

PACE-VET



Focus Group Guidelines

V3



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Focus Groups guideline PACE-VET

1 General Information

Time expenditure: ca. 1,5 hours, plan with 2 hours
Staff: 2, moderator and keeper of the minutes
Participants 5-10 (10 is a lot, 7 would be sweet spot)

1.1 Material

To conduct the activities and keep track of results, the following materials will be needed:

- Coloured cards (for participants)
- pens
- camera (photo)
- notepad / laptop for minutes
- Signature list to prove the focus group
- Name tags (fantasy names possible; used for identification for the protocol)
- Projector for presentation

1.2 Protocol

It is important to collect the key points of the discussions. The result will be visible by the end, when participants have written down their contributions on the card, but in hindsight it can be difficult to understand the reasoning behind the contribution. A protocol is therefore very important for the proper analysis of the results. The following aspects need to be considered when writing the protocol:

- Write down conspicuous/exceptional things
- Write down aspects with a lot of discussion
- If known statements are confirmed: Write it down!
- Take photos of the final results (make sure that participants remain anonymous)

1.3 Objectives

As the focus groups will be held with different user groups, thereby you can replace “users” with “learner/worker”, “employer”, “certifying and validating body”, and “educational institution”. Two aspects are mostly important to figure out in the discussions:

- 1) Extract requirements from users: What do they need to use the product? How will the product convince them to switch to the new thing?
- 2) Background information: What are the backgrounds of the user groups? How do they use mobiles and social media, how old are they, what is their interest in such a product?

1.4 General comments:

- The degree of directivity depends strongly on the heterogeneity of the group.
- In heterogeneous groups: appreciate individual opinions and intervene less.
- (Task of the minute keeper is to record differences / heterogeneous opinions)
- during the classification by detailed inquiries (if meaningful) bring it to a deeper abstraction level
- Leave room for discussion

2 Conduct of the Focus Group

2.1 Introduction (Persona I) (10min)

Every participant is asked to provide information about

- *Their work and responsibility (What they do now, how they got there)*
- *Their connection to the broader topic “education in event technology”*
- *Their interest / motivation to further engage in the topic.*

This information should be documented (anonymously). The information will be used to fill in the first part of the persona profiles.

Procedure:

- Participants write 1-2 key points on ONE single card (without any name)

2.2 How does informal and non-formal learning effect your work? How important are formal qualifications for your work? (25 min)

The first block is supposed to break the ice and bring the participants mentally in a place to talk about lifelong learning and the educational situation in the industry. Initial discussion can ensue, which should be protocolled. Make sure not to lose too much time, but also to provide room for meaningful discussions.

Procedure:

- Participants write their ideas on the cards individually, without discussion among each other.
- Collect all on floor / table: explanation of the participants
- Organizer tries to sort and group the contributions
- Are there any additions? (Question to the group)
- Arrange, overlap duplicates
- take a photo



2.3 Flash round: Technologies and Competence management (10 min) + Persona (II)

Small block of questions to be implemented via Sli.do. The idea is to shift the focus of the discussion away from the problem (qualifications in education) and concentrate on the solution (PACE-VET digital LLL Infrastructure).

The idea is to sensitize participants for the meaning of competence certifications and to introduce the discussions around the actual issue: technologies used and needed. The following questions will be part of the flash round:

Grade: (Completely disagree – Completely agree, 5-point scale)

- *Certification of lifelong learning can improve the situation.*
- *I have access to infrastructure that supports the documentation of Lifelong Learning*
- *It makes sense for me to document lifelong learning*
- *Formal qualifications provide all information necessary to find a new job.*
- *Lifelong Learning will play an increasingly important role in the future.*
- *Skills portfolios (proof of lifelong learning: videos, photos, audio) are equally or more important than formal qualifications.*

The answers shall not be discussed at this point, but terminologies explained (especially “skills portfolio”).

With the following questions we strive to collect personal backgrounds of the participants. The questions are a follow up from the Flash-Round.

- *How do you document learning? What are good practices of establishing skills portfolios?*
- *What are disadvantages of the current situation in your daily work?*

2.4 Used Technologies and Features (40 min)

2.4.1 Do you already use technologies in the context of Lifelong Learning? Which one? How do you keep track of what has been learned or made by your or your students? Which technologies do you use? (45min)

Here, the idea of balancing /recording competences should be introduced. Ideally, the absence of a possibility to track informal and non-formal learning has been mentioned in the introductory discussion. Depending on the participants, the question focuses on which tools are being used to

- *look for jobs (learners, workers)*
- *document projects (learner, workers)*
- *document personal certifications (learners, workers / employers)*
- *manage applications (employers)*
- *manage competences in the firm (employers)*
- *document assessments (educational institutions)*

- *award and document awarded certificates (educational institutions / certifying bodies)*

Procedure:

- Participants write their ideas on the cards individually, without discussion among each other. It would be good if all cards would have the same colour!
- Collect all on floor / table: explanation of the participants
- Organizer tries to sort and group the contributions
- Are there any additions? (Question to the group)
- Arrange, overlap duplicates
- take a photo



2.4.2 Which specific features make these tools useful? Which features are missed or would further improve these technologies?

The specific features will be added to the already laid out collection of technologies. What needs do they have, what do they expect? What are the backgrounds of which the application would be used? Please make sure to stay consistent with the colours of the cards that are being used:

- Existing features that make the tools useful: colour A
- Features that are being missed: colour B

Throughout the discussion, participants can draw ideas from other contributions.

Aspects which can be provided as food for thought:

- Process Validation and Acceptance? Repetition of Validation / Accepted age of qualification?
- Level of detail – qualifications vs competences



- Useability – Frontend GUI (mobile, desktop)
- Compatibility?
- Pricing?
- Social Factors
- Content design
- Perceived ease of use
- Background of user groups - Physical attributes: age groups, gender, what kind of applications are they used to?
- Goals of users - What would the user want to use the application for?
- Cultural Background and bigger picture - Context of usage scenarios

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