



# MILEAGE INTERNSHIP MODEL

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences



Co-funded by  
the European Union

## Deliverable information

Grant Agreement No.	
<b>Project acronym</b>	MILEAGE
<b>Project title</b>	Mentorship development for quality practices in higher education
<b>Project timeframe and duration</b>	01/09/2023 – 31/08/2025
<b>WP</b>	WP2 Building support system of HE study practices
<b>Task</b>	Development of advisory service for HE study practices
<b>Deliverable</b>	MILEAGE INTERNSHIP MODEL
<b>Status</b>	Final version
<b>Version number</b>	2.0
<b>Deliverable responsible</b>	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences
<b>Dissemination level</b>	Public
<b>Date of submission</b>	April 2025

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## Version history

Version	Date	Author	Description
1.0	April 2025	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences	Peer-reviewed version
2.0	April 2025	CESIE ETS	Finalised and submitted to the Coordinator

## Summary of the Project

The project will ensure inclusiveness of study practice services by building capacities of career counsellors and developing new services. We aim to improve the quality of study practices by building the competences and skills of coordinators and mentors. By implementing MILEAGE study practices we will stimulate innovative pedagogies in HEIs and form a supportive environment for student practices. Lastly, we will advocate for civic engagement through the recognition of community work in students' academic results.

# Table of Contents

Deliverable information .....	2
Project coordinator .....	2
Version history .....	3
Summary of the Project .....	3
Table of Contents .....	4
Table of figures.....	5
<i>WHAT IS INTERNSHIP? .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>DIMENSIONS OF INTERNSHIP LEARNING AND APPROACHES.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE MODELS .....</i>	<i>11</i>
Inkster & Rose internship model .....	12
Kiser's internship model.....	12
Sweitzer and King Internship (DSI-2) model .....	14
1. Anticipation .....	14
2. Exploration .....	16
3. Competence .....	17
4. Culmination .....	18
Digital work-based learning framework .....	19
1. Design phase.....	20
2. Preparation phase .....	21
3. Onboarding phase .....	22
4. Delivery phase .....	24
5. Assessment phase.....	25
6. Quality Assurance .....	28

<i>SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE WORKPLACE – PERSPECTIVES OF THE ORGANISATION</i> .....	30
<i>MILEAGE INTERNSHIP MODEL</i> .....	32
Stage 1: Clarification of Priorities in the Internship .....	33
Stage 2: Finding a suitable organisation .....	33
Stage 3: Preparation phase .....	34
Stage 4: Implementation phase.....	35
Stage 5: Termination phase.....	37
Stage 6: Reflection phase .....	38
<i>REFERENCES</i> .....	40

## Table of figures

Table 1 - Dimensions of Learning and Development - Source: King & Sweitzer (2014: 42) .....	9
Table 2 - Approaches to learning in internship - Source: King & Sweitzer (2014: 42).....	10
Table 3 - Internship Experience Models - Source: Diambra et al., (2004); King & Sweitzer (2014, 2019); eWBL Framework (2024).....	11
Table 4 - Anticipation stage - Source: Sweitzer and King, 2019: 35.....	15
Table 5 - Exploration stage - Sweitzer and King (2019: 152) .....	16
Table 6 - Competence stage - Source: Sweitzer and King (2019: 276) .....	18
Table 7 - Culmination stage - Source: Sweitzer and King (2019: 341) .....	19
Table 8 - What to do? - Sweitzer and King (2019).....	38
Figure 1 - Sweitzer and King Internship (DSI-2) Internship Model .....	14
Figure 2 - Levels of assessment (Massa & Kasimatis, 2017).....	26
Figure 3 - Assessment process (Massa & Kasimatis, 2017) .....	26
Figure 4 - Formal Evaluation.....	28
Figure 5 - Special features of the workplace - perspectives of the organisation .....	31
Figure 6 - Mileage Internship Model .....	32

# WHAT IS INTERNSHIP?

According to the European Commission's definition (European Training Foundation, 2025), work-based learning (WBL) is learning that takes place in the workplace and uses tasks or workplaces for instruction and practical purposes. It can be formal and structured using curricula or informal, i.e. it can take place incidentally as part of normal daily work, e.g. through experience, practice, mentoring or demonstration. Typical forms of WBL are apprenticeships, **internships**, traineeships and on-the-job training, which often, but not always, combine practical experience in the workplace with classroom teaching (European Commission, 2025).

Internship is a term used mainly in North America to describe a period spent in an organisation to gain practical experience under supervision (European Training Foundation, 2018: 79). The terms 'internship' and 'traineeship' (or 'traineeship' and 'trainee') can be used in different ways, reflecting different traditions or usages within a particular country, region or language (Stewart et al., 2021: 3).

**An internship** (or "traineeship" as it is sometimes called in Europe) is an agreement to perform work in a company or organisation primarily to provide experience, skills and/or contacts that will help the worker obtain employment or other work opportunities. When using the term, it does not matter whether the internship is completed during, after or as part of a formal education or training program or government support (Stewart et al., 2021: 3). According to Gault et al. (2000), internships “generally refer to part-time field experiences and span a variety of academic disciplines and organisational settings”. Internship programmes vary widely but can also be full-time if the student is not participating in a degree program. When a student forgoes school to gain experience, this is considered a cooperative education (co-op) rather than an internship. “Co-ops” typically occur in the engineering field, which means that a student alternates between full-time study and full-time employment to gain experience (see Chern, 2018).

Overall, **internships** are typically considered as **experiential learning**, where **students gain knowledge, skills and experience through direct experience**

outside of an academic setting. In addition to hosting students or job seekers completing internships as part of formal education or training programs, many companies, non-profit organizations and government agencies have developed their internship arrangements. These can sometimes be linked to paid employment but are just as likely to be a form of unpaid training. Some are highly structured, while others are less systematic. They can allow participants to gain work experience in a variety of ways, whether by performing actual or fictitious tasks or simply by shadowing more experienced workers and observing their work. Some internships may require simple or even menial tasks, sometimes for the personal benefit of senior executives or managers rather than the organisation they work for. In such cases, the perceived value of the internship may lie as much in what it adds to the intern's CV or in the contacts it promises to provide as in the acquisition of particular work-related skills or knowledge (Stewart et al., 2021: 4).

# DIMENSIONS OF INTERNSHIP LEARNING AND APPROACHES

Internships can be vehicles for both learning and development in several aspects of students' lives. Learning implies an additive change; for example, students understand a topic or concept better or acquire new abilities (King & Sweitzer, 2014: 39). As a way of fostering generative thinking about possibilities for learning and development, King and Switzer (2014: 39-41) consider **four dimensions: professional, academic, personal, and civic**. In each dimension, learning and development can incorporate the domains of knowledge, skills, and attitudes/values (see Table 1).

Internships have long been a feature of professional programmes at the graduate and undergraduate levels and often serve as the culmination of these programmes. These internships are often a requirement for graduation. They are usually arranged either through the academic programme itself, a central office in the department where the programme is located, a central academic internship centre on campus, or, in some cases, through career counselling offices. Many HEIs offer internships that are not related to a degree programme and whose primary purpose is personal development or career exploration; access to these internships is usually through the career counselling office and are generally arranged through the careers guidance service.

King and Sweitzer (2014: 38) refer to such experiences as academic internships, which include what some programmes refer to as professional internships and have listed three approaches to learning in internship: (i) an engaged approach to learning, (ii) an integrated approach to learning and (iii) a self-authored approach to learning (see Table 2).

Table 1 - Dimensions of Learning and Development - Source: King & Sweitzer (2014: 42)

Dimensions of Learning and Development	Characteristics
<b>The professional dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• common in professional programmes,</li> <li>• opportunity to take the next step in career readiness,</li> <li>• to acquire more of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of a profession or an academic discipline,</li> <li>• to explore how well those fit with their interests and strengths,</li> <li>• to understand the world of work more completely and become socialised into the norms and values of a profession.</li> </ul>
<b>The academic dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• referred to as a liberal education,</li> <li>• emphasize the applied learning of a particular academic discipline, thereby deepening understanding of key disciplinary concepts,</li> <li>• essential abilities across disciplines that can be strengthened: the ability to look critically at information, think creatively, perceive issues from multiple viewpoints, develop analytical abilities, and communicate both verbally and in writing,</li> <li>• abilities sometimes may be referred to as “soft skills,” although that term is more commonly used to reference interpersonal skills (see below the personal dimension).</li> </ul>
<b>The personal dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an opportunity for intellectual and emotional development important to an intern’s life, regardless of occupation,</li> <li>• offers an opportunity to develop qualities such as flexibility, sensitivity, and openness to diversity,</li> <li>• a powerful catalyst for developing a sense of potential, testing creative capacities, and exercising judgment,</li> <li>• the opportunity to advance self-understanding and self-awareness is a crucial one and can include clarifying values and understanding reaction patterns, cultural profiles, ways of thinking, and styles of communicating.</li> </ul>
<b>The civic dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for HEI students to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will allow them to function as productive citizens in a democratic society,</li> <li>• professions must grapple with the nature of their social contracts or missions,</li> <li>• the work of each professional is by definition connected to a larger social purpose,</li> <li>• the internship is a chance to learn about the public relevance and social obligations of a profession and about how those obligations are (or are not) carried out at the internship site.</li> </ul>

Table 2 - Approaches to learning in internship - Source: King & Sweitzer (2014: 42)

An engaged approach to learning	An integrated approach to learning	A self-authored approach to learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Focus on engagement as a process,</li> <li>➤ engagement is considered as an outcome,</li> <li>➤ students can emerge from an academic internship as more engaged learners who take responsibility for their learning, ask intelligent and probing questions, think critically and creatively, appreciate complexity, hold multiple perspectives, remain proactive in the face of challenges, and solve problems effectively,</li> <li>➤ a mindful way of thinking—an active awareness—is necessary,</li> <li>➤ visual attention appears to be needed for visual awareness of the context and mechanics of one’s work,</li> <li>➤ developing conscious attentiveness can be an outcome of an internship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Integrative learning is an important liberal learning outcome,</li> <li>➤ academic internship offers students the opportunity to learn in integrated ways, as when key concepts from the major are brought together in a field-based, capstone experience,</li> <li>➤ interns from different liberal arts &amp; professional disciplines meet in seminars on campus, online, or on-site - in service to the problems and challenges they are working on in the field,</li> <li>➤ facilitates the integration of the cognitive and affective aspects of learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ students to take more responsibility for their learning,</li> <li>➤ learning as self-authorship - the ability to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations,</li> <li>➤ the internship can be a context for promoting a self-authored approach to learning,</li> <li>➤ helps interns learn to evaluate critically, form their own judgments, &amp; collaborate with others toward mature actions,</li> <li>➤ guides interns to learn how to analyse knowledge, generate their own ideas, express disagreement and argue their perspectives,</li> <li>➤ helps to stand up for their beliefs without needing approval from their site or campus supervisors,</li> <li>➤ provides a context for interns to learn to accept responsibility for their own decisions &amp; actions in ways consistent with their emerging relationships at their field sites,</li> <li>➤ supports students in finding their inner voices and lets them learn to manage complex challenges in the four dimensions of learning.</li> </ul>

# INTERNSHIP MODELS

# EXPERIENCE

Numerous models of the internship can be found in the literature. The main feature of each model is the focus on perception of the whole process and reflection during the process (see Table 3). We pay particular attention to four models, which are explained in more detail below: (1) Inkster & Rose's (1998) model, (2) Kiser's (2000) model, (3) Sweitzer and King's (2019) model, and (4) the e-Work Based Learning Framework (eWBL) (2024), which includes an internship in a virtual environment. The last model is the Mileage Internship Model, which is based on the four models in detail described below.

Table 3 - Internship Experience Models - Source: Diambra et al., (2004); King & Sweitzer (2014, 2019); eWBL Framework (2024)

Model	Stages					
<b>Inkster &amp; Rose (1998)</b>	Arranging and anticipating an internship	Orientation and establishing identity	Reconciling expectations with reality	Productivity and independence	Closure	Re-entry and practical application
<b>Kiser (2000)</b>	Pre-placement stage		Initiation stage	Working stage	Termination stage	
<b>Sweitzer and King (2014, 2019)</b>	Anticipation	Exploration	Competence	Culmination		
<b>eWBL Framework (2024)</b>	Design Phase	Preparation Phase	Onboarding Phase	Delivery Phase	Assessment Phase	
	{Quality Assurance}					
<b>Mileage Internship Model</b>	Clarification of Priorities	Finding a suitable organisation	Preparation	Implementation	Termination	Reflection

## Inkster & Rose internship model

Inkster and Rose's model (1998 in Diambra et al., 2004: 194) describes transitions and phases in the internship process. In the **first phase**, the student searches for and secures a placement, a task associated with feelings of excitement, ideal expectations, high motivation and sometimes self-doubt. **Phase two** involves the initial arrival, learning new information and establishing a workplace identity (students may feel overwhelmed by the flood of incoming information and stimuli or overwhelmed by basic routine tasks). **Phase three** is characterised by the realisation that initial expectations do not match the reality of the work environment (the internship is structured differently than the familiar classroom, and students' actions may have consequences not only for themselves, but also for clients and co-workers). **The fourth phase** is typically a time when students' efforts to contribute to the workplace and supervisors' recognition of students' competencies lead to greater independence. Interns are confident, aware of their role and strengths, and perform tasks and activities productively. **The fifth phase** is closure, a time when ongoing relationships are clarified, those that need to be terminated are rejected and successes are celebrated. Inkster and Rose also address students' feelings of not being noticed, leaving unfinished projects, and jealousy of new interns. **In the sixth and final stage**, students adjust to returning to the classroom, entering the workforce after graduation, or continuing their education. Interns can focus on the benefits of the internship by using the experience for future coursework, career preparation, or graduate school applications. Interns may also struggle with feeling that the classroom is mundane compared to the internship, have difficulty finding a job, or struggle with how the internship experience will affect graduate school (Diambra et al., 2004: 195).

## Kiser's internship model

Kiser (2000) introduced a **four-stage model** based on her observations and review of a number of internship stage models from different disciplines.

The **pre-internship stage** takes place before the internship is carried out. It involves the process of identifying, investigating, interviewing and determining an internship placement with the involvement of the company and academic mentor. After a joint decision is made, a work schedule is established, contact with the future internship supervisor is maintained and personal schedules and activities are rearranged to meet the demanding tasks of an internship.

The **initiation stage** occurs when the actual start of the internship. Orientation, getting to know co-workers and clients, and becoming familiar with agency policies and procedures are typically associated with this second phase. Students observe their new environment while supervisors assess students' strengths and weaknesses. The **working stage** is the time when agency tasks and learning objectives are completed. Students and supervisors become more familiar with communicating and recognising personal strengths and admitting limitations. Students relax, establish a regular work routine, experience a boost in self-confidence and work more autonomously. Kiser (2000) warns supervisors not to shorten the supervision time when they have more confidence in the students' abilities. Students may also become too accustomed to completing work tasks and no longer challenge themselves when new learning opportunities present themselves. **Termination**, the last of the four stages, begins when plans for ending the internship are considered. In this phase, planned efforts are made to complete the internship. It is important that students complete tasks or pass on incomplete tasks to others. Saying goodbye, redefining changing relationships, or helping clients transition to other appropriate resources are common tasks in the termination stage. It is also a time for the student **to reflect on their** accomplishments as well as the professional and personal lessons they have learned. Kiser cautions that although a stage model provides some idea of how the internship experience will evolve and change over time, there is "little agreement [between different stage models] on the exact nature of these changes" (Diambra et al., 2004: 195-196).

# Sweitzer and King Internship (DSI-2) model

Sweitzer and King (2019: 19) have constructed a developmental stage of internship (DSI-2 Model) based on their long-term experience, review of years of student reflections, discussions with colleagues and their study of other stage theories that have yielded a developmental theory of internship stages within their framework. They have identified four developmental stages that interns tend to experience in an internship: **Anticipation, Exploration, Competence, and Culmination** (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - Sweitzer and King Internship (DSI-2) Internship Model

## 1. Anticipation

In terms of learning objectives at the anticipation stage, interns should:

- Describe key aspects of the concerns they are experiencing—those that evoke both excitement and anxiety—as they begin their internship

- Articulate ways in which they can become a more engaged learner
- Give examples of each of the critical tasks of the anticipation stage as they apply to their internship
- Identify the key relationships that will be part of their internship experience
- Explain the concept of disillusionment as it applies to the anticipation stage (Sweitzer and King, 2019: 29)

Table 4 - Anticipation stage - Source: Sweitzer and King, 2019: 35

Associated Concerns	Critical tasks	Response to Tasks	
		Engaged Response	Disengaged Response
<b>Getting off to a good start</b>  <b>Positive expectations</b>  <b>Acceptance</b>  <b>Anxieties regarding:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Capabilities</b></li> <li>• <b>Relationships with</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Supervisors</b></li> <li>○ <b>Co-workers</b></li> <li>○ <b>Clients</b></li> <li>○ <b>Interns on-site</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Examining and critiquing	Is willing to challenge own assumptions by making them explicit	Assumes expectations about internship are grounded in truth and reality
		Seeks out accurate information to dispel differences in expectations	Lives with untested expectations of relationships and inherent biases
	Acknowledging concerns	Recognizes interest and anxiousness as normal and works toward resolution where needed	Accepts interest; Accommodates or denies anxiety: the Not Me! fantasy
	Clarifying role and purpose	Seeks clarification of role and responsibilities to ensure that learning expectations can be met and that their interests are respected with opportunities for them to be realized	Accepts role and responsibilities without critically thinking through how it meets their learning needs and interests
<b>Life Context</b>	Developing key relationships	Explores differences between being liked and being accepted  Considers others' perspectives when personalizing  Reactions of co-workers	Confuses being liked with being accepted and personalizes reactions of co-workers
		Invests in mutuality in relationships and recognizes the role it plays	Sees no purpose to mutuality because relationships are not seen

		in the success of the internship	as partners in their success
		Works toward acceptance in key relationships; sees value as a source of support and learning	Depends on others to initiate and/or is disconnected from colleagues; sees little value in relationships and no connection to the success of the internship
	Making an informed commitment	Pursues understanding of key variables in the internship and commits to going forward	Clings to naive or uninformed notions of the internship

## 2. Exploration

In terms of learning objectives at the exploration stage, interns should:

- List key strategies for remaining engaged in the face of challenges
- Give examples of each of the critical tasks of the exploration stage as they apply to your internship
- List the significant areas where challenges can arise and give examples of instances where some of them have arisen for you
- Explain the opportunities for civic development during the exploration stage
- Explain the concept of disillusionment as it applies to the exploration stage (Sweitzer and King, 2019: 152)

Table 5 - Exploration stage - Sweitzer and King (2019: 152)

Associated Concerns	Critical tasks	Response to Tasks	
		Engaged Response	Disengaged Response
<b>Building on progress</b>	Keeping the focus on learning	Analyses skills and knowledge needed to achieve goals	Does not try to overcome obstacles; lives with them
		Considers and adjusts learning goals	Settles for work unrelated to goals
		Seeks new learning opportunities	Ignores/declines new learning opportunities

<b>Heightened learning curve</b>		Seeks to expand understanding and embrace larger organizational and social dynamics (integrative engagement)	Satisfied with the focus on the individual dynamics of the work
<b>Finding new opportunities</b>			
<b>Adjusting expectations</b>	Approaching assessment and evaluation of progress	Seeks support and guidance; makes productive use of formal and informal feedback	Does not ask for or accept support; resists or rationalizes feedback
		Reflects on progress individually and with others	Minimal attention to reflection
<b>Adequacy of skills and knowledge</b>	Building supervisory relationships	Seeks to improve relationships	Distances self from relationships and supervision
<b>Real or anticipated problems</b>	Encountering challenges	Acknowledges and clarifies difficulties and fears	Conceals fears; denies or rationalizes difficulties
		Treats problems as an opportunity for learning and empowerment	Upset that problems occur, and expectations aren't met

### 3. Competence

In terms of learning objectives at the competence stage, interns should:

- Explain the positive aspects of reaching the competence stage
- Give examples of each of the critical tasks of the competence stage as they relate to your internship
- Give examples of sources of fulfilment in success and ways in which they do and do not match your experience
- Explain the importance of balance during the latter stages of your internship
- Explain the opportunities for professional and civic development in the competence stage
- Explain the concept of disillusionment as it applies to the competence stage (Sweitzer and King, 2019: 271).

Table 6 - Competence stage - Source: Sweitzer and King (2019: 276)

Associated Concerns	Critical tasks	Response to Tasks	
		Engaged Response	Disengaged Response
<b>High accomplishment</b>	Raising the bar: quality and integrity	Embraces tasks and challenges	Content to continue with current level of challenge and activity; bored but not willing to change
<b>Seeking quality</b>		Sets high aspirations	Satisfied with status quo
<b>Emerging view of self</b>		Sets personal standards of excellence	Sets standards of "good enough"
<b>Feeling empowered</b>	Having feelings of achievement and success	Actively seeks fulfilment. Engages self and others in achieving the feeling of success	Accepts whatever sense
<b>Exploring professionalism</b>	Maintaining balances	Keeps personal and internship demands in check	Unable to manage conflicting demands effectively
<b>Doing it all</b>			
<b>Ethical issues</b>	Preparing for the profession	Seeks to understand and adhere to professional and ethical guidelines	Ignores or accepts transgressions
<b>Worthwhile tasks</b>		Seeks to identify as an emerging member of the profession/field	Content to identify as a student

## 4. Culmination

In terms of learning objectives at the culmination stage, interns should:

- Give examples of each of the critical tasks of the culmination stage as they apply to your internship
- Understand the personal strengths and limitations that you bring to the tasks you face
- Explain the concept of disillusionment as it applies to the culmination stage
- Develop concrete plans for closure and continuity in each aspect of your internship (Sweitzer and King, 2019: 335).

Table 7 - Culmination stage - Source: Sweitzer and King (2019: 341)

Associated Concerns	Critical tasks	Response to Tasks	
		Engaged Response	Disengaged Response
<b>Saying goodbye</b>	Endings and closure	Proactively seeks closure in key relationships	Looks to others to initiate closure, waiting for the end
<b>Transfer of responsibilities</b>		Actively reviews the experience; plans to build on strengths	Accepts with resignation the final evaluations from outside sources
<b>Completion of tasks</b>	Redefining relationships	Identifies and deals with feelings in key relationships	Avoids any unpleasant feelings
<b>Next steps</b>	Planning for the future	Intentional and realistic planning for self and clients	Does not plan, merely stops
<b>Multiple endings</b>			
<b>Closing rituals</b>			

## Digital work-based learning framework

The digital work-based learning framework (eWBL) is used to integrate the digital component into the internship. In the above-mentioned model, the phases of the internship are built according to the relevance of remote work, which is widely used in most work environments where interns do their internship. It considers the inevitable use of digital tools in today's modern world and implements the hybrid mode of the internship (face-to-face and virtual work environments are combined in the internship in hybrid mode).

The following stages of the internship are taken from the [e-Work Based Learning Toolkit \(eWBL\)](#) that has recently explored collection of tools, templates and methods for preparing, implementing and evaluating WBL from the perspectives of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the employer (organisations) and students (the intern). [The toolkit](#) is designed

with an extra focus on the hybrid mode, as work is increasingly delivered remotely (eWBL, 2024).

## 1. Design phase

The design phase comprises the planning of the internship at the curricular level. Framework divides the design phase into three important components:

### a. Curricular Component

For HEIs, design considerations typically include:

- In which semester will the internship take place in
- How long it will last
- How many learning credits to award
- What are the intended learning outcomes and
- How to assess them and how it aligns with national qualifications standards.

For organisations:

- The general responsibilities of the interns determine the length of their employment
- Deciding on the type of internship contract
- Compensation exploring potential opportunities for long-term employment.

### b. Particularities

Carefully consider academic discipline, types of partner organisations, learning outcomes, and legal and financial aspects in case the internship will be held remotely or in a hybrid mode. Use the checklist to determine whether an online internship is adequate for your industry or your organization.

### c. Individual Learning Plan

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) serves as a guide for both the student and coordinators to ensure that the learning objectives are met, and the

programme is tailored to the individual needs of the learner. It is important to note that the ILP should encompass the planning of eWBL at a more general level and should be flexible enough to accommodate different job descriptions and employers' needs. If ILPs are used, the design phase should establish a general template that students and mentors can fill up with elements specific to their job experience, i.e., based on the next phases of the present framework.

An ILP should ideally outline:

- the learner's expectations and goals
- the learner's learning needs in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- the work tasks and training required to achieve these goals
- the strategies for monitoring, mentoring, providing feedback, and evaluating progress.

## 2. Preparation phase

The preparation phase encompasses the more practical activities that companies and organisations, but especially HEIs, have to perform before the beginning of the 'work' phase of the internship. Three items that require particular attention:

### a. Skills alignment

Succeeding in internship is heavily dependent on possessing a specific set of competencies and skills. Although these skills can be improved on the job, the findings indicate that students who lack familiarity with them before commencing their internships may face significant challenges. If working remotely, the importance to assess students' compatibility for online internships before they start their virtual internship is crucial, and where necessary provide training to help build the capacity of students. Self-evaluation questionnaires can be used to assess the competence level of interns prior to the internship.

### b. Recruitment and selection

Part of the success of the internship relies on offering students enough high-quality internship positions. While remote internship offers the advantage of greater flexibility in terms of location, not all positions are suitable for remote work. CV design

and preparation for (online) job interviews that highlight the candidate's capabilities to work independently and give evidence that he or she is self-conscious and familiar with netiquette rules like having adequate physical space, avoiding interruptions, using formal language, turning the camera on, etc.

#### c. Training of staff at HEI and organisations

The last crucial component of the internship preparation phase is the training of staff in HE and companies. Staff in organisations and HE are often not prepared to support students doing internships, esp. for remote internships. This lack of preparedness includes the technological (esp. in terms of remote internship) and pedagogical aspects. Mentors are not always familiarised with the latest technology, nor with the various productivity tools (e.g. virtual workspaces, collaborative tools) that are often central to success. Similarly, they are often unaware of the pedagogical demands of internships, such as the need for more constant feedback, a closer relationship between intern and mentor, the fostering of the intern's ability to work independently, and issues associated with poor socialisation in the case of remote internship.

### 3. Onboarding phase

The onboarding phase starts when the intern has secured a placement and is ready to commence working. A robust onboarding phase is essential to mitigate some of the limitations, such as the absorption of the company's culture in the case of remote internships. This framework divides the onboarding into four main activities that, while having different purposes, can be combined into a one-day event or divided into multi-day events. The four activities are:

#### a. Introducing internship aims

The main role of onboarding is to introduce students to the overall internship process, which includes explaining the general aim of the internship, the intended learning outcomes, the different stages the intern will go through, and the feedback and assessment mechanisms. This should be aligned with the ILP described in the design phase. This meeting is also a good opportunity for the organisation to introduce its history, work culture, and long-term goals. In line with the recommendations outlined in the preparation phase, it is advisable for employers to also assess the digital skills and remote work readiness of the students at this stage in case the internship will be

held in hybrid mode. If any significant gaps are identified, employers should consider providing training.

#### b. Meeting colleagues and stakeholders

After presenting the general internship aims, the intern should be formally introduced to colleagues and stakeholders, including key IT and administrative staff. Furthermore, onboarding events can be used (create social media groups). HEIs can hold similar onboarding events, where interns from different disciplines meet to network with student interns and create opportunities to exchange invaluable work experiences (esp. in the case of remote internships to minimize feelings of social isolation).

Benefits of a 'buddy' system are also very well accepted. It involves assigning interns to a buddy, who is typically someone who was an intern and has now been hired for a permanent position. He should help the new intern through the first few weeks on the job. Meeting colleagues and others in the organisation face-to-face to foster a collaborative mindset is essential. Several activities can be used, including meet-and-greet events, group breakfasts or lunches, corporate visits to showcase the company's departments, ice-breaking activities, and small parties.

An intercultural readiness checklist can help students reflect on their intercultural competencies and identify areas for improvement as they engage in diverse environments.

#### c. Detailing the workflow

One of the most recurring challenges of internship relates to poor intern-supervisor or mentor communication. Supervisors are often unaware of what interns are doing. Similarly, interns frequently complain about unclear instructions and inadequate support. This includes more recurring meetings briefing sessions, follow-ups and touchpoints. The onboarding should also cover the preferred forms of communication for different work situations, the way the work output will be shared, the frequency that tasks will be distributed, the start and end of the workday, and the work assessment methods. Similarly, HEIs should have an onboarding event to explain feedback, mentoring and assessment. Both students and companies can use questions to determine whether the workflow is understood and functioning well.

#### d. IT and other practical matters

While work in an internship could be mostly performed from home if the remote internship is planned, interns should not be expected to rely on their personal IT equipment or bear the cost of purchasing office supplies. The onboarding day is a great opportunity to provide the necessary IT equipment to interns, install the necessary software and security protocols on interns' laptops and distribute documents or other items necessary for work. It is also advisable to offer interns a tutorial on how to navigate the company system, access shared platforms, etc.

## 4. Delivery phase

The delivery phase involves the main tasks and responsibilities of the internship:

#### a. Task briefing

Task briefing ensures interns understand their work tasks, including what they need to do, expected outcomes, and deadlines. Remote work can hinder communication and make it hard for interns to seek clarification. Organizations often hold weekly briefing meetings at the start of the week, covering:

- Objectives and expectations: Clear communication of task objectives
- Resources and support: Providing necessary materials and addressing questions
- Deadlines and milestones: Setting deadlines and key milestones.

#### b. Task monitoring

Organisations should monitor interns' work. Issues arise from both interns and supervisors; interns miss support, and supervisors lack visibility into interns' tasks.

Two ways to enhance task monitoring are:

- Increase Feedback Frequency: Conduct regular virtual meetings, with the frequency depending on task complexity and supervisor availability.
- Visibility: Keep interns 'visible', including on shared work platforms, making them easily accessible for consultation and collaboration. Shared calendars can enhance coordination.

However, excessive meetings can be burdensome, and autonomy benefits learning, so task monitoring should avoid micromanagement.

HEIs should also monitor students, focusing on their well-being, work-life balance, and adaptation to (remote) work. This can be done through periodic meetings, potentially combined with feedback sessions.

### c. Networking and socialization activities

Internship offers interns a chance to experience real workplaces, learn the ins and outs of a specific industry or field, and build professional connections.

Helpful ways to overcome the limitations of (remote) internships:

**Senior Meetings:** Interns can participate in meetings involving experienced professionals, even if they just observe. Before such meetings, supervisors can provide a quick rundown of who's involved, their roles, and what will be discussed. This helps interns understand the organisation's culture and expand their professional network.

**Social Networks:** Encouraging interns to create and actively use profiles on professional platforms like LinkedIn can be beneficial.

Additionally, supervisors from both the organisation and HEIs can encourage interns to reach out, ask questions, or set up (virtual) coffee breaks with colleagues and more experienced staff.

**Face-to-face and virtual events:** organisations and HEIs can have different social events (social gatherings, capacity building trips) or virtual events like online social gatherings, games, or quizzes to foster a sense of community. While some participants may find these activities a bit artificial, they still offer value. Notably, events exclusive to interns tend to be more engaging, as they give interns a stronger sense of ownership compared to events organised by management.

## 5. Assessment phase

Assessment is a systematic process for understanding and improving student learning (Angelo, 1995 in Massa & Kasimatis, 2017:6) and the process of credibly demonstrating resources, implementation measures and results to improve the effectiveness of instructions, programmes and services in HEI (Banta & Palomba, 2015:2).

As Astin & Antonio (2012: 3) point out, assessment is the collection of information about the functioning of students, staff and institutions of HEI with two distinct activities: (i) the mere collection of information (measurement) and (ii) the use of this information for institutional and individual improvement (evaluation). Assessment can be done on four levels: level of the intern, course, study programme and institution (HEI and organisation) (see Figure 2).

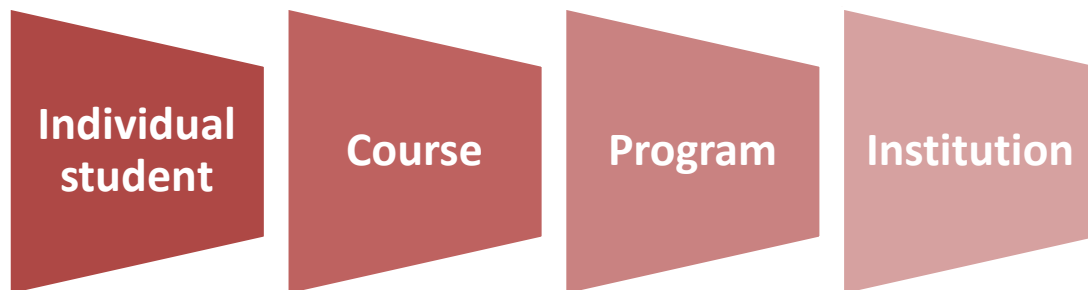


Figure 2 - Levels of assessment (Massa & Kasimatis, 2017)

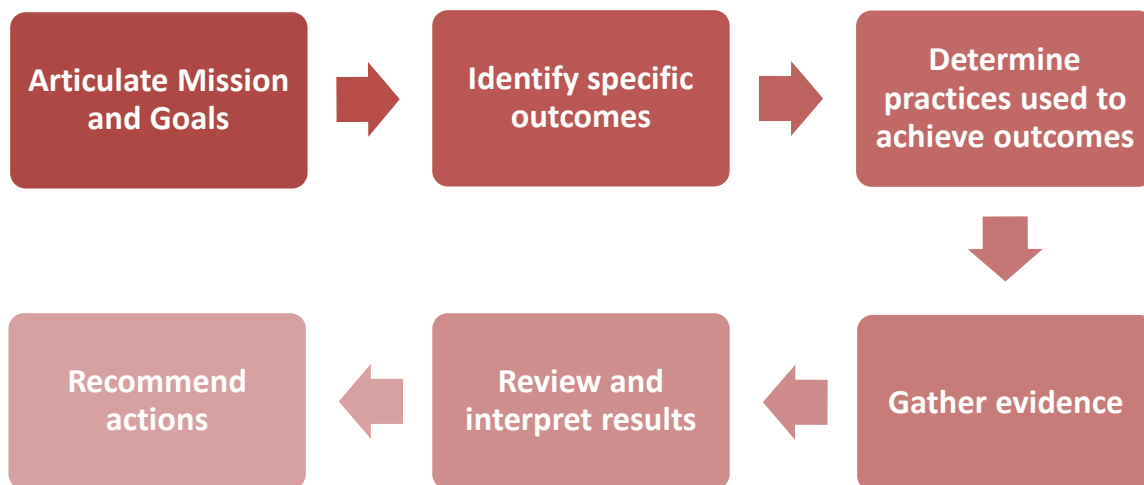


Figure 3 - Assessment process (Massa & Kasimatis, 2017)

It is recommended to divide the assessment into two main components: feedback and mentoring and formal evaluation.

#### a. Feedback and Mentoring

Internships leverage work experiences as a means of learning. However, unexamined work experiences can be unreliable sources of learning because individuals often misinterpret them. Through thoughtful reflection,

learners can move past initial impressions, thereby transforming work experiences into valuable sources for personal improvement. As a result, it is important for both organisation and HEIs to promote reflection concerning the role of work in the learning process at various levels. Here we suggest:

**Self-assessment:** One effective approach to incorporate various types of feedback involves initiating a process where interns initially complete a predefined self-assessment form. Subsequently, the outcomes of this self-assessment serve as a foundation for a personalized discussion between the intern and their supervisor.

**One-on-one feedback with company mentor:** After the intern successfully fills in the self-assessment part of the form, it is important for the supervisor to fill in the employer evaluation part of the same form. After this, the supervisor can more easily plan the one-on-one feedback session with the student, based on the form both parts completed.

**Group feedback with HE and mentor in organisation:** At the different stages of the internship, it is important for HE supervisors and organisation mentors to take the time to jointly assess the performance of the student, considering the organisation targets and the learning goals set by the HEI.

Dimensions that can be assessed in each process include:

- (i) *acquisition of practical knowledge,*
- (ii) *development of skills and attitudes,*
- (iii) *networking,*
- (iv) *career prospects.*

#### b. Formal Evaluation

The feedback and mentoring aspect constitute a continuous and constructive process, extending throughout the entire internship. Formal evaluation takes place after the program and assumes a more summative character, primarily focused on validating learning outcomes and accruing credit points. Make sure it is learner centred.

Take the form of a log diary or internship report at the end of the programme

Critical! Stick to measurable criteria

Learning outcomes (what the learner should be able to do at the end of the internship)

Evaluation criteria (how the learning outcomes can be demonstrated)

Level descriptors (characteristics of each learning outcome)

Figure 4 - Formal Evaluation

## 6. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) is a central process to ensure the success of the internship. It is perceived as a cross-cutting activity through all five phases. Unlike the evaluation of individual interns, QA focuses on the continuous improvement of the overall internship. QA in internship is about systematically assessing and improving the overall effectiveness and quality of the internship programme to ensure that it achieves its pedagogical and practical objectives (eWBL Toolkit, 2024).

The European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA) has taken the lead in developing common standards and guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015).

The ESG sees quality as “primarily a result of the interaction between teachers, students and the institutional learning environment”. Ensuring quality in the design and delivery of formats requires a clearly defined framework with key components that work together based on organised processes. When discussing QA, a distinction should be made between process-related and content-related aspects. The content (the development of subject-specific and generic competencies) can be formulated in terms of

whether the evidence – the desired level of learning - is provided. The process, on the other hand, is seen as a prerequisite for building trust. It checks whether the conditions for learning meet the standard. Both the conditions and the level of learning are important components for recognition (WEXHE, 2020).

a. Recommendations for an effective QA and enhancement in internship

- Collect data during the implementation phase to monitor student participation and satisfaction at the programme level and assess the impact of internship on the identified learning outcomes during the assessment phase
- Analyse data to investigate potential quality issues
- A Feedback loop could encourage quality improvement at different stages of the internship
- Adapt assessment and evaluation procedures and methods to the mode of internship, i.e. distinguish between combined and online modes
- The feedback, mentoring and assessment procedures should be introduced to students at the pre-internship stage
- It is also important to train the staff involved in internship (coordinators, in-company/organisation mentors and HE staff) and introduce them to the specifics of digital mode of WBL implementation.
- Assess the student's digital skills and readiness for distance learning
- Strategies for monitoring, mentoring, feedback and assessment of progress should be included in the individual learning plan (ILP)
- Try to measure the process of developing competencies
- Use multiple forms of assessment (a combination of formative assessment with feedback and reflection and summative assessment at the end of the intern focusing on the assessment of learning outcomes) (eWBL Toolkit, 2024).

# **SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE WORKPLACE – PERSPECTIVES OF THE ORGANISATION**

A Practical Guide for Employers, produced by the National Association of Colleges and Employers and NACE Centre for Career Development and Talent Acquisition (2015), gives excellent tips on how to build a high-quality internship by the employer. The following features can be considered.

# HIGH QUALITY INTERNSHIP TIPS FOR ORGANISATIONS

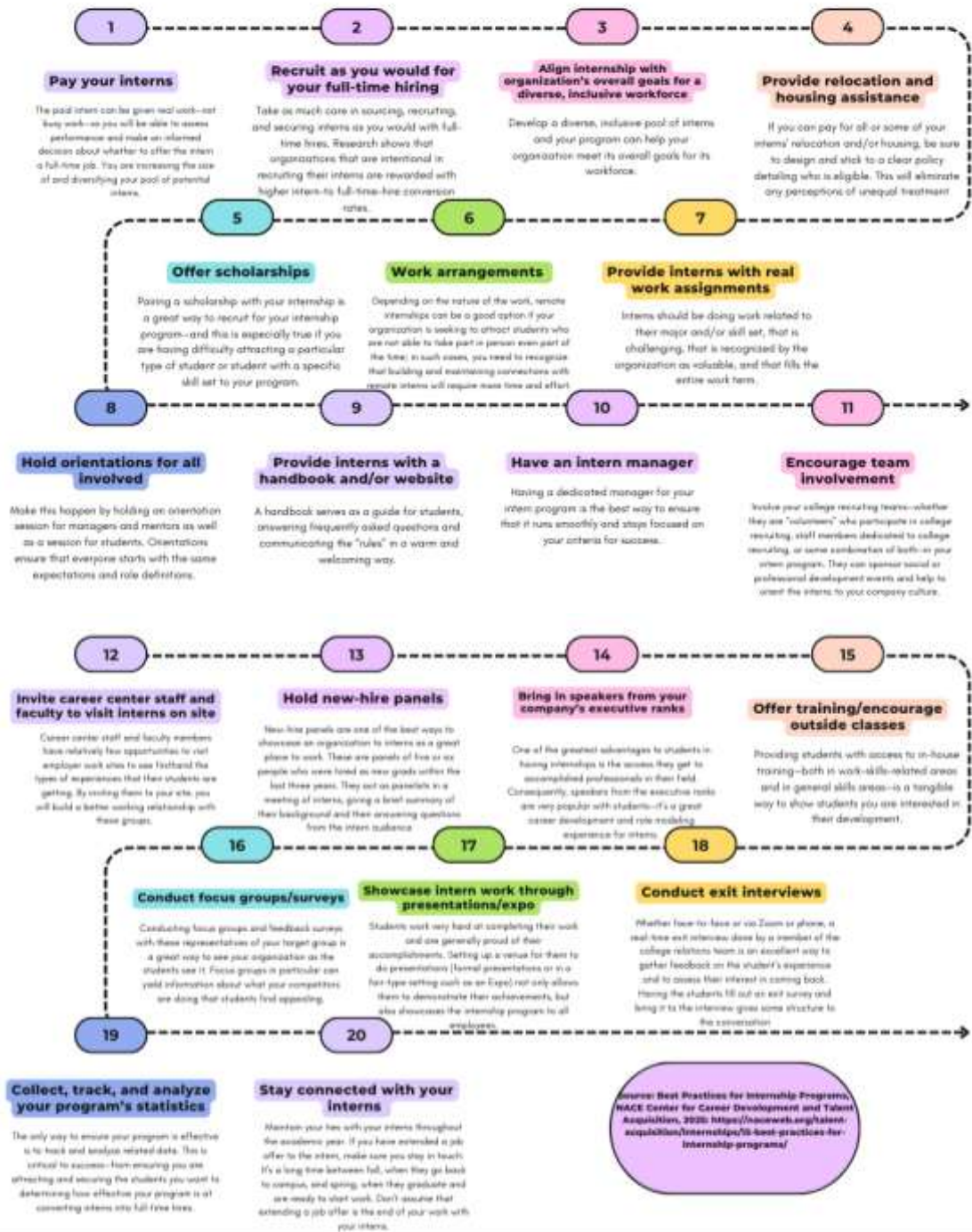


Figure 5 - Special features of the workplace - perspectives of the organisation

# MILEAGE INTERNSHIP MODEL

The Mileage Internship Model is based on a combination of the eWBL Framework (2024), the Kiser Model (2000), the DSI2 Model by Sweitzer and King (2019) and the Practical Guide for Employers for a Quality Internship (2015) created by the National Association of Colleges and Employers and the NACE Centre for Career Development and Talent Acquisition.

At each stage, you will find a guide on **how to deliver high quality internship:**

(1) **the intern** beginning the internship, for (2) **the home institution (Higher Education Institution), faculty/educational mentor, or internship coordinator** at the programme level where the internship is mandatory or optional, 3) **the organisation/company conducting the internship**, and 4) **a special focus on the company/organisational mentor and supervisor** directly responsible for training the intern.

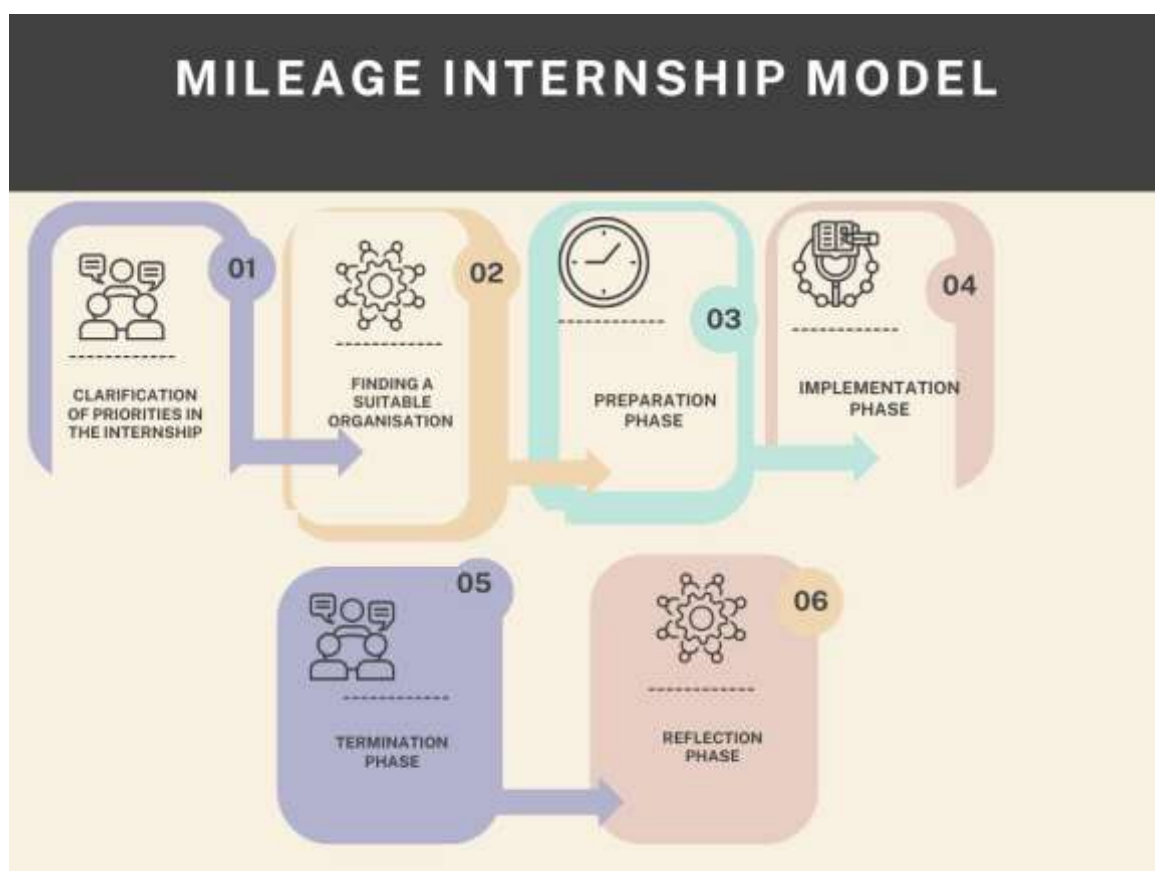


Figure 6 - Mileage Internship Model

## Stage 1: Clarification of Priorities in the Internship

### **INTERN**

- Customise specific goals and objectives of your internship journey
- Identify career goals and aspirations related to the study programme
- Understand the skills required for success in internship
- Conduct a self-assessment of current skills and knowledge (pay attention to digital skills in case you are looking for internship held remotely)

### **HEI & MENTORS IN HE**

- Design internship Curriculum
- Plan in which semester the internship will take place and how long it will last
- How many learning credits will be awarded
- What are the intended learning outcomes and how to assess them
- How internships aligns with national qualifications standards
- Include aspects of digital internship
- Design Individual Learning plan in collaboration with intern

### **ORGANISATION/COMPANY & MENTORS IN ORGANISATION (IN-COMPANY MENTORS)**

- Designing job description for intern
- Defining the general responsibilities of the interns
- Determining the length of their internship/employment
- Deciding on the type of internship contract and compensation
- Exploring the tele-workability of the internship, and clear which competencies to be fostered
- Make sure that the learnings (skills, knowledge, and attitudes) you target match the learning outcomes and qualifications specified by the HEIs
- Exploring potential opportunities for long-term employment

## Stage 2: Finding a suitable organisation

### **INTERN**

- The student searches for and secures a placement

- Searching through internship job portals, career counselling at HEI, etc.
- Most commonly, the faculty or professional staff member(s) at HEI or in a program who oversees student's field placement may have helped intern to find the placement and give all the necessary information
- For intern, this task is associated with feelings of excitement, ideal expectations, high motivation and sometimes self-doubt
- A good CV: highlight capabilities to work independently, give evidence of your self-awareness
- Get familiar with the rules of netiquette (e.g. having enough space to participate in interviews, avoiding interruptions, using formal language, turning on the camera, etc.), especially at the interview stage

### **HEI & MENTORS IN HE**

- Provide advice/counselling on whether an internship is suitable and if there is a skill gap, identify how to fill it together with student
- Filter positions based on: location (city, region or country level), mode of delivery (online, blended, or face-to-face); employer's industry
- Offer job fairs online with the help of virtual tools
- Offer trainings for future interns ranging from sharing resources and guidelines to more in-depth one-on-one or group coaching with curriculum vitae (CV) reviews and simulated online interviews
- Consider offering applicants access to testimonials from previous interns

## Stage 3: Preparation phase

### **INTERN**

- Identify propensity by using self-assessment tools such as: time management, self-efficacy/reliance, problem-solving, communication, and cooperation and conflict management
- Do big Five personality test

### **HEI & MENTORS IN HE**

- Incorporate training for the competencies into the curriculum
- Look for readily available alternatives to address this skill gap

- Help students identify their propensity for these attitudes by using self-assessment tools such as: time management, self-efficacy/reliance, problem-solving, communication, and cooperation and conflict management
- Encourage students to do big Five personality test
- Train faculty mentors for delivery of the high quality internship (introduce all the internship stages and introduce the necessary digital tools)

## **ORGANISATION/COMPANY & MENTORS IN ORGANISATION (IN-COMPANY MENTORS)**

- A crucial component is the training of staff in companies
- Mentors are not always familiar with the latest technology, nor with the various productivity tools (e.g. virtual workspaces, collaborative tools) that are often central to the success of remote work
- Similarly, mentors are often unaware of the pedagogical demands, such as the need for more constant feedback, a closer relationship between intern and mentor, the fostering of the intern's ability to work independently, and issues associated with poor socialisation
- Assign mentorship of interns to someone with an explicit interest in assuming this role
- The chosen mentor should also possess the appropriate skillset, which typically includes strong communication, teamwork abilities and a comprehensive understanding of the organisation's structure.

## Stage 4: Implementation phase

### **INTERN**

- You will get familiar with the overall process of the internship in this phase; both mentors, your university and the organisation are leading the process

### **HEI & MENTORS IN HE**

- The introduction to the internship aims should explain:
  - The aim of the internship
  - The intended learning outcomes
  - The different stages the intern will go through
  - The feedback and assessment mechanisms

## ORGANISATION/COMPANY & MENTORS IN ORGANISATION (IN-COMPANY MENTORS)

- The Introduction should take place in a meeting with the supervisor at the company
- It is an opportunity for the company to introduce its history, work culture, and long-term goals to the intern (also HE coordinator or mentor could participate)
- It is important to assess the digital skills and remote work readiness of the students. If any significant gaps are identified, consider providing training sessions at the beginning and throughout the internship to bridge these gaps
- Provide an excellent opportunity to present interns to key IT and administrative staff
- Pay special attention to intern-supervisor/mentor communication. Mentors are often unaware of what interns are doing. Similarly, interns frequently complain of unclear instructions and inadequate support
- Plan recurring meetings, briefing sessions, and follow-ups
- Make a structured workflow of the internship, esp. if it takes place remotely (include a timeslot to explain how the workflow will be structured – meeting, e-mail, platform)
- Pay attention to the frequency that tasks will be distributed (daily, weekly), determine the start and end of the workday
- Introduce work assessment methods
- **Introduce Buddy system:**
  - Assign interns to an existing employee (buddy) who guides the new intern through the first few weeks or months on the job
  - The buddy is typically someone who was an intern and has now been hired for a more permanent position at the company
  - This creates empathy and closeness between the buddy and the new intern, which can be highly beneficial when it comes to explaining the company workflow
  - Offer interns IT equipment and a tutorial on how to navigate the company systems, access shared platforms, etc.
- Set weekly briefing meetings:
  - Objectives and expectations: communicate the objectives and expectations for each task. This ensures that interns have a clear understanding of the desired outcomes.

- Resources and support: outline any necessary background information such as reference materials, guidelines, or access to relevant databases. Address questions interns may have or indicate the best person to refer to if not the supervisor himself
- Deadlines and milestones: specify the deadlines and important milestones associated with the assigned tasks. This helps interns manage their time effectively and prioritise their workload
- Meet and greet event, group breakfasts or lunches, corporate visits to showcase the company's departments, ice-breaking activities or a small party

## Stage 5: Termination phase

### All involved parties

- The termination stage is aiming at validation and credit points
- HEI and Company should adhere to measurable criteria:
  - (i) *the expected learning outcomes,*
  - (ii) *evaluation criteria with level descriptors and*
  - (iii) *the achieved outcomes*
- Assessment can take place throughout the whole internship. It can be based on self-reports, one-on-one discussions, group feedback or all of them and should include multiple dimensions:
  - (i) *practical knowledge acquisition,*
  - (ii) *development of soft skills and attitudes,*
  - (iii) *networking and*
  - (iv) *career prospects*
- Companies and HEI should offer learners multiple opportunities to discuss and reflect on how work is contributing to learning
- Feedback should take into consideration the different dimensions that internship fosters, including practical knowledge acquisition:
  - Development of soft skills and attitudes
  - Networking
  - Career prospects
- Feedback should encompass different formats including:
  - Self-assessment,
  - One-on-one interviews
  - Group feedback.

- One possible way to integrate these multiple forms of feedback would include, first asking interns to fill out a pre-designed self-assessment form and then using the results as a basis for a one-on-one discussion with the supervisor
- If conditions allow, group feedback can be added to it, including the intern, his supervisor at the company, co-workers and the supervisor at the HEI
- **The internship report:**
  - Aims to encourage the learner to critically reflect on the tasks performed, relate to the theory acquired at the HEI, and identify the development of transferable skills
  - Is often reviewed by the supervisor at the HEI in consultation with the supervisor at the company
  - For such evaluation to work, it is critical to adhere to measurable criteria
- **Learner-centred evaluation** should ideally encompass:
  - Learning outcomes, stating what the learner should be able to do at the end of the internship
  - Evaluation criteria, showing how the learning outcomes can be demonstrated
  - Level descriptors about the characteristics of each learning outcome.

## Stage 6: Reflection phase

### INTERN

According to Kiser (2000), it is time for the student **to reflect on their** accomplishments as well as the professional and personal lessons they have learned. For Switzer and King (2019), it is time to celebrate the achievements and embrace the experience.

Select your most meaningful entries for reflection.

*Table 8 - What to do? - Sweitzer and King (2019)*

<b>Checking In</b>	On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your experience, with 1 at the low end and 10 at the high end. After you give a rating, think about why you chose the rating you did.
<b>Experience Matters (For the Experienced Intern)</b>	What has been the most difficult aspect of beginning an internship, given your life experiences or experience with previous internships? What strengths have you gained from your previous internship or life experiences that can help you meet the challenge?
<b>Civically Speaking</b>	Ask yourself these final two questions, which also come: Now What? And Then What?

<b>Personal Ponderings</b>	Different sites use different terms for the same purpose. Make a list of the key terms and roles at your internship site.
<b>Personal Ponderings</b>	Choose a memorable experience, one in which you think you learned something important.
<b>Seminar Springboards</b>	Using any class you have taken, describe how it affected you in the personal, professional, and civic dimensions by noting the knowledge you gained, the skills you developed, and the attitudes or values you became aware of or changed.

## **HEI & MENTORS IN HE**

### **ORGANISATION/COMPANY & MENTORS IN ORGANISATION (IN-COMPANY MENTORS)**

For HEIs and organisations/companies, this is a phase in which the data collected in the previous phases provides an opportunity to reflect on and analyse the outcomes of participation and satisfaction of internships delivered at the programme level and to evaluate the impact of the placement on the identified learning outcomes in the assessment phase. It is important to evaluate the data and examine any potential quality issues. A feedback loop could promote quality enhancement in the different phases of the internship, for both HEI (programme level) and organisation providing internships.

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Project number: 2023-1-SI01-KA220-HED-000160001