

# Validation arrangements

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 MALTA

## Timeline

2015 Implementation	2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation
2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation
2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation
2024 Implementation	2025 Implementation	

ID number 28670

## Background

The 2012-14 amendments to the 2012 Education Act provided a framework for the validation of non-formal informal learning to award qualifications in the Malta qualifications framework (MQF) (up to level 5). The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (name changed in 2021 to Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)) is responsible for introducing a national validation system, drafting guidelines aligned with the MQF and ensuring that the learning outcomes approach is systematically used. NCFHE was supported in this work by sectoral skills units composed of representatives from the sector, education and training, government and social partners.

## Objectives

The objective of validation of informal and non-formal is to identify, assesses and formally certify the knowledge, skills and competences which individuals develop throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning. The validation process can result in an award recognising the skills, knowledge and competences an individual has obtained in her/his years of experience in a particular occupation. This award then provides the opportunity to further studies, find a job, get a promotion, or continue studying abroad.

## Description

In 2015, the *National vocational education and training policy* highlighted the need for training programmes for staff involved in validation, and for validation for learners with disability or learning difficulties. The *Malta national lifelong learning strategy 2020*, also adopted in 2015, set a target for having in place a transparent and sustainable system of validation. Reflection on a national plan for recognition of the skills and competences of the whole labour force by 2024 has been initiated.

2015 Implementation

## **2016 Implementation**

### **2017 Implementation**

In 2017, NCFHE, which is responsible for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, signed two memoranda of understanding (MOU) in this regard:

- (a) a MOU with Jobsplus and the building industry consultative council to carry out the assessment procedures and tests for validating informal and non-formal learning according to the national occupational standards (NOS);
- (b) MOU with the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) whereby ITS is now responsible for the validation of work-based learning related to the national occupational standards (up to EQF/MQF Level 5) of the tourism and hospitality sector.

In 2017, at ITS, a process of recognition of prior learning was designed in conjunction with the Finnish Haaga Helia University of Applied Sciences, to help customise lecturing staff training programmes leading to top-up degrees in hospitality services. This enabled ITS to become a higher institution offering degree programmes in hospitality and tourism as from 2017.

### **2018 Implementation**

No major developments. Implementation continued.

### **2019 Implementation**

In 2019, the NCFHE collaborated with the National Skills Council (NSC) to seek efficient ways of setting up new sector skills units (SSUs) in more areas. The NCFHE, together with all the relevant stakeholders, also focused more on the development of national occupational standards (NOS). Throughout 2019, the NCFHE published 32 new NOSs from the various sectors raising the total of published NOSs to 54. These included updated sets of national occupational standards in the printing and digital media industry. The publication of the national occupational standards meant that the printing and digital industry roles from MQF/EQF level 1 to MQF/EQF level 4 are all covered. In 2019, validation assessment for the hospitality and tourism sector started through collaboration between NCFHE, MTA and ITS. In 2019, approximately 275 certificates were issued through the validation of non-formal and informal learning in childcare, building and construction, and hospitality and tourism.

### **2020 Implementation**

During 2020, the NCFHE promoted a manager in charge of the implementation of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The total number of sector skills units (SSUs) was raised to nine: covering different sectors: automotive, building and construction, education support, hair and beauty, health and social care, hospitality and tourism, ICT, printing and digital media, and STEM engagement. These SSUs meet monthly and this year these meetings were transferred to online meetings to ensure continuity. During 2020, the most active SSUs were the building and construction, hospitality and tourism, health and social care, ICT and STEM engagement with a total of 16 online meetings during 2020.

Throughout 2020, the NCFHE has increased the number of published NOSs to 80. These are now available on the Malta qualifications database. The NOSs have a pivotal role in the validation assessment. During 2020, the NCFHE signed an MOU with AME Ltd. to start offering validation assessment in the building and construction industry as well. An updated memoranda of understanding was signed with both ITS and Jobsplus to include more roles in which validation assessment shall be offered in health and social care, hospitality and tourism and building and construction. Throughout 2020, a total of 554 certificates were issued to applicants who successfully passed the validation assessment at Jobsplus and ITS.

In October 2020, a virtual study visit was carried out with the Polish Educational

Research Institute (IBE) during which various elements of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) were discussed and compared. ITS, Jobsplus and Hyland Credentials participated and presented their validation assessment methods and blockchain technology to their Polish counterparts.

Also, in 2020 the NCFHE contracted two ECVET experts to assist it in drawing up guidelines for education institutions on the RPL. These experts carried out desk-based research on RPL policies at local education institutions including the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS), the University of Malta (UM), the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute for Education (IfE) and the Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta (EAPTI-GPTIM). Two business breakfasts were held to help with the research. The NCFHE signed a contract with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) for them to draft the RPL guidelines for NCFHE to disseminate to all education institutions. By December 2020, the SCQFP had participated in two events. The NCFHE intends to publish and disseminate the guidelines by end of the first quarter of 2021.

### **2021 Implementation**

In 2021, Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) published the Recognition of prior learning (RPL) guidelines which were prepared by the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP).

### **2022 Implementation**

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) developed the guidelines quality assurance guidelines of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) for the validation assessment centres (VACs), which were open for public consultation till December 2022. The VACs' quality assurance policy aims at solidifying and ensuring excellence of quality in the process of VNFIL recognition. These guidelines will become applicable to existing and future VACs and related entities in of 2023.

### **2023 Implementation**

In 2023, a rigorous evaluation system was set up based on the 2022 guidelines for VACs. This exercise meant to establish high standards in the operational aspect of VACs, thereby establishing trust, transparency and parity of esteem. Applications from providers to open VACs were assessed against these guidelines. Five VACs successfully passed through this process and became operational whilst two applications were rejected.

In addition, two new sector skills units (SSUs) were set up (the automotive SSU and the STEM SSU).

### **2024 Implementation**

In January 2024, discussions started between the MFHEA and the National Skills Council (NSC) on revising the VNFIL legislative framework. The aim was to share the responsibilities of the regulation between the two entities.

In summer 2024, the MFHEA launched work on updating the 2021 *Recognition of prior learning (RPL) guidelines* to make them more relevant to current and future needs in view of the EU skills agenda. This was done by the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework Partnership. The updated RPL guidelines were envisaged to be published by mid-2025.

In 2024 the *Skills pass* within the hospitality and tourism sector was introduced. The *Skills pass* is a verification process initiated by the Government of Malta that allows skilled individuals in the tourism and hospitality industry to gain recognition for their skills and be able to work in Malta in this industry.

On 4th October 2024, MFHEA held a stakeholder meeting to present the Quality

assurance guidelines of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) publication, namely the refined quality assurance guidelines for VACs. These were set to come into force on 1st January 2025, aimed to facilitate spot checks and audits of VACs.

In addition, in October 2024, MFHEA became full member of the European network of RPL. This aimed to provide MFHEA visibility and possibilities of networking and collaboration in the field of RPL with other EU countries and institutions adopting RPL policies.

In November 2024, the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) carried out meetings with stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of VNFIL and the standards required to have a robust system in place, towards parity of esteem.

### **2025 Implementation**

The new Quality Assurance Guidelines for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) came into force on 1st January 2025, as planned. Validation Assessment Centres (VACs) were properly informed and supported to adjust to these guidelines. In March 2025, the Validation Unit within MFHEA started with the first onsite visits to VNFIL centres. This was a Quality Assurance exercise to gauge how VACs are adapting to the new regulations and standards. The objective of such visits was to ensure VACs have the necessary support as well as monitor implementation, as intended in the guidelines. Particular emphasis was placed on the four pillars of VNFIL: documentation, guidance, assessment, and certification, with special focus being given to assessment practices.

In June 2025, the revised 2nd edition of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Principles and Practices for Providers were officially launched by MFHEA. The launch event generated substantial stakeholder interest. Subsequently, three new RPL applications were processed by August, based on the revised RPL document.

Regarding S.L.607.02, the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning Regulations, several amendments were agreed between the MFHEA and the National Skills Council, which underwent formal review through 2025. The new regulation is set to be endorsed by Cabinet and become effective by the end of 2025.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (until 2021)
- Jobsplus (Public Employment Service)
- Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)

## **Target group**

### **Learners**

Adult learners  
Unemployed and jobseekers  
Low-skilled/qualified persons

## **Thematic categories**

### **Governance of VET and lifelong learning**

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### **Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications**

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[Cedefop ReferNet Malta \(2018\). Malta: VINFL takes off](#)

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[Validation of non-formal and informal learning information leaflet](#)

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[Further and higher education Act establishing Malta Further and Higher Education Authority](#)

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[Validation of non-formal and informal learning information leaflet](#)

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[The National occupational standards\(NOS\)](#)

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[Quality assurance guidelines for Validation assessment centres\(VACs\) - public consultation document:](#)

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[The Skills pass website](#)

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[Malta Further and Higher Education Authority \(MFHEA\).\(2021\).Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) - Definitions, Principles and Guidelines](#)

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[Quality assurance guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning \(VNFIL\)](#)

## Related policy developments

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**2025 Implementation**

### Implementation of Upskilling pathways

In 2017, the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE) within the education ministry secured funding to coordinate the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Upskilling pathways.

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#### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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**2025 Implementation**

### Training programmes for Young people at risk of being early school leavers (ESL) or Not in Education and Training (NEETs)

In the school year 2015/16. the Prince's Trust XL programme – from a UK-based charity

... and since 2011, the Prince of Wales programme from a cross-sector charity, founded in 1976 by the Prince of Wales – was introduced in lower and upper secondary schools in Malta.

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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET

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**2020 Completed**

## The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) implementation

The 2015 National vocational education and training policy proposed measures to:

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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2020 Completed**

## The National vocational and training policy (2015)

The National vocational and training policy mapped the VET sector in Malta and identified areas for future actions.

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**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**“ ... ” Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Validation arrangements: Malta. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe (2025 update)* [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28670>