

# Guidelines for the organization of Work Based Learning initiatives

## Guidelines for VET Trainers

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## INTRODUCTION

The Guidelines below have been established from existing experiences and discussions with the project partners of WBL2.0 and provide some solutions to questions asked by VET trainers when working with companies to provide internships and/or placements.

The Guidelines are addressed to VET trainers and aim to provide them with an overview of the following issues: establish a fruitful cooperation with companies for organising the placements, how to assess, validate and certify the competences, skills and knowledge within transnational placements experiences, how to monitor placements.



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## CHAPTER 1 – COOPERATION WITH COMPANIES

### 1.1 – The Definition of the internship content with companies

An internship can be a focal and key part of a student's learning experience, taking the lessons learned in the classroom and transposing them into the world of work. In addition to the practice of existing learning, the student also experiences an actual workplace with the usual pressures, timescales and rapid movement from one task to another.

However, whilst an internship opportunity is hugely beneficial to a student, ensuring that the opportunity is closely matched to that particular student will form a large part of whether the internship is successful or not. Therefore, the preparation including the choice of company, choice of student, internship role, location and duration all need to be taken into account prior to a successful internship.

The company chosen should ideally have an existing relationship with the organization allowing the teaching staff to set expectations for both company and intern. Wildly differing expectations can create a large barrier to a successful internship and it is imperative that expectations are setup for both parties at the very beginning of the preparation. Ideally, these should be set within a basic Partnership Agreement of similar which sets out the expectations and requirements of the company, the teaching organization and the intern in detail to avoid future disappointment.

It is recommended that depending upon location, the company and a member of the sending organization meet face to face or via telephone/Skype call prior to the creation of the Partnership Agreement.

Prior to the internship starting, the host organization should also ensure the following:

- Emergency contacts are known by relevant parties
- All insurance and Health and Safety issues are confirmed and agreed
- All risk assessments have been performed and identified risks mitigated
- Any legal checks and/or requirements have been fulfilled (such as PVG checks in the UK, if required)

### 1.2 – The Learning Agreement

The Partnership Agreement details the co-operation between the organization and company however arguably more important is the Learning Agreement which is created between the company, the organization and the intern and which provides more detail on the actual internship. A good Learning Agreement leaves no doubt as to expectations, tasks, reasoning for the internship, duration, location and additional elements such as hours of work, breaks, contact points and learning expectations.



To provide an example, consider the following elements in your learning agreement:

#### Key Details

- Name and address of intern
- Name and address of company (including address of internship if different from company address)
- Name and address of sending organization
- Start and end date of internship

#### Learning Activities

- Course and level of intern
- Expected learning outcomes of internship (if relevant for course qualification or module provide details of specific module)
- Assessment procedure of learning outcomes and who will assess learning (also include ECVET detail if relevant)

#### Logistical Information

- Days and hours of internship
- Allowable breaks during working day
- Key contact point at sending organization and hosting company
- Detail of any recompense or grant funding for the internship or expenses to be paid including when and how
- Details regarding insurance requirements and cover along with Health and Safety requirements

It is good practice to ensure the intern gets a copy of the Learning Agreement before the internship starts and for the organization to spend time talking through the Agreement with the intern to ensure they fully understand it's content and the expectations of all parties. In the case of an overseas internship, you may need to consider translation of the Learning Agreement into the native language of the host company to ensure full understanding of the content.

Note that if the internship is via a funding opportunity such as Erasmus+, there may be specific Learning Agreement templates available for use – check with your funding organization.

### 1.3 – The Added Value of the internships experience

In addition to the obvious benefits of an internship previously detailed, there are numerous levels of added value to all parties; intern, company and organization. Due to various pressures, it can be beneficial to understand these benefits in case of friction when attempting to arrange internships.



#### For the intern:

- The opportunity to gain real world working experience in a commercial organization and the use of their learnings in the workplace,
- The opportunity to expand their personal network,
- The opportunity to increase their employability by having relevant experience on their resume,
- In the case of overseas internships, the opportunity to identify and understand any cultural differences and to practice second languages,
- An understanding of the pressures, deadlines, teamwork requirements and organizational structures of a workplace.

#### For the company

- If a potential role is available following the internship, the opportunity to 'test' the learner within an active workplace environment,
- The ability to provide feedback to the organization to help direct learnings for future students guided by their own individual requirements for staff,
- An addition to their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) requirements and expectations,
- The opportunity to bring in skills that they may not otherwise have on a permanent basis within the organization.

#### For the organization

- The opportunity to further engage with industry allowing for continued updating of teachings to provide students whose skills are 'fit for purpose',
- To increase the perceived value of their courses to prospective and current students thereby aiding recruitment and retention,
- To allow students real workplace experience potentially assisting attainment,
- To provide 360-degree learning opportunities for students which may well include the possibility of overseas internships.

A strong internship will identify the benefits and offer a high quality, interesting and relevant experience with the support of both the host and sending organizations.



## CHAPTER 2 – MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### 2.1 – Defining monitoring tools

It is imperative that the internship is monitored accurately to ensure the best benefit for the intern and the hosting company. There are numerous methods and tools that can be employed to ensure that monitoring is regular and consistent and can address issues before they arise. Potential methods to consider for monitoring will depend on the location of the company in relation to the sending organization but the following can provide some ideas:

#### Site Visits

- By far the best monitoring method is by carrying out a site visit and speaking to both the host organization and the intern face to face.
- It is recommended that a list of questions and areas to check is determined beforehand to ensure the visit is efficient and doesn't impinge too much on either the companies time or the intern.
- It is advisable to ensure time is allowed for discussion with the intern privately in case of any concerns that they are reluctant to discuss in front of the host company.

#### Remote Monitoring

- Skype/Web Conferencing can be used in lieu of site visits
- WhatsApp is an instant communication tool that can be used for short discussions or messages
- OneNote Class Notebook is an additional to regular OneNote for educational organizations allowing an intern to keep a detailed journal whilst allowing their tutor to read it instantly. If an intern is encouraged to journal all tasks and learnings, it can provide the tutor with a rapid method of monitoring.

Key elements of monitoring tools are accessibility and ubiquity. By using tools that the intern is conversant with and understands will reduce the risk of monitoring failures. Whilst mobile and digital tools may well be preferred, be aware that the intern may be utilizing a pre-paid data package and therefore may not have enough data for video conferencing or other bandwidth heavy utilities and this is especially true if the internship activity is overseas.

### 2.2 – Monitoring activities and information analysis

During the monitoring period, there are two key aims;

1. The positive welfare and safety of the intern and
2. The learning outcomes of the intern related to their studies or course modules.



The first aim is outwith the scope of this guide, however the risk assessment should cover most possibilities allied to the organizations existing Health and Wellbeing policies towards students should provide local and legislative guidance.

With regard to the learning outcomes, efficient monitoring will allow the teacher to constantly review the learning outcomes in the Learning Agreement to determine completion – individual organizational processes will determine whether assessment is carried out during the internship followed by verification upon return, or whether all assessment will be done within the sending organization. Of course, if the two organizations have an existing ECVET agreement in place, assessment will be carried out by the company or host organization with verification taking place upon return.

By tracking learning outcomes against the Learning Agreement, the teacher can quickly identify any areas that may not be getting the coverage expected at the outset and can liaise with the company to ensure full coverage of all expectations is sought.

### **2.3 – Final Evaluation of the internship experience**

Each completed internship can provide valuable understanding and experience to benefit and improve future internship opportunities and it is recommended that any internship schedule allocates time at the end for a debrief or post-mortem on the process and the results.

Ideally, the session should take place with representatives from all relevant parties – the intern, the host company and the sending organisation and should be trying to answer the questions of:

- What worked well?
- What didn't work well?
- How can we improve in the future?

Additional questions and discussions can branch from these high-level ideas but asking and answering the above questions provides a solid foundation of information from which to base a quality evaluation report which can guide and direct future internship opportunities.

When carrying out a post-mortem, ensure that the conversation is non-judgemental – whilst questions can be asked to clarify an issue that arose, the purpose of the session is to identify the facts about the internship and not to provide judgement or apportion blame which could negatively affect the continued conversations.

## CHAPTER 3 – SKILLS ASSESSMENT

### 3.1 – ECVET Internships and Mobilities

There has been a lot of work carried out to create solid toolkits and examples for ECVET based internships and learning mobilities and to ensure the most up-to-date information, we would recommend you review the current ECVET toolkits which can aid with skills assessment, validation and certification.

<http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu/tools-examples-more/ecvet-toolkit-tools>

### 3.2 – Non-ECVET Internships and Mobilities

For non-ECVET internships and mobilities assessment will need to be carried out either onsite by a member of the teaching staff, or upon return to the sending organization depending upon local policy.

As a minimum, the Learning Agreement agreed prior to the internship between the sending organization, the host company and the intern should determine and clearly present the expected learning outcomes and skills to be assessed and learned during the internship. The should be presented with clarity and no ambiguity such that each party fully understands the expected outcomes, their responsibilities towards those outcomes, the objective measurement or assessment of the outcomes and the method of assessment of the outcomes.

Ensuring complete clarity prior to the internship removes any potential for misunderstanding for any of the parties and this task should be directed and led by the sending organization. If the internship forms part of the intern's study and its success is directly linked to course outcomes, it is imperative that all parties completely understand the importance of their commitment prior to the internship commencing.

### 3.3 – Expectations

Ideally, the initial Partnership Agreement and discussions between the sending organization and the host organization should clearly specify expectations for all parties, especially in the identification and assessment of learned competencies of the intern.

When identifying suitable companies for potential internships, consider the role of the 'mentor' within the company and ideally discuss the internship with them. Areas for discussion could include:

- Familiarisation and Induction – how will the intern be inducted and provided with the relevant information to succeed within their internship? Starting work in any new location can be a stressful time that can be alleviated by a strong plan of induction, familiarization and



introductions to the colleagues they will be working with, along with an understanding and meeting of who will be their key contact or 'mentor' during the internship.

- Support – who will the intern ask for support, whether this be within the technical skills required for the internship or for any pastoral care and support that may be required during their internship.
- Identification and Assessment – who within the company will be responsible for the tracking, identification and informal assessment of the interns learning? Ensure the intern is fully aware of how this informal assessment from the company will be actioned and whether there is any direct link to any formal assessment that may well be required as part of their learning modules. Also ensure that this is linked to the learning outcomes specified in the Learning Agreement to ensure there is no ambiguity from any parties.

Ensuring that all parties have complete understanding of the process of evaluation, assessment and validation is imperative to a successful internship for all parties. Continued and relevant discussion before, during and after the internship and ensuring expectations are met for the host company, the intern and the sending organization can go some way to ensuring the needs are met for all parties.



## Example Flow

Whilst each flow will be individual to your own regional and national requirements and internal guidelines, an example is provided here for reference.

