks' kindly rank answer from 0 – 5 as per criteria below. Kindly avoid fractions and only award whole marks.:

Candidate has answered the question correctly and fully during the interview as listed in the Occupational Standard	5 marks
Candidate has answered the question almost fully however left out key minor details.	4 marks
Candidate answered the question more than 50% correctly.	3 marks
Candidate answered the question correctly but with not enough details.	2 marks
Candidate knows the answer to the question however didn't communicate the answer with significant details.	1 mark
Candidate gave the wrong answer to the question asked and had no knowledge of the topic	0 marks

The candidate must get at least 70% correct in each unit to pass. For the candidate to be successful they must pass from each unit.

Name of Module per NOS		
Question		Marks
1	*Questions should be specific and avoid vague language. Instead of naming some health and safety hazards at the workplace write Name 5 health and safety hazards at the workplace.*	
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

The maximum mark that may be achieved in this unit is a total of XX marks. The candidate requires at least 70% to pass this unit assessment. Any mark over XX is considered a pass and any mark under XX is considered a fail.

Total Mark Achieved:		Pass		Fail	

Competent		Needs Further Training		Not competent	
Other General Feedback:					

DECLARATION

This document shall be retained in the applicant's private folder together with all the relevant documents for future reference. The purpose for the retention of these records is for cases of appeals on decisions made by the assessor/s or for reference if the applicant shall re-apply for VNFIL following further training to fill knowledge, skills and/or competence gaps.

The maximum mark that may be achieved during this assessment is a total of XXX marks. The candidate requires at least 70% to pass this assessment. Any mark over XXX is considered a pass and any mark under XXX is considered a fail.

Total Mark Achieved:		Total in %		Pass		Fail	

Competent		Needs Further Training		Not competent	
Other General Feedback:					

Name of Training/VNFIL Coordinator	
Signature	
Name of Quality Assurance Manager	
Signature	

Annex 2: On-the-job Assessment Sheet Template

Name and Surname of Candidate	
Role the candidate applied for	
MQF Level	
Name of Assessor 1	
Name of Assessor 2	
Location of Assessment	
Date of Assessment	

The candidate shall be carrying out practical work related to the role they have applied for to prove that they have the necessary competences as per the respective National Occupational Standard. The assessor shall be paying attention to the job being done with special attention to:

Rate the following statements 1 (lowest mark) to 5 (highest mark)	
Health and Safety precautions that the candidate has taken prior to starting the task. (5 marks)	
The appropriate handling of materials, tools and equipment throughout the task. (5 marks)	
The clean, safe and appropriate maintenance of the work area throughout the task. (5 marks)	
The clearing-up methods used by the candidate upon finishing the task. (5 marks)	
Rate the following statements 1 (lowest mark) to 10 (highest mark)	
The necessary preparation prior to starting the job including any calculations that need to be done such as calculating how much material is needed for the area. (10 marks)	
The work ethic the candidate has shown throughout the task at hand. (10 marks)	
The candidate has shown key competences and useful skills such as communication skills throughout carrying out the task. (10 marks)	

The following statements have the highest marks that the candidate can obtain. The assessor can ask further questions to invite the candidate to explain the job being done.

Rate the following statement 1 (lowest mark) to 25 (highest mark)	
The candidate has answered the questions posed by the assessor to explain what is being done and why. (25 marks)	
The candidate showed the necessary skills and knowledge as per the national occupational standards whilst carrying out the job. (25 marks)	

FINAL MARK: _____ /100

A mark of 60 and over shall be considered a Pass.

SIGNATURE of ASSESSOR 1: _____

SIGNATURE of ASSESSOR 2:_____