

Denmark – VIA University College

Institution	VIA University College
Interviewed Person	Study counsellor for the bachelor programme for Nursing at VIA UC

I – Preparation

Anna is a study counsellor for the bachelor programme for Nursing at VIA UC and she has been a VPL assessor for the VPL team in the Nursing programme for the recent three years. When Anna was new in the function, she especially remembers that assessing the applicants' personal, professional and social competences implied new aspects for her in the function.

The VPL forms the first of two steps in the application system for the target group of migrants and refugees; the second step is the accession interview – partly based on the VPL documentation.

II - Awareness

There are – roughly speaking – two groups of applicants from the target group: those, who already have a nursing education from the homeland, and those who have a contact in his or her network who knows about the Danish education system. Applicants with a professional nursing qualification from the homeland are guided to have their education approved, fully or partly, by the Ministry of Education and Science. For many applicants to the nursing education, they do not fulfil the language requirements of Danish. Because of a complexity in the Adult education system for language competences, quite often applicants are lost in the system due to language requirements equivalent to the secondary education level. This especially occurs when they apply for the nursing education without having had the guidance before applying.

III - Starting up

Cases are used in the VPL interview to support the applicant in relating her competences to practise and education. The applicant reads the case and hereafter applicant and assessor have a dialogue on the case – content and dilemmas. The assessor focusses on the applicants' ability to relate to the case content, problematics and ethical dilemmas. Besides, practice experiences are discussed together with motivation for the profession and the education.

IV – Documentation and support

Anna tells that, whilst most migrant applicants have their full documentation, many refugees lack important documents. In the validation process, this forms a severe problem. The validation team has recommended applicants with these challenges to use a public available portefolio as a format to collect all relevant data. However, the format has proved less usable for the presentation of competences which could be useful in the validation process. Furthermore, the format is not suitable for demonstrating the applicant's motivation for the education.

This is why the team has developed brief guidelines to be used by student counsellors and the admission team in order to establish a continuity in all the areas of guidance for the applicants at the University College.

The specific focus of these guidelines is to support the applicants to highlight their personal, professional and social competences. Doing so, it helps them gain more insight and thus to reflect and argue for one's motivation for the education.

V - Assessment

In the assessment interview, the guidelines are used as a basic framework though not necessarily followed systematically. The aim is to map academic competences as well as relevant professional skills. Besides, there is a focus on competences, required by the health education, like ethical awareness and knowledge of human nature.

The identification of this type of competences are made implicitly by the applicants' reflections and together with his chosen focus in his answers to interview questions. The counselor prepares for the interview by reading the applications thoroughly when specifically noticing how the personal, professional and social competences are highlighted in the application.

Many applicants are nervous at the interview so it is important for Anna to defuse the situation and to establish an equal dialogue. Transparency is important in the interview, not least because of the assessment there is of course an element of power in the interview.

This is why, as Anna tells: *I am aware of the importance of securing transparency in the assessment, which I do in the end of the interview by explaining my reasons for the assessment conclusion.*

In this final part of the interview, the applicant can ask more questions and also adjust any misunderstandings. Furthermore, guidance are offered for a new application in case of a negative result.

VI – Impact

It is Anna's impression that, during the VPL process, applicants gain insight and awareness of own strengths and weaknesses as well. This also makes it easier to have a good dialogue in case of a rejection. Quite often, the validation process helps the applicant to accept the requirement for improving her study competences.

VII - Impact on the longer term

Due to follow up interviews with students who have got admission to the education with a positive VPL, the conclusion is that:

"They are doing quite well. They demonstrate good skills in the training internship and they are focused and enthusiastic in their study".

Anna reflects that, *"their will and commitments means a lot for them to fulfil the education. I wish many more from the target group would have the chance for admission with a VPL",* she says.

SPECIAL SECTION ONLY FOR VALIDATION PROFESSIONALS

Based on annual evaluations of the VPL's, new initiatives for development of the practice are planned.

The VPL team meet with the admission group. Here lawyers and administrative staffs update the team with new legislation. These meetings are planned before each round for admission to the education. Moreover, Anna is involved in research & development work for VPL. So, as she expresses,

“Though I feel qualified for my function as a VPL assessor, I need more knowledge about the target group of migrants and refugees, as they often provide a complexity to deal with in the VPL system”.

IX – policy context

It is Anna's experience that the political context does not fully support the individual VPL user. When arriving in Denmark, they often meet a very bureaucratic system without transparency. Anna compares with the Norwegian system, which she is acquainted with from working as a nurse. There is short time distance from applying for VPL until you are at work as a nurse at the hospital. In Denmark, you almost have to start again at the Nursing education or at least for part of it.

For a person with proper competences and possibly lots of work experience, you must feel humiliated when for example, the Ministry has approved the full or part qualification equivalent with a Danish bachelor degree as nurse, and then – on the same basis – the health authority rejects the application for authorization.

“This is a waste of competences”, Anna states.