



Association CH-Q



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Managing European  
diversity in Lifelong Learning

## **SCC Sustainable Culture of Competence**

Commitment of stakeholders  
Benefits to users and organizations

### **Charter & Benchmark tool**

#### **Initiators**

- Association CH-Q, Switzerland
- Foundation Competence Management / European Network Valuation of Prior Learning VPL, the Netherlands & Flemish Belgium
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority QCA, England

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## The idea behind it

The driving concept behind developing a 'Competence Culture' is the recognition that effective valuation arrangements to support individuals in becoming lifelong learners is a need. The empowerment of individuals in the face of an increasing pace of change in social and economic systems remains a principal focus of these arrangements.

The use of the notion of 'competence' in the Charter is not reductionist or narrow. Whilst it acknowledges that it is important to link personal achievements to qualifications and to processes of formal recognition, the arrangements being developed emphasize that this is the individual's competence, that they should be helped to reflect and recognize it, and that also other valuation systems like increased self-awareness of competence – and how it has been acquired –, social valuation and non-formal valuation systems, can help significantly with self-development and progression. The individual lies at the heart of the process – but the idea of 'culture' suggests that a supportive framework of recognition arrangements can be constructed and maintained by specific social structures and by educationalists, trainers, guidance professionals and others supporting individual learners. This culture should be based on shared values, common practices and commitment to quality standards, although it also can be based on continuously renegotiated values. The Charter is one way in which such a culture can be created, sustained and grown.

Control in such a culture is collective – we believe that systems are required, and that systems have shared values and agreed practices. Systems should have stability but also be characterized by openness and accountability. The people for whom the systems are developed should have a principal input to the design, management and modification of the arrangements. The Charter is a means of securing this principal input within the practical actions and governing policies which make up the arrangements.

The bottom-up orientation of the Charter is relatively novel in arrangements for valuation of prior learning and achievement. Without a commitment to quality standards, common agreed approaches and common values, there is the risk that the explicit and implicit purposes of arrangements will drift away from a focus on the individual. Many recognition processes have become mechanistic and burdensome to those involved in them; it is essential that new arrangements do not decay in this way. The Charter is an essential means of preserving individually-focussed processes and preventing drift in policy and practices, but still offer flexibility and possibilities to change.

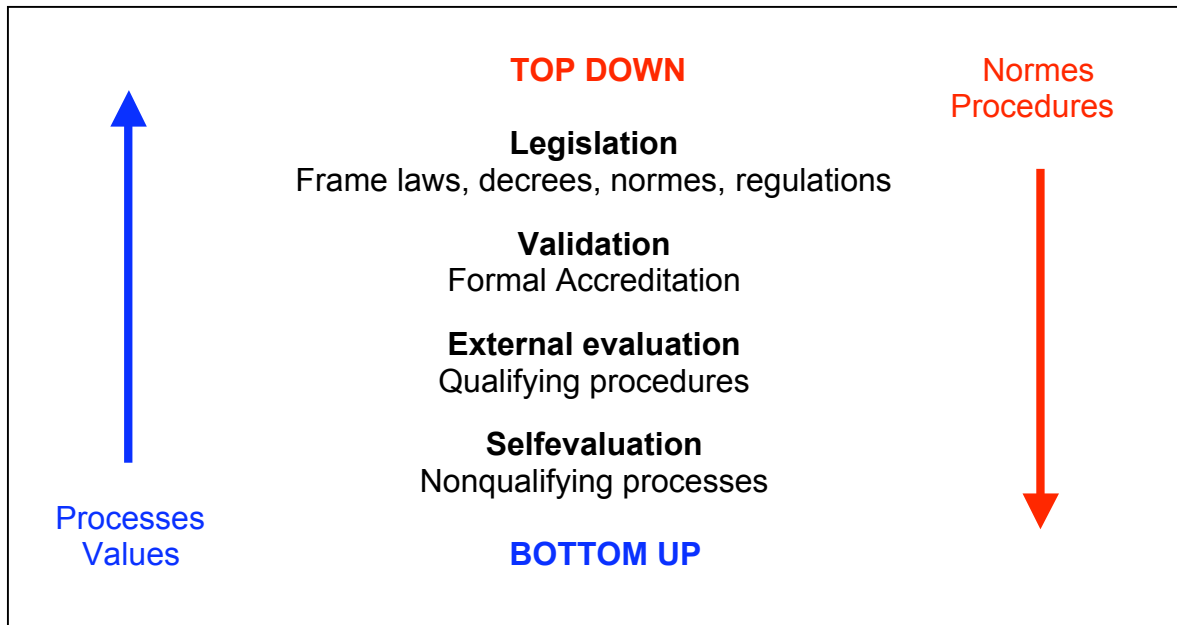
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## The Frame - National Systems of valuation and validation

### Structures



### Stakeholders - roles, responsibilities

#### TOP DOWN

Normes  
Procedures

#### Legislation

Authorities, Executive bodies (conferences)

#### Validation / Certification

Bodies, responsible for quality assurance and control in respect of formal documents

#### External evaluation

Institutions / Companies responsible for qualifying and giving recognition

#### BOTTOM UP

Processes  
Values

#### Selfevaluation (autoevaluation)

Institutions responsible for quality & control of selfevaluation processes

# I The Charter

## Mission

We want to make a major contribution to the setting up of a society that empowers individuals

- to act in a autonomous way (individual success)
- to participate and integrate in modern society and in the labor market (success for society)

We concentrate our efforts on building a sustainable **Competence Culture** within an active, permanent and wide dissemination of **Lifelong Learning**

## Goals and Standards

### A Defining the principles for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal and informal learning.

#### 1 Individual, cultural literacy

Empowering individuals **to act autonomously**

- Enhancing their understanding of themselves and their possibilities (consistency / self-identity)
- Widening the competency of self-responsibility (steering own decision making)

Supporting individuals **to coher to a greater whole**

- Providing relevant background information which enables them to deal with today's challenges (cultural literacy)
- Providing conditions which help the integration in society.

#### 2 Holistic approach

- Linking different areas of life / activity and recognizing, valuing achievements from all of them
- Building bridges between cultural, general and vocational education and to the labour market
- Encouraging equivalence of formal and non-/informal learning as well as developing equal opportunities
- Promoting permeability (modularisation)
- Connecting bottom-up und top-down approaches.

### **3 Shared responsibilities**

- Transparency of the roles of the stakeholders
- Separation of guidance and procedures of qualifications
- Paying special attention to interfaces (bottom-up und top-down)
- Personality-/dataprotection in relation with processes and instruments
- Adequate application of special instruments supporting various aspects of processorientation and sustainability.

## **B Creating specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee access and quality**

### **4 Personal development, career flexibility and mobility**

Establishing processes enabling individuals

- to make them aware of their potential, to use it in a deliberate and realistic way and accept full personal responsibility for it
- to take charge of managing their own capabilities, competencies and qualifications in a sustainable way
- to focus on competence oriented solutions while planning their careers
- to use the selfmanagement of competencies in a profitable way for their personal development and integration in society.

### **5 Procedures of recognition and validation**

Establishing manageable, affordable and accessible procedures which enable individuals

- to provide and present understandable and valid evidence of their achievements, capabilities and competencies
- to submit evidence in an appropriate form for formal national and international certification where this is available and appropriate for the individual
- to use evidence for formative and summative purposes.

## **C Setting up a frame of reference for the application**

### **6 Standards, structures, quality assurance**

- Providing understandable information about procedures of recognition which encourage individuals to make use of it
- Emphasising the meaning of values, adopting common standards and guiding principles as fundamentals for an overarching system of recognition and validation
- Establishing structures which reflect the different levels of processes and procedures and the different roles and activities of the stakeholders involved.
- Defining quality criteria and establishing systems of quality-assurance for the application of procedures and processes.

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## II The Benchmark tool

### Creating a sustainable Competence Culture

#### Approaches and assessment of its level of achievement

The questionnaire is an accompanying instrument to the Charter and serves as a benchmark tool. It conveys institutions, providers insight in the principles essential for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal and informal learning. It specifies the processes, procedures and supporting actions which guarantee access and quality.

Lifelong learning is central to new thinking about education and training. It places strong emphasis on the individuals taking greater responsibility for their own personal and professional development. The bottom-up orientation of the Charter is a answer to this. It puts the learners and their interests in the center of the system of valuation and validation of competencies (VPL-system). The questionnaire summarizes the individual issues at stake: the raising of the awareness about what the individuals have achieved in all parts of their lives; the way they learn and how they might undertake further development to fulfill their aspirations. Over and above that the questionnaire expresses the values which guide and structure the relevant approaches and which should lie at the heart of programmes helping to achieve 'lifelong learning'.

The questionnaire is a selfevaluation tool with a focus on outcome statements. It indicates the added value for the individual and – at the same time - for the institution or the provider involved. It suggests the kind of evidence relevant to estimate the extent of the 'good practice' and the level of achievement that should be met.

#### Guidance

The questionnaire is divided into the three Goals of the Charter. They set out the particular objectives related to them with their correspondig Standards. The questions along the Standards support the developing of a (common) understanding of what is at stake in creating a sustainable Competence Culture.

The rating-grid next tot the questions gives evidence of the degree of implementation of processes and procedures, of guidelines, policies, strategies. This assessment against the Standards can be done first before taking the relevant measures and then again after having gone through the different implementation phases.

## A Defining the principles for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal and informal learning

1 Individual, cultural literacy		DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS, ACTIONS WHICH...
<b>Being able to act autonomously</b>		
1.a	Do the individuals get a better understanding of themselves and their possibilities (consistency of self-identity)?	...ENCOURAGE SELF-AWARENESS 0 1 2 3 4 5 ...STRENGTHEN SELF-IDENTITY 0 1 2 3 4 5
1.b	Do the individuals get a higher competence of self-responsability (steering of own decision making)?	...WIDEN SELF-RESPONSABILITY 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>Being able to coher to a greater whole</b>		
1.c	Does the VPL system provide relevant background information which enables the individuals to deal with today's challenges (cultural literacy)?	...PROMOTE PROBELM SOLVING 0 1 2 3 4 5
1.d	Does the VPL system provide conditions which help the integration in society?	...ENHANCE WORKING WITH OTHERS 0 1 2 3 4 5

2 Holistic approach		DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS, PROCEDURES WHICH...
<b>Combining the relevant elements</b>		
2.a	Does the VPL system link different areas of life / activity and does it recognize and valuate achievements from all of them?	...INCLUDE ALL AREAS OF LIFE 0 1 2 3 4 5
2.b	Does the VPL system build bridges between cultural, general and vocational education and to the labour market?	...INTER-RELATE ALL SECTORS OF EDUCATION 0 1 2 3 4 5 ...FACILITATE ACCESS TO LABOUR MARKET 0 1 2 3 4 5
2.c	Does the VPL system encourage equivalence of formal and non-/informal learning as well as developing equal opportunities?	...RESPECT EVIDENCE OF ALL AREAS AND WAYS OF LEARNING 0 1 2 3 4 5
2.d	Does the VPL system promote permeability of education and training?	...PROMOTE MODULAR LEARNING 0 1 2 3 4 5
2.e	Does the VPL system connect bottom-up und top-down approaches?	...FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS 0 1 2 3 4 5

<b>3 Shared responsibilities</b>		<b>DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES AND POLICIES WHICH...</b>
<b>Including all actors on all levels</b>		
<b>3.a</b>	Are the roles of the stakeholders defined and transparent?	...CLARIFY THE ROLES OF THE PERSONS AND DECISIONMAKERS INVOLVED 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>3.b</b>	Is there a better separation between guidance / coaching and procedures of assessments / qualifications?	...SEPERATE BETWEEN THE TASKS OF GUIDING AND ASSESSING / VALIDATING 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>3.c</b>	Does the VPL system gives special attention to interfaces (bottom-up und top-down)?	...PROMOTE COMMON UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN BOTTOM-UP/TOP-DOWN EXPERTS 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>3.d</b>	Does the VPL system provide personality protection in relation with processes and instruments?	...ASSURE PROTECTION OF RELEVANT DATA 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>3.e</b>	Does the VPL system provide adequate application of special supporting tools?	...INCLUDE ACCOMPANYING TOOLS 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>3.f</b>	Do these supporting instruments emphasize the various aspects of process orientation and sustainability?	...GRANT PROCESSORIENTED INSTRUMENTS TO ASSURE SUSTAINABILITY 0 1 2 3 4 5

## **B Creating specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee access and quality**

<b>4 Personal development, career flexibility and mobility</b>		<b>DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCEORIENTED PROCESSES WHICH...</b>
<b>Developing manageable, affordable, accessible processes</b>		
<b>4.a</b>	Do the processes raise the individuals awareness and understanding of their potential and strenghten their willingness to use it in a deliberate and realistic way and accept full personal responsibility for it?	...CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONFIDENCY 0 1 2 3 4 5 ...CONTRIBUTE TO TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ONES OWN LEARNING 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>4.b</b>	Do the processes widen the individuals abilities of managing their competencies in a sustainable way?	...PROMOTE THE STEERING OF CAREER GOALS ON A LONGTERM BASIS 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>4.c</b>	Do the processes empower the individuals to focus on competence oriented solutions while planning their careers?	...PROMOTE APPROACHES TO OCCUPATIONAL GOALS WHICH MATCH OWN REALITY 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>4.d</b>	Do the processes enable individuals to use the self management of competencies in a profitable way for their personal development / integration in society?	...IMPROVE PERSONALITY BUILDING AND PARTICIPATION IN A LEARNING SOCIETY 0 1 2 3 4 5

## 5 Procedures of recognition and validation

## DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCEEDINGS WHICH...

### Establishing competenceoriented proceedings

<b>5.a</b>	Does the VPL system provide and present understandable and valid evidence of their achievements, skills and competencies?	...INCLUDE PERSONAL RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR PROVIDING EVIDENCE 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>5.b</b>	Does the VPL system improve the submitting of evidence in an appropriate form for formal national and international certification where this is available and appropriate for the individual?	...ENCOURAGE THE APPLICATION OF FOLDERS OF EVIDENCE 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>5.c</b>	Does the VPL system enable the individuals to make use of evidence for formative purposes?	...ACCEPT FOLDERS OF EVIDENCE FOR FORMATIVE WAYS OF ACCREDITATION 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>5.d</b>	Does the VPL system enable the individuals to make use of evidence for summative purposes?	...ACCEPT FOLDERS OF EVIDENCE FOR SUMMATIVE WAYS OF ACCREDITATION 0 1 2 3 4 5

## C Setting up a frame of reference for the application

## 6 Standards, structures, quality assurance

## DEGREE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES, STRATEGIES WHICH...

### Providing fundamentals and conditions which genuinely respond to the needs of todays educational systems

<b>6.a</b>	Does the VPL system provide understandable information about procedures of recognition which encourage individuals to make use of it?	...ASSURE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF ACCREDIATION 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>6.b</b>	Does the VPL system emphasize the meaning of values, adopting common standards and guiding principles as fundamentals for an overarching system of recognition and validation?	...RELATE TO VALUES 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>6.c</b>	Does the VPL system establish structures which reflect the different levels of processes and procedures and the different roles and activities of the stakeholders involved?	...GRANT APPROPRIATE STRUCTURES 0 1 2 3 4 5
<b>6.d</b>	Does the VPL system define quality criteria and establish systems of quality-assurance for the application of procedures and processes?	...ASSURE A SYSTEM OF QUALITY CONTROL 0 1 2 3 4 5