



oMERO Project

an eu curriculum for visual disabilities RehabilitatOrs

Designers' KIT
Work-Based Learning Guidelines

This document is part of oMERO Project's Intellectual Output 3



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

Index

1	Introduction	3
2	WBL in Higher Education	3
2.1	Definition of work-based learning	3
2.2	Work-based learning – taking a quality assured approach	4
2.3	The growing importance of apprenticeships in European higher education	5
2.4	Policies and Restrictions	5
2.5	The main actors of WBL in Higher Education	6
2.6	The Covid-19 impact on WBL	7
3	WBL in oMERO Curriculum	8
3.1	State general aims, quality assurance and ethics	8
3.2	Design the WBL experience	9
3.3	Students' orientation	13
3.4	Selection and training of WBL Mentors and Coordinators	14
4	Bibliography	17
	Annex 1 – WBL quality indicators recommended by EQAVET framework	20
	Annex 2 – Checklist: organizing WBL for VDR curriculum	21
	Annex 3 – Final Evaluation criteria (suggested)	23
	Annex 4 – Generic in-company trainer competence set - CEDEFOP (2013)	25

1 Introduction

This document is divided into two main sections.

The first section is a general introduction to Work-Based Learning (WBL) in Higher Education, while the second one focuses on the implementation of WBL within the oMERO Curriculum.

2 WBL in Higher Education

2.1 Definition of work-based learning

From a strategic point of view, the provision of high-quality work-based learning is at the heart of current education and training policy. Collaboration between training providers and companies in all occupational sectors is regularly promoted (at national and European level). Work-based learning is increasingly recognized as a means of ensuring that learners of all ages acquire the knowledge, skills and competences required by the future labour market¹.

In terms of delivery, work-based learning can take place onsite, in a company or organisation, or within a more traditional learning environment such as a classroom or training centre, the latter targeting learning that is vocationally or occupationally relevant and which centres on meeting the needs or expectations of a particular industry or profession.²

Work-based learning (WBL) is often seen as a powerful vehicle for developing workplace skills and promoting productivity of the labour force. Realising the potential of work-based learning requires firms and trainees to engage in work-based learning that effectively increases productivity. Understanding the dynamics of the costs and benefits of WBL and ensuring that those are reflected in the design of WBL schemes is essential to ensure that firms provide high-quality WBL and trainees perceive WBL as an attractive career option.³

Designing structured WBL schemes requires policy choices to be made – and only well-designed schemes can yield the expected benefits. The potential consequences of poorly designed WBL schemes include insufficient provision of WBL opportunities by firms, low take-up rate by learners, poor learning experience and limited productivity increases for learners and wasteful use of public and private resources.⁴

The benefits for **employers** enhance:

- An increase in the competences of employees appropriate to the context of their work
- Tailoring the educational pathway of employees to the needs of the employer
- Increased employees' motivation thereby reducing staff turnover in the company
- Reducing the cost of staff training

For **employees** the main gains are the following:

- Reducing skills shortages of employees
- Tailoring the educational pathway of employees to their real needs and possibilities

¹ Web site: WBL-toolkit.eu

² Web site: WBL-toolkit.eu

³ Web site: OECD (<https://www.oecd.org/fr/education/apprendre-au-dela-de-l-ecole/work-based-learning-and-productivity.htm>)

⁴ Web site: OECD (<https://www.oecd.org/fr/education/apprendre-au-dela-de-l-ecole/work-based-learning-and-productivity.htm>)

- Higher satisfaction of employees with professional development

The main advantages for **academia** include:

- Competitive educational offer that better suits the needs of local employers and employees
- A source of additional income
- Making the foundations for a more sustainable cooperation with employers in local labor market (enterprises, institutions)
- Improvement of the image in the local labor market as the initiator of positive changes

An indispensable workplace component:

A substantial part of learning, i.e. half of it, should be done in the workplace, with some of this work-based experience being acquired abroad as far as possible. Taking into account the diversity of national systems, the aim is to work towards achieving this proportion of work-based learning over time.

2.2 Work-based learning – taking a quality assured approach

2.2.1 The EQAVET framework and the building blocks

The European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) 'Quality Assuring Work-based Learning' framework identifies a series of common themes, called 'Building Blocks', which have been used to establish and strengthen quality assurance processes in work-based-learning.

The EQAVET Framework⁵ identifies 6 main BUILDING BLOCKS aimed to provide guidance and to set out activities that help VET providers to develop and support a quality assurance approach for WBL.

The building blocks are designed to be useful and appropriate for the three main models of WBL:

- Apprenticeship schemes which combine training in companies and VET schools or other education/training institutions;
- On-the-job training in companies which typically cover internships, work placements or traineeships which are a compulsory or optional element of VET programmes leading to formal qualifications;
- Integration into a school-based programme through on-site laboratories, workshops, junior or practice firms, simulations or real business/industry projects and assignments.

The 6 building blocks are:

1. Design work-based learning
2. Improve the quality
3. Respond to learners' needs
4. Communicate
5. Train the staff
6. Assess the learners.

Quality is ensured by following all stages of the implementation of an internship/traineeship.

These quality elements are declined in the second section of this guide.

Annex 1 provides a list of WBL Quality Indicators, suggested by the EQAVET Framework for each building block, which should be taken as a reference when implementing WBL.

⁵ EQAVET - Quality assuring work-based learning (available at <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/UserFiles/File/quality-process/eqavet-quality-assuring-work-based-learning.pdf>)

2.3 The growing importance of apprenticeships in European higher education

Through the principle of subsidiarity, higher education policies in Europe are under the responsibility of the member states. However, education and therefore higher education was formally recognised as an area of European competence by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The European institutions have since 2017 sought to develop a new strategy to match the development of skills in higher education with the needs of the labour market.

Apprenticeships have seen their place fully recognised in these new policies. Since 2014, the ERASMUS programme has included an objective of higher education mobility for learning purposes. In December 2016, the Commission launched scoreboards on how to encourage students and apprentices to go abroad.

In its resolution of 14 September 2017, the Parliament recognised the extremely positive effect of the Erasmus+ programme, in particular in increasing the chances of integration into the labour market, but also in encouraging active citizenship and a sense of European identity. However, the Parliament stressed that the new programme should be more open and accessible and focus more on vocational education and training, lifelong learning and non-formal and informal education. This recognises the interface of learning between higher education, employment and European citizenship.

2.4 Policies and Restrictions

Apprenticeships have the double merit of combining training and employability, thus facilitating better professional integration. Betting on apprenticeship therefore means showing confidence in the adaptability of the public concerned and in the creative will of companies. It has long been known that training policies must be brought closer to the needs of companies. However, in view of these important issues, it very quickly became apparent that it was essential to set precise objectives and a clear framework for apprenticeship policies.

In March 2018, the European Council adopted a recommendation on "effective and quality apprenticeships" to help young people enter the world of work. The European Commission, for its part, has proposed different criteria to determine what constitutes a policy for developing apprenticeship, in compliance with national or sectoral requirements or collective agreements. The criteria concern training, working conditions and general conditions.⁶

The following conditions are thus considered necessary:

- **Written contract:** Apprenticeship should be based on a written contract between the employer, the apprentice and the vocational training institution.
- **Definition of learning outcomes:** employers and vocational training institutions should define a set of comprehensive learning outcomes that ensure the acquisition of specific job-related skills and personal development.
- **Pedagogical support:** Company trainers should be appointed to cooperate closely with Vocational Training School providers and teachers. Support should be given to teachers and trainers to update their skills.
- **A strong workplace component:** at least half of the apprenticeship period should be spent in a workplace and the possibility should be given to gain some of this experience abroad.
- **Remuneration and/or allowance:** apprentices should receive remuneration and/or allowance, which should be determined taking into account the cost-sharing arrangements between employers, apprentices and public authorities.
- **Social protection:** apprentices should have the right to social protection, including the necessary insurance.

⁶ Website: cnefop.gouv.fr

- **Respect for working conditions, health and safety:** relevant rules and regulations on working conditions, including health and safety legislation, should apply in the host workplace.

In addition, in July 2020, the European Commission launched a new version of the EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIP. Its aim is to encourage national coalitions, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and strengthen the participation of social partners, including at sectoral level, mobilise local and regional authorities and support the representation of apprentices in the Member States. In addition, this renewed alliance will address important horizontal issues such as gender equality, social inclusion and the internationalisation of vocational education and training.

The challenges for the different participating states can therefore be summarised as follows:⁷

- **A well-defined regulatory framework:** a clear and coherent regulatory framework should be put in place on the basis of partnership and transparent dialogue between all parties concerned.
- **Ensuring good participation of the social partners:** the social partners, especially at sectoral level, should be involved in the design, management and implementation of apprenticeship programmes.
- **The establishment of a business support policy:** financial and/or non-financial support should be provided, in particular to small, medium and micro enterprises.
- **Enabling flexible pathways and mobility:** conditions for access to apprenticeship should be flexible and opportunities for further education and training should be available. Apprenticeship should lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Transnational mobility should be a component of learning.
- **Developing vocational guidance and awareness-raising:** to ensure successful acquisition of learning and to limit drop-out, the apprentice should be provided with vocational guidance, mentoring and learner support.
- **Ensuring transparency:** transparency of and access to apprenticeship opportunities within and between Member States should be guaranteed.
- **Ensuring quality assurance and monitoring of graduates:** there should be a mechanism for quality assurance of apprenticeship and monitoring of the employment and career progression of apprentices.

On a microeconomic level, measures to support companies and to develop the attractiveness of apprenticeship are essential. For companies facing recruitment challenges, generation renewal or skills shortages, apprenticeship is a solution. It is a positive investment because it will enable them to train a young person in their working methods and corporate culture and, subsequently, to have a motivated and operational employee. Business leaders must therefore have at their disposal new measures (e.g. fixed-term apprenticeship contracts) and financial aid to facilitate the long-term recruitment of apprentices as well as attractiveness and loyalty at the end of the apprenticeship period.

2.5 The main actors of WBL in Higher Education

Apprenticeships, Internships, Traineeships and other forms of VET, differently defined according to national rules and the training contexts of each organisation, may vary as well as the level of students' autonomy and the type of supervision provided.

However, when implementing WBL in Higher Education institutions (HEIs), we can identify different roles and actors within universities and hosting organisations.

1. **WBL secretary:** the WBL secretary is responsible for coordinating the WBL activities from the administrative point of view; he/she is usually an administrative staff person (or sometimes someone involved in the teaching programme) of the HEI. The secretary establishes formal relationships with the hosting organisations. Students can contact the WBL secretary for all questions concerning their practical training.

⁷ Web site: cnefop.gouv.fr

2. **WBL coordinator:** each WBL is assigned a coordinator who, from the outset, becomes the WBL contact person for both students and WBL mentors. He/she is usually a faculty member of the HEI, either on a tenure or on a contract. A WBL coordinator stays in touch with the WBL mentor and the student.
The main task of the coordinator is to supervise the process. This includes:
 - a. the WBL implementation according to the Curriculum and the selected LOs;
 - b. the monitoring of activities and assignments;
 - c. supporting the mentor in the final evaluation of the student
 - d. mediating, steering and intervening in the event of problems.
3. **WBL mentor:** is an on-the-job contact person, working for the partner/hosting organization. The WBL mentor is often referred to as 'external tutor', but for clarity in this guide we will always refer to him/her as 'mentor'. The mentor shows the trainee how to manage the activities and relationships of the job in order to foster the trainee's abilities, career development, and professional growth. He/she is mainly responsible for the substantive supervision of the WBL on the job. He/she must be involved in the student assessment and keep in touch with the WBL coordinator.

2.6 The Covid-19 impact on WBL

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), together with the containment and physical distancing measures, has led to significant changes in education and training. At the same time, it has led to many questions being asked, resulting in numerous innovations, particularly in learning.

For example, distance learning has been successful in ensuring some continuity in learning and skills development in technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

However, due to the social and digital inequalities already in place before the crisis, there is a risk that the most economically fragile groups, deprived of educational continuity, will accumulate even greater difficulties. Depending on the country concerned, the pandemic has tangibly increased inequalities in learning.

For the International Labour Office (2021 report on the COVID pandemic and vocational training), with few exceptions, the increased use of distance learning in TVET programmes has not promoted the acquisition of practical skills or the organisation of work-based learning, key elements of successful technical and vocational training.

However, the crisis may not only have negative aspects. A multitude of promising practices have emerged to make teaching more flexible and to develop new assessment procedures using high-tech or low-tech solutions, or even without any technological input. Adapted to local contexts, these new solutions have continued to evolve as the crisis has deepened.

Thus, without delay, private and public TVET stakeholders established partnerships to facilitate access to distance learning systems, design new training programmes and mobilise additional resources to address skills and labour shortages in sectors hard hit by the health crisis.

These collective efforts have borne fruit and resulted in innovative solutions in response to the pandemic. Distance learning has proved to be a very effective tool, including for the development of practical skills.

More generally, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our relationship with the economy and society in general. The policy choices that governments make now and in the near future will determine success in the transition to a greener, more inclusive and sustainable future.

This is an opportunity to chart a course that allows everyone to face the future with confidence. Work-based learning will be part of the pathway to that future and will have to be complemented with alternative methods such as self-learning on recorded material, online courses and other not yet developed/known ways of sharing knowledge.

3 WBL in oMERO Curriculum

This is a step-by-step guide for the design of an effective Work Based Learning when localizing the EU VDR Curriculum. A checklist is provided ([see Annex 2](#)) to verify the fulfilment of the described main steps:

1. **State the general aims, quality assurance and ethics**
2. **Design the WBL experience**
 - a. Timing and length
 - b. Identify workplace and partners
 - c. On the job experience and Mobility options
 - d. Partnership and safety documents
3. **Student orientation**
 - a. Orientation
 - b. Educational contract
 - c. Monitoring and evaluation
4. **Selection of WBL Coordinators and Mentors**

The following sections introduce important quality and general guidelines for the WBL instantiation and the consequent practical tools that are needed to carry out properly for the WBL experience.

3.1 State general aims, quality assurance and ethics

Defining the **general aims of the WBL** for highly specialized professionals, a few important factors can be pointed out as relevant:

- learning at the workplace is contextual, and learning is characterized by contextual reasoning and flexibility;
- theory and practice at the workplace are seamless, and learning develops situation-specific competences.
- many activities at work require collaboration with other people, and person's ability to function successfully depends on the performance of other individuals;
- group working promotes knowledge exchange and sharing of expertise; to make this possible, ability and possibility to learn in collaboration with others is crucial to students.

In order to make the most of learning at the workplace, it is needed to design meaningful interaction and integrate theoretical and practical knowledge when developing professional competence into WBL.

In this context, oMERO project embraces the perspective put forward by the *Pact for Skills*, promoted by the European Commission in 2020, that is intended to mobilise a concerted effort among private and public partners for quality investment in skills for all working age people across the Union; to this end, the project adopts the following key principles:

- Building strong skills partnerships
- Monitoring skills supply/demand and anticipating skills needs
- Working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities
- Promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all

Quality issues address the effectiveness as far as the attractiveness of traineeships for all the parts involved, gaining an enforced link between educational and occupational needs.

It also relates to the potential societal benefits resulting from increased skills levels (and perhaps employability) such as the quality of services and the occupational opportunities for the next generation.

Regulatory frameworks for VDR internships should be settled clear, coherent and comprehensive, encompassing key aspects relevant to quality and having clarity regarding which organisations are responsible for which quality aspects. The regulatory framework should be based on a fair and equitable partnership approach including a structured and transparent dialogue among all relevant stakeholders.

Written documents and opportune monitoring tools, as described in the next section, will provide guidance and transparency into the quality approach.

Annex 1 provides a useful list of WBL Quality Indicators, suggested by the EQAVET Framework for each building block, which should be taken as a reference when designing WBL for HE courses implementing oMERO Curriculum.

Willing to perform the most useful experience for the trainee and the best value for the learning process there are to be granted some quality issue, made upon parties' responsibility, respect and **ethical issues**.

In addition to the policies and practices provided by the internship site organization, the program expects all students to always conduct themselves in a professional manner. This includes but is not limited to:

- following all rules and policies as required by employer.
- maintaining strict confidentiality regarding information, especially regarding medical records (in this line, a signed consent to follow the rules of confidentiality should be provided)
- demonstrating honesty, cooperation, integrity, courtesy and a willingness to learn.
- treating all customers, clients, supervisors, and fellow employees with dignity and respect.

Students undertaking Work Based Learning are not employees of the provider and always remain students of the HEI:

- the intern should not replace the role of paid employees,
- the intern should be engaged in meaningful activities,
- there are no guarantees of employment consequent to the internship,
- the employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern,
- religious, ethnic and sexual discrimination are in no way tolerated in the settlement of internships.

3.2 Design the WBL experience

The way work placements are structured affects the benefits that may be expected by students and employers from the experience. It is suggested to deepen internship opportunities and fellowships in advance, considering partners, skills and availabilities.

3.2.1 Timing and length

The amount of WBL in VDR training course will be stated by HEIs as a fundamental part of their course designs. The EU Curriculum for VDR proposed by the oMERO Project targets graduated professionals and aims to award EQF7 level certifications through academic courses awarding from 60 to 120 ECTS. Aside to the flexibility of the Curriculum in terms of awarded credits, WBL should cover a significant percentage of the workload in order to allow students to apply all the core competencies and to perform the professional skills.

For the VDR profile, a minimum of 300 hours of workload is suggested to be carried out in WBL in a course awarding 60 ECTS. The workload may be extended to cover half of the course, consistent with the total number of credits awarded.

As for the length, the WBL placement undertaken at the end of the programme, for example, can allow students to put into practice skills learnt at school and connect with potential employers. Short work placements throughout the programme or creating an on-the-job block in the middle of the programme may also foster students' motivation, building on and feeding into learning at school⁸.

3.2.2 Identify workplace and partners

On-the job approach and settings

WBL training can be located *on-* or *off-the-job* or can be a combination of both. *On-the-job* training is "imparted at the actual job location involving 'hands-on' training", while *off-the-job* training "involves giving training to the employees at a place other than the real job location"⁹. Combining *on-* or *off-the-job* locations for work-based continuous VET can be a way to make the off-the-job sequence prepare the on-the-job one: learners first receive basic theoretical and practical training on the off-the-job site (emphasis is placed on role playing, group working, observation and study trips, individual project work) and then, when ready, are placed in on-the-job positions where they will use what they have learnt, realise its value and consolidate it. (CEDEFOP, i.e. the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) While the decision on the location may be arbitrary or pragmatic, it may also result from choices in terms of pedagogy and instructional strategy.

Considering the experiential approach to the key competences of the VDR curriculum, the internship is due to contextualize learning and to practice into the relationship with the VIP. Therefore, the methodology preferred would be starting from observing (not participant) towards a former collaboration within the MDT team under supervision of a mentor. Autonomy of contribution must not be interpreted as undertaking responsibility of the professional intervention or in substitution of a working colleague (see code of ethics).

Considering possible difficulties in targeting a larger group of students in workplaces (very few organizations in VIP services and often small sized) and in the eventuality of pandemic-related restrictions to in-person participation, part of the WBL credits can be delivered in an *individual project work* deployed under the supervision of one of the teachers plus an external professional expert.

Partner/Hosting organizations

It would be important to identify partners that can enable trainees to experience professional skills, by selecting places or partners that can offer expertise on more than one Core Competence.

The WBL secretary ensures that on-the-job Internships take place within organizations with certain mandatory requirements. It is required that:

- The hosting organization must be dedicated to VIP or have an explicit competence area (i.e. rehabilitation area, blind and low vision representative and associations, hospitals or health centres, applied research centres).
- There must be at least 3 different professionals in the MDT, in order to observe the different intake of the specialized competences and to participate to the team collaboration.
- The hosting organization must ensure at least 3 of the VDR key activities defined in the VDR Professional Profile (core competences from UoL 1 to 11), as EU Council recommendations state that apprenticeship schemes should be competence-based in order to enable trainers to attain the appropriate standards to work competently and safely.
- The WBL mentor should be identified from among the workers or established collaborations (different mentors should be indicated in case of multiple internships or to be alternated in the time schedule).

⁸ OECD papers WBL in school-based VET <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/work-based-learning-in-school-based-vocational-education-and-training-vet.htm>

⁹ Surbhi, S (2015). "Difference Between On-the-job and Off-the-job training". Key Differences. <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-on-the-job-and-off-the-job-training.html>

3.2.3 On the job experience and Mobility options

Opportunities for transnational mobility of apprentices should be provided: in this case mobility should be accompanied by necessary preparations and support before and during the internship, including foreign language learning. The international collaboration of oMERO project could support the student exchange options.

There are many tangible advantages of mobility periods as part of apprenticeships. These are for example improved foreign language skills, greater awareness of another culture and general health system approach, a greater ability to adapt to new situations, better interpersonal skills, better opportunities for subsequent employment or wider academic knowledge.

Once the hosting organization is recognized it is important to establish an appropriate regulatory framework, whereby the responsibilities, rights and obligations of each party involved are clearly formulated and are enforceable.

3.2.4 Partnership and safety documents

Contract with partner/hosting organizations

The partnership should be formalized in advance through Agreements with hosting organizations.

HEIs usually have a list of previous agreements with Partner Organizations. This list should be formalized so that students can select the Hosting Organisation in which they wish to have their WBL experience.

In compliance with HEI regulations and/or laws in force, these Agreements should detail:

- The full name, address and legal reference with power of signature for all the organizations
- The definition of curricular traineeship (alias internship or professional practice) and learning objectives
- the exclusion of a working relationship commitment for the hosting organization towards the student
- the fulfilment of safety and health regulations
- the number of students admitted in internship simultaneously or sequentially.

The Agreements should also formalize that the HEI is supposed to grant an insurance fully covering all described activities by the hosting organization.

It is the responsibility of the HEI's WBL Secretary to ensure that all administrative tasks associated with the WBL activity, including any required health and safety forms are completed.

Aside to the Agreements, an Educational Contract with the student should be formalized every time a WBL experience is activated. The Educational Contract is further detailed in section 3.3.1 of this guide.

Safety procedure and risk assessment

The hosting workplace must comply with security standards and guarantee a safe learning and working experience for learners engaged in apprenticeships.

Apprentices should be entitled to social protection, including necessary insurance in line with national legislation (EU Council recommendations). WBL organisers have a duty to ensure that health and safety arrangements are sufficient and appropriate.

Moreover, health and safety awareness would normally feature as a part of apprenticeship training.

According to local and international legal frameworks student are due to an opportune course (online or in presence) about safety procedures and workplace risk assessment.

Students, while on WBL, have the same health & safety responsibilities as other employees in the workplace, so they must take reasonable care of themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts and omissions.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Setting up WBL in a course implementing the oMERO Curriculum, designers may face some difficulties, such as:

- ✓ **Difficulties in finding partner organizations:** since Visual Rehabilitation is a sectoral and specific health-based activity and the VDR professional profile is not yet included in major organization schemes, it could be difficult to identify partner organizations and/or mentors within the limited surroundings of the HEI. The opportunities of WBL must be founded at least in the national area, considering in the advance the student mobility issues.
- ✓ Apprenticeship programmes should meet the actual employment and skills needs of employers within the framework of sectoral and/or national priorities. This means that apprenticeship programmes will rarely cover the full vocational profile, but will often deepen only some (and not all) of the core competences targeted by the curriculum. As long as the curriculum is not formally recognised and if it has not been previously registered in Social Health Services organisations, partners may have an interest in adding new profiles or express the need for different specialisations for future collaborations.
- ✓ **Cost of training:** WBL should be properly funded, with equitable cost-sharing between employers and public authorities at regional and/or national and European levels. It is ruled at local or national level where and if a reimbursement of internship is due and the eventuality of economic advantages for hosting companies. In any case the hosting organization has to engage effort and time that have to be intended as an investment. Placement of different financing arrangements for the covering the wage of apprentices and the staff costs of supervisors/mentors, depending on the framework arrangements, is due in advance
- ✓ **Health system restrictions and privacy.** Due to the particular professional role of the VDR the internship is often intended in the social-health system organizations that have to observe restrictions to participation and are obliged to limit the access to personal information. VIP recipients, or their representative, ethical boards or professional association could be asked to agree to the opening positions of internship.

3.3 Students' orientation

3.3.1 Orientation

Considering the broad career paths (EQF 6 bachelor's degrees) potentially leading to the VDR profile and the few niche organizations providing rehabilitation services to VIP, it will be important to introduce the WBL options to students in advance.

Adequate and timely career guidance must be provided to give orientation to foster the experiences and professional skills, to complete the profile.

Starting from an individual interview – once the wider learning programme is started – it would be useful to identify personal choice of tasks or competences between the curricular Units of Learning in order to suggest appropriate internships. Also, localization and participants' origin, motivation to mobility or limitations, other useful skilled knowledges as spoken foreign languages and driving licence, can be collected in the personal information form that will be useful to introduce the candidate intern to the hosting organization.

It is the responsibility of the HEI's Secretary to ensure that all pedagogic tasks associated with the WBL activity, including orientation and special needs assessment will be performed.

From a quality perspective, it is important to state the entry requirements for an apprenticeship for VDR: students must fulfil the programme course (percentage of participation and all the examinations) collecting the necessary prior learning before starting the on-the-job curricular traineeship.

3.3.2 Educational contract

Written contracts between Hosting Organizations, HEIs and learners are important to specify expectations and responsibilities of the different parties involved (EU Council, 2018).

A set of comprehensive learning outcomes should be defined for the apprentice in which specific job-related and key competences are balanced and support both the personal development and career opportunities of apprentices.

This would address the criticism that is raised against apprenticeships as fostering only the development of job-specific skills and not addressing transversal skills.

On the other hand, the settled intern needs some clear information about his/her own practical activities, timetables and rest time, designed contact persons, responsibilities and formal duties, presence registration, internal rules observance and privacy principles, which should be expressed in the contract details or in attachment.

The contract must contain the following information:

- the identity of organizational host and the project reference person
- the identity of the trainee
- the objectives and the competences targeted by the traineeship
- the date of signature, the starting date and the duration of the contract
- all rights and obligations of the parties
- the place of learning and the eventuality of home services or other locations
- all other conditions agreed between the parties concerning, for example, housing, food, remuneration.

The student is asked to sign within the contract the duties, activities and chosen curricular competences, engaging herself/himself in respectful actions and maximum effort. The same curricular competences chosen for the educational contract will be evaluated at the end of the traineeship both by the student and the WBL mentors.

3.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The quality approach, described in section 2.3, is pursued by ensuring that the competences gained and the learning process of internships are of high quality and compliant with defined standards for learning outcomes. The definition of the standards for LOs is on the responsibility of the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET¹⁰.

A number of broader, transversal and transferable skills should be targeted as a complement to job-specific competences, ensuring that participants can adapt to change after completing their training. The EU Recommendation described these competences as: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology, digital competences, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression¹¹.

The same curricular competences chosen for Professional Profile and Curriculum in the educational contract will be evaluated at the end of the traineeship both by the student and the workplace mentors, together with useful transversal skills chosen by parties between the one listed above. The HEI's Secretary and the coordinator (pedagogical reference for WBL) will be ensuring fair, valid, and authentic assessment of learning outcomes providing suggested and shared criteria to the workplace mentor (see **Annex 3**).

In this final evaluation, the student's gained competences (certified by the self-evaluation and the mentor's evaluation), the learning process (guidance, preparation of internship, company requirements, qualified roles, methodology and opportunities of learning, cooperation between HEI and work-based training) and prior knowledge level will be measured and assessed, in order to propose improvement and refinements in future collaborations.

An open qualitative section can be included in the final evaluation as a final note.

It is suggested to start the monitoring process after the first week of internship in order to be able to settle timely adjustments, even with a simple questionnaire or interview of involved parties (student, mentor). In some cases, the local framework requires the coordinator to carry out an inspective meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship, its locations and tools. Even if this is not necessary and not formally requested by the local framework, it would be useful to organise such an inspective meeting, where possible.

The number of evaluation activities should not be too large and they should not be too demanding in terms of time and administration of procedures or activities about which employers are complaining. Moreover, the evaluation criteria of the traineeship process should be specified in advance and timely planned.

Timetables signed by the student must be collected in order to have evidence of participation and gain curricular credits.

Monitoring should be as far as possible based on scaled interviews or forms, in order to collect homogeneous data and to be able to underpin improvement areas. Quantitative evaluation requests also less effort in tracking a global evaluation of the WBL and allows transparency towards the student, the hosting organization and the global framework.

3.4 Selection and training of WBL Mentors and Coordinators

WBL Mentors

HEIs need to develop mechanisms to profile mentors in workplace organizations and to support those who have the relevant competencies to use specific WBL methods. HEIs also ought to ensure

¹⁰ High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles. Cedefop. 2015.

¹¹ European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2006.

that employers understand the language of academic quality and to provide feedback on quality issues to employers and learners, facilitating meaningful dialogue, task observance and feedback¹²

Given the demands of WBL, in-company mentors have a particularly important role to play. They provide a learning environment within the company, supervise and assess the apprentice's learning activities and provide a link to the apprentice's training institution. For some in-company mentors, these skills come naturally, for others they do not, and so they need support.

Mentors should have access to various and flexible training programmes that provide opportunities to develop their competences, update existing ones to the required level or to close competence gaps. Competence development should especially cover training-related competences (see **Annex 4**, trainer global competences from CEDEFOP 2013), while technical domains and company knowledge as well as transversal competences would be assessed at the beginning of the traineeship. The training programme would be optimized after final evaluation in order to act continuous improvement and perform major adherence to workplace issues and professional needs.

The WBL mentor, as a preceptor, through the acquisition of formative strategies, becomes an expert and specialist in a determined context which, with critical thinking skills and communicative abilities, accompanies the student in the practical experience, delivering it as meaningful training.

Moreover, WBL mentors should know, master and be able to use the main educational methods in training WBL interns, which are:

- learning by observation;
- learning by doing;
- learning by communication;
- cultural acknowledgement.

WBL Coordinators

The WBL coordinators' training programme, should include:

- introduction of roles, responsibilities and objectives in WBL
- methodological and educational opportunities in WBL
- professional competences aimed through the WBL experience
- relationship and communication competences
- monitoring tools and final evaluation

The learning development of the student also turns out to be based on the relational dimension of competence, which favours above all the inclusion of the student within the professional healthcare staff (onboarding). This dimension shows that the dual relationship that is established between the trainee and the trainer who, as an expert, promotes the professional development through reflection on the experience (to reconstruct concepts and knowledge from practice). This relational dimension of competence is usually realized by the participants mainly through open communication with the student, mutual trusting and attention given to supporting the student toward a good outcome of the formative process (educational-relational approach).

Therefore, awareness of the internal role and training objectives is the very first step in the enrolment of the WBL Coordinators in the formative approach.

The last dimension of WBL coordinator competence, namely the organizational one, focuses their tutorial action on the creation of the organizational conditions with the purpose of supporting the student in optimizing performances. The organizational dimension of competence is dedicated to select and introduce tools and instruments, internal documents, select activities and process stages to be followed or participated (create learning-conducive work environments) and, where necessary, express rules or instructions.

¹² <https://cesie.org/studi/work-based-learning-benefits-wbl/>

Opportune activity plans need to be given to the student in order to make the experience operational and not casual.

Furthermore, this cooperation should be supported by mutual and regular feedback mechanisms. Monitoring of how the learning outcomes are reached should take place through continuous monitoring systems, in which both HEIs teachers, namely WBL coordinators, and in-company mentors cooperate.

HEI's WBL secretary and coordinator should expressly be available for supporting mentors during the whole WBL process, both for practical and educational issues.

4 Bibliography

Baltic toolbox Methods For High Quality Based Learning - <https://qualityplacements.eu/baltic-toolbox-of-methods/>

CEDEFOP (2015). *Work-based learning in continuing vocational education and training: policies and practices in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Cedefop research paper; No 49. DOI: 10.2801/51005

CEDEFOP (2013). Guiding principles on professional development of trainers in vocational education and training. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/TWG_Guiding_principles_on_professional_development_of_trainers_in_VET_FINAL.pdf

CESIE. How can Employers, Learners and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) benefit from working together to provide quality and affordable training to employees? <https://cesie.org/studi/work-based-learning-benefits-wbl/>

Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles <http://www.cnefop.gouv.fr/>

EACEA final report on "Gaps and needs in WBL" – http://www.net-wbl.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Interim-Report_Needs-and-gaps.pdf

Eduwork.Net – <http://www.eduwork.net/>

ENhANCe Project (2021) – "How to design and set an effective Work Based Learning?" ENhANCE Project Designers' Kit. <https://oot.enhance-fcn.eu/mod/page/view.php?id=1906>

EQAVET – Quality assuring work-based learning – <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/UserFiles/File/quality-process/eqavet-quality-assuring-work-based-learning.pdf>

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET). (2009).

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1536&langId=en>

European Commission for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility. (2016). High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles.

European Commission for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Teachers and trainers matter: how to support them in high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning: 12 policy pointers, Publications Office, (2019), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/129296>

EU Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, OJ C 153, 2.5.1–6. Official Journal of European Union. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:153:TOC>

European Training Foundation (2014). Work-based learning – A handbook for policy makers and social partners in ETF partner countries. Doi:10.2816/018079

European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process – <http://www.ehea.info>

Frankenberg, Wagner, Wiechmann. (2018). Apprenticeship Q, Quality Management Matrix for Apprenticeships. https://apprenticeshipq.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/08/Quality-Management-Matrix-for-Apprenticeships_v3.pdf

La Sala R, Coppola D, Ruozi C, Martelli M, Lo Coco A, Marchini R, Gotri L, Pedrazzi G. Competence assessment of the clinical tutor: a multicentric observational study. Acta Biomed [Internet]. 2021 Mar. 31 [cited 2022 Apr. 6];92(S2):e2021016. Available from: <https://www.mattioli1885journals.com/index.php/actabiomedica/article/view/11445>

Learn to Work – Grow your company with Apprentices <https://learntowork.eu/>

Linehan, M. (2008). Work based learning. – Graduating Through The Workplace. Published by CIT Press, Bishopstown, Cork, Ireland.

Lubbers, C., Bourland-Davis, P., & Rawlins, B. (2007/8). Public relations interns and ethical issues at work: Perceptions of student interns from three different universities. Prism 5(1&2): http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/prism_on-line_journ.html

OECD. Work Based Learning in school-based Vocational Education and Training. <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/work-based-learning-in-school-based-vocational-education-and-training-vet.htm>

OECD. Work-based learning and productivity.

<https://www.oecd.org/fr/education/apprendre-au-dela-de-l-ecole/work-based-learning-and-productivity.htm>

Surbhi, S (2015). “Difference Between On-the-job and Off-the-job training”. Key Differences. <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-on-the-job-and-off-the-job-training.html>

The European Trade Union Confederation (2016). A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships. <https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships>

WBL Accelerator (n.d).What Is Work-Based Learning (WBL) And How Can We Accelerate It? <https://www.wblaccelerator.eu>

WEXHE project consortium, led by University of Ljubljana (2019), Traineeship package: Higher Education Institutions. <http://wexhe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Training-Package-for-Higher-Education-Institutions.pdf>

WEXHE project consortium, led by University of Ljubljana (2019), Integrating Entrepreneurship and Work Experience in Higher Education: Quality Assurance and Work-Based Learning. <https://www.enga.eu/projects/integrating-entrepreneurship-and-work-experience-into-higher-education-wexhe/>

WHO guidelines (2013). Transforming and scaling up health professionals' education and training. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/transforming-and-scaling-up-health-professionals%E2%80%99-education-and-training>

Work Based Learning Toolkit – <https://www.wbl-toolkit.eu/>

Annex 1 – WBL quality indicators recommended by EQAVET framework

Here below are listed a set of WBL quality indicators suggested by EQAVET Framework (EQAVET – Quality assuring work-based learning – <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/UserFiles/File/quality-process/eqavet-quality-assuring-work-based-learning.pdf>). They have been identified in research as the most important under the four following headings:

Plan

1. Commitment to WBL at senior level (statement of intent)
2. Roles, responsibilities and authority are clearly defined
3. Resources allocated to facilitate WBL
4. WBL is part of talent management strategy
5. Work-based learning policy present

Do

6. Appropriate matching of student to the work-placement
7. Skills profile of WBL students established prior to placement
8. Recruitment of student based on company needs
9. Productivity return on WBL student
10. Onboarding of WBL students facilitated
11. Retention rate of students
12. Exposure to real-life work experiences
13. Time allocated for support and supervision (between student and mentor)

Check

14. Monitor and measure satisfaction levels (Company, Student and VET)
15. Internal communication and feedback loops established
16. Opportunities for Improvements
17. Conduct regular (annual) audits and review of WBL processes

Act

18. Relationship between Company and VET Provider established
19. Structured communication in place between company and VET provider – feedback, problem solving, etc.
20. Improvement opportunities determined and actioned

Annex 2 – Checklist: organizing WBL for VDR curriculum

PRELIMINARY STEPS	
The HEI organization has pointed out the Learning Outcomes relevant for the VDR professional to be targeted within the internship (WBL) from the curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regulatory frameworks for VDR internships are settled clear in HEI	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is an expressed code of ethics for student's internship	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, it is delivered to the student	<input type="checkbox"/>
HEI resource dedicated to pedagogic responsibilities in WBL (LO and orientation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
HEI resource dedicated to student/workplace support and monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>
DESIGN THE WBL EXPERIENCE	
Timing and length of WBL internship are settled	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, it is settled at the end of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, experiences are also included in the middle of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partner/Hosting organization, fulfilling the minimum requirements, i.e.	
it is dedicated to VIP or with explicit competence area	<input type="checkbox"/>
it involves at least 3 professionals in the MDT	<input type="checkbox"/>
it ensures at least 3 of the VDR key activities defined in the VDR Professional Profile (core competences from UoL 1 to 11)	<input type="checkbox"/>
it clearly identifies WBL Mentors	<input type="checkbox"/>
On the job experience and Mobility Options	
integration with Project Work	<input type="checkbox"/>
transnational mobility option	<input type="checkbox"/>
a check on foreign language skills (especially in the event of a transnational mobility option)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partnership document with hosting organization signed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insurance extension to the workplace and activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety procedures and workplace risk assessment checked	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety course taken by the student	<input type="checkbox"/>
STUDENTS' ORIENTATION	
Student orientation interview performed (in advance)	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, student personal information form or description is envisaged	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, curricular exams and participation is checked	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational contract signed	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, curricular competences expressly listed	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, practical information for the apprentice included	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mobility support is provided	
by HEI organization and administrative resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
by the hosting partner	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	
Process quality indicators selected and monitoring process planned	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, in-progress evaluation is planned	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, final evaluation is planned	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, results analysis and feedback is planned	<input type="checkbox"/>
SELECTION AND TRAINING OF WBL COORDINATORS AND MENTORS	
WBL Mentors' tasks and profile shared with hosting organization for assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
WBL Coordinators' Training programme developed and planned	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, the training programme has been carried out	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct support to WBL Mentors available	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 3 – Final Evaluation criteria (suggested)

	Trainee evaluation (or self evaluation)	Coordinator evaluation
Appropriate matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - correspondence with student's goals and professional interests - adherence to curriculum LOs - practical support from HEI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - previous knowledge of student - correspondence with company's mission and professionals - practical support from HEI
Onboarding process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coordinator support in practice - staff integration - practical and clear information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student's motivation - behaviour with staff - efficiency
Training process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarity of educational contract - variety of learning opportunity - coordinator's support - coordinator's ability to transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarity of partnership contract - clarity about roles and tasks - quality of trainers' training or information
Learning Outcomes (curricular)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acquired experience for each UOL in the educational contract -- UOL1 -- UOL3 -- ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -acquired competence for each UOL in the educational contract -- UOL1 -- UOL3 -- ...
Other competences (transversal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -opportunity to exploit wider transversal competences: i.e. communication, foreign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transversal competences performed: i.e. communication, foreign

	language, mathematical and research, technology and ICT, learning to learn, social and cultural, innovation and entrepreneurship	language, mathematical and research, technology and ICT, learning to learn, social and cultural, innovation and entrepreneurship
General satisfaction	- personal satisfaction (suggested Likert scale 3 points or 5 points)	- personal satisfaction - global evaluation of the student
Transferability	- usability of experience and transferability to other workplaces	- estimated opportunity for employment

Annex 4 – Generic in-company trainer competence set - CEDEFOP (2013)

This set was elaborated by CEDEFOP and is used in the WBL context to identify and assess the competences that need to be acquired by the 'in-company trainer', who corresponds to the professional figure that in this document was indicated as 'WBL mentor'.

1. Competences related to technical domains, sectors:

- (a) qualification in training;
- (b) good knowledge of the subject, expertise in the sector;
- (c) experience;
- (d) awareness of legislation and developments in the sector and industry;
- (e) knowledge of qualification requirements;
- (f) awareness of related occupations in the sector.

2. Company specific competences:

- (a) awareness of the company's core business and structure, activities and working methods, strategy and objectives, staff's profile;
- (b) awareness of emerging skills and skill needs of employees in a company.

3. Training-related competences:

- (a) training (learning) needs assessment:
 - ability to assess competences of the staff (apprentices, trainees), identify competence gaps and relevant training (learning) needs,
 - ability to combine company needs and individual aspirations of learners,
 - ability to distinguish between short-term and long-term learning needs;
- b) training design:
 - ability to design a training programme based on learning objectives and outcomes and learning needs of specific learner groups,
 - ability to assess and select relevant content and methodology,
 - ability to specify theoretical and practical parts of the programme, methodology, evaluation methods, and resources needed,
 - ability to plan the programme time schedule;
- (c) training delivery:
 - knowledge of training and learning facilitation methods and techniques; group dynamics; learning styles; equal opportunities principles; ethical principles,
 - ability to create a positive and stimulating learning environment,
 - ability to motivate learners to apply their knowledge, skills and competence in workplace situations,
 - ability to select and apply appropriate training methods and techniques and flexibility of approach;
- (d) assessment of learning:

- knowledge of formative and summative evaluation methods,
- ability to assess comprehension and progress of learners,
- ability to provide feedback and possibly guidance to learners,
- ability to apply various assessment and evaluation methods and techniques,
- ability to assess the training programme and identify issues for improvement.

4. Transversal competences:

- (a) project management;
- (b) positive attitude;
- (c) ability to work in a team;
- (d) communication skills;
- (e) presentation skills;
- (f) use of ICT to simplify learning;
- (g) critical thinking;
- (h) networking skills;
- (i) multicultural awareness;
- (i) conflict management,
- (ii) self-assessment and self-development (learning to learn);
- (j) ability to identify own knowledge and competence gaps and learning needs;
- (k) ability to identify relevant and high-quality training options for updating one's skills and competences.