

Guidelines for the organization of Work Based Learning initiatives

Guidelines for Companies

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<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/home.html>

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INTRODUCTION

For a successful internship, good coaching on the workplace is needed. Not only the help of the supervisor, but also the reception of the trainees within the working team, can make a big difference.

Although the supervisor does not always grant much time for this, he has a very important function in the success of the internships.

Phase 1 - Before the Internship Period

When the supervisor is able to organize an internship project with challenging contents (degree of autonomy, variation and satisfaction), and able to prepare a good introduction to the company and a smooth start at the work place, it will be a big input for the trainees' motivation.

Phase 2 - During the Internship

The supervisor is not only the contact person in case of problems, but he supports and guides the learning process of the trainees (by giving feedback and demonstrating) and it is his leadership style that will motivate them to increase their competences.

Phase 3 – At the End of / after the Internship

The supervisor is the main actor in the process of assessing the trainee's competences and in evaluating the internship project as a learning process.



CHAPTER 1: PHASE 1 - BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP PERIOD

1.1 - What to do before the internship

1) Preparation

- Plan the training period and schedule suitable tasks.
- Prepare company cards/passes and (if necessary) computer login.
- Check security routines – for example rules for minors under 18.
- Check if necessary insurance coverage is provided.
- Check the company's checklist for new employees.
- Pass the information to the colleagues and future co-workers of the trainee in your department.
- Also provide a Practical Information Document with information about:
 - work clothes,
 - security rules and routines - fire alarm, injury - safety regulations,
 - routines when sick/ time off,
 - time of lunch break, coffee breaks,
 - floor plan of the company (lunch room, toilets),
 - all necessary phone numbers for the trainee,
 - company values,
 - code of conduct (honesty, theft).

2) Reception and Introduction of the Trainee

- Meet the trainee at the entrance.
- Welcome – the first impression is important – and general introduction to the company.
- Get work clothes, lockers, routines for changing/ or dress code.
- Tour of the workplace: show the company in whole & different departments.
- Present the trainee to your colleagues.
- Check professional secretary – documents to be signed?
- Ergonomics: working postures, handling of materials and tools, workplace layout.

1.2 Requirements

Host Company:

- The company must be familiar with the philosophy of workplace training for vocational training students.
- Suitable sector to meet and match the student's requirements.
- Must have available and qualified staff to host and assist the student during the placement.
- Has suitable equipment and facilities to properly implement the work plan.

Company Tutor:

- The company tutor must be a professional who is qualified in the field in which the student is to do workplace training and also has extensive general knowledge of how the company operates.
- Must have timetable availability for monitoring and advising the trainee.
- Must be familiar with the tasks of the student.
- Sufficient knowledge of the trainee's working language.
- Must be motivated to host the student.

Functions and Responsibilities:

- Underline the different activities that can be performed by the student which will become his/her actual work plan.
- Comply with the agreed work plan.
- Must foster team work and include the trainee in it as far as possible.
- Maintain continuous follow-up with coordinating organization host country during the placement.
- Responsible for validating the completion of the placement.
- Ensuring that the placement is implemented according to the established work plan.
- Responsible for tutoring and mentoring the trainee during the whole of the training period at the company.

CHAPTER 2: PHASE 2 - DURING THE INTERNSHIP

2.1 - What to do during the internship:

How to tutor a trainee – different learning styles: active, reflective, theoretical or practical.

Give special attention to:

- Try to engage the trainee in the work team.
- Motivate the trainee.
- Take your responsibility as a mentor.
- Treat the trainee with respect.
- Have a dialogue with the trainee continuously.
- A trainee has no responsibility for production

2.2 - General introduction to the company

In order to help the trainees through the orientation period, the supervisor should:

1. Describe the structure of the company, its principles and philosophy.
2. Explain the work schedule and the tasks of the different staff members in the team.
3. Distribute a brochure or an organization chart of the company, as well as a practical information document with working hours, necessary phone numbers for the trainees etc.
4. Explain “the house rules” and give these in written form (English or another language).
5. Give information about safety regulations. If required, you will have to distribute a work place risk analysis form.
6. Check if any documents (Internship Agreement) have to be filled in or signed.
7. Clarify regulations and how to act in emergency situations (company procedures).
8. Explain the work procedures and how the supervision will work out in practice (making appointments).
9. Inform the trainees how many formal assessment conversations you are going to have.
10. Explain and show equipment.

When the trainees have no more questions about all this, show the premises: the main building, workshops, changing rooms and facilities for different purposes.

The practical things to be organised may also include possible visits to other work places or units.



Consider that the trainees can be really showered with information. Put information as much as possible on paper: a well-structured document prevents confusion and misunderstanding.

Operating in a foreign language and in a new culture may be very confusing. In the beginning, check if the trainees understand you. The trainees should be urged to ask questions about anything that is not clear.

Constant support and encouragement are vital for a positive working relationship.

A list of things a trainee usually expects:

- Get to know daily life in a company,
- Be practically busy,
- Experience modern techniques,
- Review and try out their own knowledge and skills,
- Experience the difference between the requirements in training and in a company,
- Examine if the chosen training is the most suitable,
- Carry out tasks with the support of a professional,
- Put school knowledge into practice,
- Learn a foreign language,
- Be treated fairly and friendly!
- Get clear and simple answers in connection with working life,
- Build a circle of friends, be part of a team,
- Have a good time in a foreign country.

You also let the trainees ask questions. Give as specific answers as possible. This gives a feeling of security and works motivating.

ATTENTION!

→ Listening to the expectations of the trainees does not mean you have to make things the way the trainees want them and neglect the objectives of the internship ←



2.3 - Giving feedbacks

Give honest, personal information to the trainees concerning how your impression is about their behaviour or performance.

Feedback is a constant process during the internship and helps to improve the performance of the trainees. Thanks to the feedback, the trainees can determine how close they are to the intended outcome of the internship.

Feedback is one of the most important matters in supervising. With regular (positive) feedback from the supervisor, a trainee can climb high on the competence Ladder.

This tool can make people aware of their level of (in)competence.

Giving feedback should be:	Giving feedback should not be:
Constructive and aimed at improving performance in the future, suggesting positive alternatives, looking forward.	A way to express disappointment and anger. Only looking backward.
Specific, about behaviour, about facts related to the job and related to learning, about what the trainees can do about it.	Vague, about the behaviour of the trainees in general, about many different things at the same time or about things he cannot change.
Focused on the work: e.g., "What you did with that machine this morning could have caused these problems." So: play the ball, not the man!	Focused on the person, using words like "You are a stupid person." "You are always..." or "You never do..."
Calm, describing possible (bad) consequences of behaviour with encouragement to learn and do better next time.	Angry, harsh, discouraging, emotional, only repeating what went wrong.
Two-way communication, supporting the trainees in evaluating themselves and finding their own way in solving problems.	One-way communication, starting from the idea that the supervisor knows what is best for the trainees.
Short but frequently (not just when things go wrong) and immediately after behaviour or the performance and direct.	Long after the problem occurred or by surprise.

2.4 - Leadership styles

To provide the right sort of guidance to the trainees, a leadership style that fits the context can be chosen.

There are 4 basic styles of leadership available to the supervisor:

Directing: the supervisor defines the tasks of the trainees and closely supervises them. The supervisor makes decisions. Communication is one-way.

Coaching: the supervisor defines the tasks of the trainees. He listens to suggestions by the trainees. Communication is two-way.

Supporting: the trainees are allowed to make small day-to-day decisions. The supervisor listens to the trainees and helps them.

Delegating: the supervisor is involved in the decisions, but control is with the trainees.

You can raise the development and the feeling of independence and self-assuredness of the trainees by gradually moving from a directive to a more supportive leadership style.

The interaction and cooperation between the supervisor and the trainees is at its most intense in the beginning of the work internship period. Towards the end of the period, the trainees' work becomes more independent and the supervisor can delegate things and withdraw more into the background.

If the trainees are not committed to training or motivated, you may be forced to adopt a more directive learning style throughout the internship.

ATTENTION!

→ Be aware of cultural differences in leadership styles ←



2.5 - Dealing with conflicts

Conflicts are normal in (professional) life. A conflict is a problematic situation between at least two parties, where each party wishes its own interest will be fulfilled and thinks that this will happen at the cost of the other. It is advisable to tackle conflicts rapidly.

Basic rules

- Remain calm
- Find a suitable place where you can sit down and talk;
- Listen to what the trainees say and try and pick up any underlying causes of unhappiness or stress;
- Question the trainees in a calm way, put them at ease and give him the chance to speak freely;
- Say in other words what the trainee said so that problems can be seen in a different way;
- Focus on what would be a reasonable outcome for everyone.

Three types of conflict

The supervisor can be an outsider or one of the two parties in the conflict (with the trainees, a colleague, a superior, an outsider), and can be involved directly or indirectly.

o The conflict remains limited to a disagreement: talk it over!

o The supervisor has been directly involved:

- Both: let off steam and put emotions in words;
- Both: say what the error of the other is;
- Both: say very concretely what should be changed;
- Together: negotiate to what both are prepared;
- Together: make arrangements and possibly fix these.

o The supervisor has been indirectly involved:

- Exert your power, your influence;
- Arbitrate; call upon laws, appointments, principles and traditions;
- Mediate. When you try to mediate, the bottleneck is often the beginning of the conversation: one of the parties does not wish to talk.

Try the following arguments:

- "What if we do not talk?"
- "It's not a question of right or wrong, but of working together."
- "Cooperating professionally doesn't need to be love."

ATTENTION!

→Prevention is better than cure: through prevention you can avoid an escalation←

→It is easier to prevent a conflict: in a culture of openness and feedback and with good communication←

2.6 - Showing the work process

Offer concrete information in a visual, graphical way and give the necessary oral explanation.

A picture says more than a thousand words. Trainees with pragmatic and active learning styles need visual demonstrations.

It works also motivating when the trainees understand things immediately.

How?

1. Visualize your manner of thinking, your analysis of a problem.
2. Ensure a clear structure with a logical order; show the steps in a process.
3. Work in phases if necessary.
4. Introduce each phase and focus on the most important points.
5. Give a short summary after each phase.
6. Take care that the:
 - trainees can see the process well,
 - trainees can hear the explanation well,
 - trainees understand the explanation,
 - number of phases and operations can be overlooked,
 - demonstration is not too complicated.
7. Give a summary of all phases after the complete demonstration

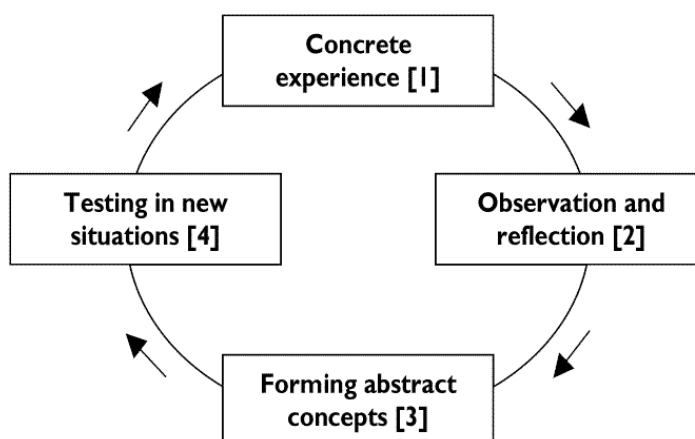
ATTENTION!

→ Always check if the trainees understand what you have been demonstrating or explaining ←

2.7 - Learning styles

People usually have their own preferences in one of the four learning styles. The learning theory of David Kolb distinguishes 4 types of learning:

- 1) From Concrete Experience (CE),
- 2) From Reflective Observation (RO),
- 3) From Abstract Conceptualisation (AC),
- 4) From Active Experimentation (AE), testing new concepts in new situations.



It's called "the learning cycle" because we often need to go around the wheel, experience – observe and reflect - analyse - test, to be able to perform a new skill.

Learning in the workplace is an essential component of professional training. It is important that the supervisor helps the trainees understand their learning process and try other learning styles in order to progress.

If the trainees prefer "learning by doing", the supervisor should try to let them test and try different tasks already from the beginning. This method could however make "reflective" trainees a little scared, since they prefer to observe you performing the tasks before they try.

As the work placement period proceeds and evolves, you can and should allow more room for the trainees to work independently in new situations. The best guide to know when such a point has been reached is your experience as a supervisor.

ATTENTION!

→ Supervisors often teach in the same style as they prefer to learn.
This style might not be the same as the trainee's ←

CHAPTER 3: PHASE 3 - AT THE END OF / AFTER THE INTERNSHIP

Follow up/ feedback

- Give feedback: listen – follow up positive and negative aspects.

At the end you have an assessment conversation with the trainee.

3.1 - Assessment conversation (with the trainees)

It is a conversation between you and the trainees in order to evaluate their performance during the internship period. It provides an opinion concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the trainees with a view to their further training.

The result may be that the sending/receiving partner will give other directions to future internship projects.

Preparation of the assessment conversation

- You inform the trainees concerning this conversation (When? What? How?).
- Both you and the trainees prepare the evaluation points on the basis of previous evaluation conversations or feedback.
- You indicate for each of the tasks what was the quality of the work done, the results they achieved.
- You take into account the initial situation of the trainees.
- You note bottleneck points/problems, e.g. when you think something has been a bit problematic or difficult for the trainees.
- You note which additional tasks the trainees had to do that were not in the original description.

Description of the assessment conversation

- You start the conversation: explain goals and working methods again.
- You possibly evaluate the marks using an assessment form.
- You give sufficient time to speak about every point, listen, ask questions, summarise.
- You ensure that you can motivate your answer each time with examples.
- You evaluate the reached level per item by comparing scores with the initial expectations.
- You make an overall evaluation.
- You express expectations for the continuation of the internship or for the next training period.

At this stage, the internship supervisor also needs to fill in some official documents, e.g. Europass Mobility or an Internship Logbook or Trainee's Folder.

ATTENTION!

→ Be objective; do not be influenced by prejudices, sympathy or antipathy ←

3.2 - Evaluation of the internship process (with the team)

Map out, possibly with colleagues, the trainees and the internship tutor, what (competences) they learned during the training period, and what the possible improvements in the internship process are. You judge the quality, evaluate whether the internship was worth doing (if there was any added value) and write a report.

This helps supervisors and coordinators in adjusting and improving or transforming the organisation of the next internship. Especially with a written report, it can be a reference to plan the next internship project better.

It is also a stimulating step in the learning process when the trainees are involved: this way he sees the full importance of the internship period.

Possible items for evaluation are:

1. Was the matching of the candidate and the workplace good?
2. What remarks did the trainees give on their assessment?
3. Did the internship stimulate the trainees to moments of independent learning and/or training?
4. Training: are adjustments necessary in function of a better connection between the industrial sector and training (technical college, training centre) and/or education in their own region?
5. The practical organisation of the internship: did anything go wrong?
6. The role of the supervisor: did he meet the expectations of the sending/receiving organisation?
7. The timing of the internship: when is the best period?
8. The planning of the internship within the learning pathway of the candidate.
9. Questions with regard to the aim of the internship activities: focus on key competences (e.g. other rhythm, more stress, social skills), focus on learning to know new equipment or train known techniques.
10. Looking for new internship work places for acquiring and/or learning specific basic competences, a module, an entire training; optimise a network of internship providers.

Points of attention:

- What have we learned?
- What can be done better next time?

ATTENTION!

→ Try to find a balance between positive and negative, between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats ←