

I Belong Cultural Orientation Course
Expression of Interest – Clarification Sessions
Questions Raised by Educational Institutions and HRD Responses
Clarification Sessions held on 9 and 15 September 2026

COURSE STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY

1. Can the 50-hour in-person classes be given online?

A minimum of fifty (50) contact hours must be delivered in person in a classroom setting and cannot be delivered online. From years of experience in the delivery of the I Belong programme and based on recommendations from experts in the field, it was established that a hybrid mode is the most effective mode of delivery. This allows the students not only to learn more effectively, but also to integrate and create long-lasting bonds with other students.

2. Are the 10 hours of the educational visits and 10 hours of the information session to be included in the 120 mandatory course hours?

According to the EOI Annex I, the 120 hours consist of 100 hours of classroom-based curriculum modules, 10 hours of educational visits (two visits of 5 hours each), and 10 hours of information sessions (two sessions of 5 hours each). Students must attend a minimum of 100 verified contact hours and must attend at least one educational visit and at least one information session to be eligible for the final centralised examination administered by the Department of Examinations.

3. Can the course be provided in Maltese or does it have to be provided exclusively in English?

Institutions may determine the language or languages used for course teaching and learner support. However, all internal assessments and the final centralised examination must be conducted in English, in accordance with the EOI and Annex II.

4. Is there a maximum number of students per class?

The EOI does not limit the number of students per class as long as the learning is done effectively and classroom capacity is considered. Institutions should indicate their proposed maximum class size in the Methodology Template.

5. Are there any specific qualifications for the teachers delivering the course?

The EOI does not prescribe a specific minimum qualification for tutors. However, institutions must demonstrate that the proposed staff possess suitable qualifications, relevant experience and competence to deliver the approved curriculum to diverse adult learners. CVs or staff profiles for key personnel must be submitted.

6. Can institutions offer students Learning Support Educators (LSE) to assist with literacy and/or other needs during the course?

For literacy, students are encouraged to attend language foundation courses since LSEs are not equipped to support with literacy issues. Institutions may offer students with learners with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties an LSE. Any support provided during internal assessment must preserve the validity, fairness and consistency of the assessment. Reasonable support or examination arrangements for the final centralised examination will be subject to the applicable procedures and approval of the Department of Examinations.

7. Can HRD provide any recommendations of the materials to be used throughout the course? Syllabus is too open and very demanding, what happens if students fail the course?

HRD has provided the curriculum. The final centralised exam sample paper will be provided. Supporting material has to be formulated by the institutions in line with the Curriculum Framework and Assessment Framework and approved by HRD. It is the responsibility of the institutions to ensure learners are adequately equipped for the final centralised examination. Institutions should also indicate the support arrangements available for learners who do not pass, where applicable.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY, ADMISSION AND PROGRESSION

8. To be eligible for this course, do students have to pass Maltese MQF Level 1 and MQF Level 2?

Knowledge of the Maltese language is not a requirement to access the I Belong Cultural Orientation course. It is, however, a separate requirement for Long-Term Residence applications.

9. Does completing the Stage 1 Culture course exempt students from any of the 100-hour course modules?

No, it does not.

10. Will vetting for participation eligibility be done by HRD?

Eligibility of students will be verified by HRD when students enrol through the I Belong Platform. Only eligible candidates will be able to choose the delivering institution through the I Belong Platform.

ASSESSMENT, EXAMINATION AND CERTIFICATION

11. What will be the format of the exam?

The final centralised examination will be a written, in-person examination consisting of fifty (50) multiple-choice questions. The examination will be held on designated dates and at venues determined by the Department of Examinations. A sample examination paper will be made available.

12. Will the examination be available in Maltese or will an interpreter be present for the examination for those that are only Maltese speaking?

Knowledge of English is crucial for integration. Therefore, students who struggle with the English language should do foundation courses. The final centralised exam by the Department of Examinations will be carried out in English.

13. Referring to Clause 5(3)a & b of the Legislation etc, what is the final pass mark - 75% or 65%?

The overall minimum pass mark for the I Belong Cultural Orientation Course is 75%. The overall result consists of 20% internal assessment/course participation and 80% final centralised examination.

14. When is the first examination intended to happen? How often will examinations take place? How are they conducted (In-person/online)?

Examinations will take place in person. The date of the first session still needs to be established but it should be in the first half of 2027. It is envisaged that sessions will be held twice per year.

15. How long is the I Belong Cultural Orientation certificate valid for?

As per the applicable Long-Term Residence requirements, applicants must complete the course no more than 12 months prior to the submission of their Long-Term Residence application.

16. Who will issue certification for this course if it does not need to be accredited by the institution?

A Certificate of Course Attendance and Internal Assessment Completion is to be given to students by the institution confirming that students have completed the course requirements and are prepared for the exam; the final I Belong Cultural Orientation Certificate will be issued by HRD following successful completion of the centralised exam. Only the certificate administered by HRD is eligible for LTR applications.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

17. Does the course need to be accredited?

The course itself is not required to be submitted for programme accreditation. It must, however, be delivered at a level equivalent to MQF Level 2.

18. Does the course schedule to be attached to the EOI need to be dated?

The course schedule does not need to include exact dates but rather an indication of how much time each module will take (eg. In hours or in weeks).

19. Shall all lecturing materials be attached to the submission?

A sample of materials is enough.

20. Is there a cap on the pricing?

There is no cap on the pricing at the moment, hence why the cost process has to be transparent and a full breakdown of the costs is among the submission requirements. Students may not be charged for any additional costs not itemised in the cost structure. HRD may request revisions to proposed course fees and/or reject unreasonable cost structures.

21. What is the purpose of the submission of Recognition of Prior Learning policy?

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy should outline how the institution recognises prior learning, where applicable. Learner eligibility for participation in the I Belong Cultural Orientation Course will be verified separately through the I Belong enrolment process.

22. What procedure should be followed if institutions wish to apply changes to the proposed methodology?

Any proposed modification to an approved methodology must be submitted to HRD in writing, together with the reasons for the change and its effect on delivery, learners, costs, staffing, assessment or compliance. No material modification may be implemented before written approval is issued by HRD.

MARKETING AND ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

23. Is there a maximum number of students the institution can accept?

There is no overall limit set by the EOI on the number of students the institution can accept provided that the institution has sufficient capacity to meet all course delivery and learner-support requirements

24. What procedure should be followed if students approach the institution directly to enrol for I Belong?

Students are to be directed to the I Belong Platform to start the enrolment process. Once enrolment is complete, they can choose their preferred institution through the I Belong Platform. Alternatively, as outlined in EOI Section 3.2.2, approved educational institutions may enrol learners through the I Belong Platform on their behalf.

25. Can the institutions market the course themselves? Or will students be referred to them by HRD?

Institutions may market the course once approved to deliver it. All promotional content must comply with HRD branding and communication instructions and must not imply guaranteed eligibility, examination success, certification or approval for Long-Term Residence.

Course enrolments must be processed through the I Belong Platform, either by the students themselves or by approved educational institutions on their behalf, as applicable, to ensure eligibility. Upon enrolment, the I Belong platform will provide a list of institutions that provide the course and students can select the preferred institution from there. Training regarding the use of the platform will be provided to all successfully selected institutions.

26. Can the institutions sell the Maltese MQF Level 2 course and the 100-hour Integration course as a package?

Institutions may offer the Maltese-language course and the I Belong Cultural Orientation Course as an optional package. However, all charges must be clearly itemised in the submitted and approved cost structure.

27. Will institutions also be allowed to do the Fast-Track?

The EOI does not establish a separate Fast-Track pathway. Institutions may propose an intensive timetable, provided that the full 120 scheduled contact hours and all other attendance, in-person delivery, educational visit, information session and assessment requirements are met. The proposed timetable must be included in the methodology and approved by HRD.