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EARLY WARNING CHECKLIST

ASSESSMENT

VET design

1. AT A GLANCE

Tool name	*Early Warning Checklist*
Activity Type	*Individual*
Purpose	*Assessment*
Challenge	*From Enrolment to Completion (Engaging and retaining adult learners through to certification)*
When to use it	*Prototype / Test stages of the Design Thinking process, implemented live during course delivery*
Time to complete	*20 Minutes per student cohort review subset*
Materials Needed	*Numbered/rated checklist matrix worksheet, evaluation tracking template*

2. DESCRIPTION

The Early Warning Checklist is a systematic, behavior-based assessment tool designed for individual use by VET educators, program trainers, and instructional coordinators. While traditional academic tracking tools evaluate student performance retroactively through final grades, this diagnostic tool focuses on tracking predictive behavioral indicators during active learning tracks. This allows educators to intervene before a student chooses to officially withdraw or drop out.

The checklist targets specific, observable risk indicators categorized into four primary domains: attendance patterns, milestone delivery, engagement metrics, and life-event constraints. VET educators execute this checklist independently at two critical institutional milestones—Week 2 and Week 6 of the instruction lifecycle. These precise checkpoints align with documented drop-off trends in adult vocational training, catching disengagement early. By assigning risk values to observable signals like missed onboarding sessions, late deadline turn-ins, or passivity during peer collaborative tasks, the checklist generates an objective triage rating for every student. This structural approach enables the institution to deploy targeted peer support or custom engagement loops to support at-risk adult learners before they disconnect completely.

2.1 WHEN TO USE IT

This assessment tool is tested during the Prototype and Test phases of the design cycle and runs continuously during live course execution. It must be completed systematically at the end of Week 2 (to counter early onboarding dropout) and the end of Week 6 (to counter mid-course attrition).



- **Look for Subtle Disengagement Signals:** Adult dropouts rarely happen overnight. Watch for early, quiet indicators like a student regularly turning off their camera during online sessions, staying completely silent during in-person group breakout work, or logging into the digital portal without opening core assignments.
- **Incorporate Contextual Flexibility:** Adult learners juggle significant external responsibilities, such as shift changes or family obligations. If a student flags a negative life event, do not use it to judge their academic capabilities; use it to flag the need for flexible milestone adjustments or alternative pacing.
- **Link Every Risk Level to an Immediate Action:** A diagnostic checklist is only useful if it leads to timely support loops. Ensure your educational institution has an agreed-upon response plan for every risk level, such as automated peer check-ins or immediate one-on-one advising.

3. STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1

Compile Participation Logs & Cohort Data

At the exact conclusion of Week 2 and Week 6, gather your student interaction data. Pull the active class attendance registers, digital learning management portal tracking statistics, assignment submission timestamps, and any formal student communications or flagged notes.

2

Assess and Score Target Behavioral Indicators

Open the Early Warning Checklist template for each student in the cohort. Methodically mark the presence of observable indicators across the four core diagnostic domains. Check off indicators like missing live sessions, late assignment hand-ins, passivity during group work, or recorded work-schedule conflicts, assigning points to each observed risk signal.

3

Calculate Risk Triage & At-Risk Tiering

Sum the checked point totals to calculate the student's final risk index. Sort the individual scores into three pre-defined risk triage tiers: Low Risk (0–2 points), Medium Risk (3–5 points), or High Risk (6+ points) to easily identify which adult learners require immediate outreach.

4

Launch Targeted Support Loops & Engagement Plans

For every student flagged within the Medium or High Risk tiers, launch the corresponding institutional support plan immediately. This may involve connecting the student with a peer-support mentor, restructuring imminent assignment milestones, or hosting a brief one-on-one advising check-in to adjust the program to their current life circumstances

4. THE TEMPLATE /CANVAS

Adult Learner Diagnostic Matrix (Week 2 & Week 6 Evaluation)
Student Name / Anonymized ID: _____
Evaluation Milestone Tracking:
[ ] Week 2 Check [ ] Week 6 Check

Behavioral Domain	Observable At-Risk Indicators	Point Weight	Observed Check	Subtotal Points
Attendance Patterns	Absent from a live face-to-face or virtual session without notification. Late arrival or early departure from consecutive class blocks.	2 1		
Milestone Delivery	Missed an assignment deadline or skipped formative knowledge checks. Submitted an assignment late or incomplete.	2 1		
Classroom Engagement	Passive or uncommunicative during peer collaborative tasks/breakouts. Low or non-existent interaction inside the online learning portal.	2 1		
Life Circumstances	Formally flagged a work schedule conflict, family issue, or health emergency. Expressed explicit confusion or anxiety regarding track continuation.	3 2		
TOTAL RISK SCORE MATRIX:				**Sum:**

Risk Triage Actions & Intervention Plan

- **Tier 1: Low Risk (0 – 2 Points) –– Standard Path:** Maintain normal monitoring; ensure the learner continues to receive standard milestone progress feedback.
- **Tier 2: Medium Risk (3 – 5 Points) –– Proactive Outreach:** Launch an informal check-in via email or text. Connect the learner with an internal peer-support buddy group and verify if any assignment adjustments are needed to protect content fit.
- **Tier 3: High Risk (6+ Points) –– Immediate Support Loop:** Schedule an immediate 1-on-1 consultation. Collaboratively restructure upcoming assessments, resolve practical constraints, and create a custom learning plan to ensure a clear path to certification.

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This document is the deliverable of the Erasmus+ Project KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training (KA220-VET) "Design Thinking for Quality VET Education Matching Labour Market Needs – VETdesign" and it represents the Result of the Work Package 2 of the project.

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Project no. 2024-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000253834

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