

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

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**previous page**

[< 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training \(ELET\)](#)

- [Up](#)

- [6.5 Cross-border learning mobility >](#)

On this page

- 1.

[Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#)

- 2.

[Information and guidance](#)

- 3.

[Quality assurance](#)

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### **Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

Competence validation and its possible outcomes in terms of admission, exemption, and certificates varies between the different education and training programmes.

#### **Validation of non-formal and informal learning in general upper secondary education:**

Applicants for general upper secondary education may be admitted based on an individual assessment. An individual assessment is an alternative option for individuals who do not meet the formal admission requirements. The assessment consists of a general test in Danish, English, mathematics, and physics/chemistry, and an individual interview to assess the applicant's personal, social and academic qualifications to begin and complete the education programme.

According to the ministerial order on admission to general upper secondary educations ([BEK nr 314 af 30/03/2020](#)), the education providers' assessment of the applicants must include whether the applicants have participated in other activities that have developed the qualifications of the applicants.

Furthermore, the education providers may admit applicants who did not pass the general test but who showed academic potential in the test and at the interview.

Education institutions are obliged to award credit when students have obtained subject-related qualifications equivalent to the objectives established for one or more subjects in a specific education programme.

Additionally, applicants may use competence certificates obtained from a prior learning assessment (realkompetencevurdering) in AVU or HF to construct a full upper secondary school leaving certificate or to obtain credit. See [section 2.7](#).

#### Validation in vocational education and training (VET) programmes:

Students enrolled in VET-programme must conduct a competence assessment within the first two weeks of education in order for the education institutions to establish the students' personal education plans. The assessment must include a specific description of the students' learning prerequisites in relation to the first and second part of the first-year basic course. The competence assessments include the students' prior school education and employment. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that students enter the education programme at the correct level and to avoid double education. The education institutions make decisions regarding exemption and credit. The national trade committees make decisions regarding the reduction of the training period and the length of the full education period.

Since 2015, all persons above 25 years of age who apply for a VET-programme must conduct a prior learning assessment.

#### Higher education:

In adult/continuing higher education programmes, prior learning assessment is possible in Academy Profession programmes and Diploma programmes. See [section 2.7](#). It is up to the individual education institution to decide how to offer students an individual competence assessment. In the ordinary education system, education institutions have the possibility to exempt from the formal admission requirements by enrolling students that do not meet the formal requirements. See [section 2.7](#).

#### **Adult education and training:**

Prior learning assessment (PLA) is most relevant in connection with adult education and training. For almost all formal adult education and training, a [legal framework for validation of prior learning](#) based on common principles has been in place since 2007.

Within this framework, individuals have the right to request an assessment of their prior learning in relation to the standards of an education and training programme, no matter where and how competences have been required.

Validation has been developed in Denmark both from a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. The legislation and the formal framework have been set nationally, but the implementation is decentralised at the provider level.

In Denmark, the recognition of prior learning (realkompetencevurdering) takes place in the following six

educational fields as part of adult education:

1. Single-course subjects in general adult education ([AVU](#));
2. Single-course subjects in general upper secondary education ([HF](#));
3. Vocational training programme ([AMU](#));
4. Vocational education and training for adults (EUV);
5. Short-cycle post-secondary adult education (Academy profession programmes); and
6. Medium-cycle post-secondary adult education ('Diploma' programme).

For the legal framework of the arrangements see [section 2.7](#).

According to Danish law, the assessment must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes.

The educational institutions are responsible for information, guidance, and assessment and validation within their education and training programmes. The Ministry of Children and Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science are responsible for the legislative framework for prior learning assessment and for taking national initiatives for implementing the legislation. The educational institutions also have the responsibility for quality assurance, review, and evaluation.

Other stakeholders act as guidance institutions, e.g. job centres, trade unions, unemployment insurance funds, etc.

A range of competence files exist that help young people to put their skills and competences into words. The competence profile may be used when applying for a formal education.

Non-formal general adult competence file ([folkeoplysningskompetencer](#)): The online tool focuses on eight different competences: social, organisational, self-management, communication, intercultural, creative-innovative, learning, and democratic. For each competence, the young person answers a set of questions. The final profile has to be signed by the young person and the person responsible for the non-formal learning activity or the non-formal general adult activity. A file for voluntary competences ([frivillighedskompetencer](#)) and a file for competences acquired in associations ([foreningskompetencer](#)) are available too. The Ministry of Culture has funded the development of the online competence tools.

My Skills and Qualification File ([Min kompetencemappe](#)) is the Ministry of Children and Education's official prior learning tool. The file covers three areas:

- education, work, and leisure time
- reading, figures, and IT
- other things I can do

## Information and guidance

The [Education Guide](#) provides information on education programmes in Denmark. The portal also informs

about prior learning assessments (PLA). The information covers: a definition of PLA, how PLA is conducted, how one can document competences, in which education programmes PLA is used, the costs of PLA, etc.

There are no publicly funded or publicly organised awareness-raising campaigns or other initiatives promoting the value of non-formal or informal learning. Often the private association of Danish Folk High Schools, [Højskolerne](#), launches awareness-raising campaigns.

According to the ministerial orders on PLA in general adult education programmes ([BEK nr. 453 af 10/06/2008](#)) and PLA in academy and diploma programmes ([BEK nr 8 af 10/01/2008](#)), education institutions are obliged to provide information about methods and procedures used in the PLA. The information must be available on the education institution's website.

### **Quality assurance**

PLA in general adult education ([AVU](#)): According to [Act no. 603 of 23/05/2019](#), the minister of children and education can establish regulations regarding the qualifications of the persons in charge of the PLA. Furthermore, the young person applying for PLA has the right to file a formal complaint to the qualification board. The minister of children and education can collect the necessary information from the education institutions for the supervision and development of statistics.

Ministerial order ([BEK nr 453 af 10/06/2008](#)) establishes how the PLA should be conducted, for instance the length, the cooperation with the young person, the methods to assess the qualifications. The methods used at the education institution must be publicly available on the education institution's website. The person in charge of assessing the prior learning must have up-to-date qualifications in relation to the subject(s) assessed in the PLA.

PLA in adult vocational training ([AMU](#)): According to [Act no. 616 of 03/06/2019](#), the minister of education can establish rules concerning the qualification of the person in charge of the PLA at the education institution. After consulting the Council for Adult and Continuing Training, the minister can establish rules concerning the conduction and planning of the PLA. Furthermore, the minister can establish rules on the development of quality and quality assessment.

According to the ministerial order [BEK nr 1795 af 27/12/2018](#), the PLA in [AMU](#) can last five days (10 days for bilingual applicants with qualifications acquired outside of Denmark). The tasks of the persons/institutions involved in the PLA are described. The persons in charge of the PLA at the education institution must have the qualifications to perform the assessment.

PLA in vocational education and training for adults (EUV) and vocational education and training (VET): According to act [LBK nr 1395 af 28/09/2020](#), the minister of children and education establishes regulations regarding PLA. The act establishes how a student can refer a decision of PLA to the trade committee.

PLA in academy and diploma programmes: According to [Act 1038 of 30/08/2017](#), the minister of higher education and science establishes rules concerning the planning and implementation of the PLA as well as the qualifications of the person in charge of PLA at the education institution. Furthermore, students can refer the decision of the PLA to the qualification board.

According to ministerial order [BEK nr 8 af 10/01/2008](#), the education institutions are obliged to develop quality assurance mechanisms.

## **Ad hoc quality assessment**

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) [published a report in 2019](#) that analyses the use and quality of the prior learning assessment (PLA) system in adult education and continuing training ([VEU](#)) in the period 2010–2018. It shows that PLA has been implemented at a larger percentage of institutions than in 2010, and that there is very strong support across education areas for the concept of recognising adults' prior learning. Slightly fewer institutions, but still very high percentages, assess that the possibilities for recognising prior learning in practice are also good. Although there has been a positive development from 2010 to 2018 in other areas as well, such as an increase in the use of various quality assurance tools, there are also a number of areas with negative results. For example, interviews in connection with PLA are not always held, and in a number of education areas there has even been a decline in the use of this tool. Similarly, it is problematic that so many providers in the vocational area, relatively speaking, do not use practical exercises in connection with PLA, given that prior learning is precisely what is to be assessed. Furthermore, a relatively large percentage of providers do not offer competence development for their staff.