

# 1. BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP

**Preparation for the internship is very important for its successful start and proceeding.** Activities during this stage should be aimed at making sure that students are well-prepared, focused and productive during their internship. Vrien and colleagues (2010) stress that all actors involved (students, supervisor from HEIs and supervisor from the host organisation) need to be willing to make the necessary effort. Establishing a common understanding between the three stakeholders before starting the internship and a joint guidance of the internship students by both company and higher education institution seems a necessity. ITC tech-

nologies may provide a means to communicate more intensively together, helping to bridge the differences between the goals and expectations of the company and HEI (Gerken et al., 2012).

## **The main steps HEIs should take before the internship:**

- Create learning objectives
- Prepare materials for internship
- Help students find their host organisation
- Prepare students for internship
- Prepare supervisors for internship

## 1.1. CREATE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR INTERNSHIP

FGDGD Learning objectives are statements that describe what information, skills, and behaviors students should be able to demonstrate after receiving training.

### **Writing clear internship objectives is important because:**

- Objectives define what you will have the students do.
- Objectives provide a link between expectations, learning and grading.

### **Purpose of Learning Objectives:**

- The objectives should help the student and the supervisors from your HEI and from the receiving organisations to evaluate the learning progress of the intern.
- Learning Objectives should not try to cover all aspects of the internship, but instead focus on select areas that the student will be exposed to throughout the internship.
- Each Learning Objective should involve new learning, expanded growth, or improvement on the job.

### **Guidelines for Writing Learning Objectives:**

- A minimum of two objectives are suggested. Try to limit the amount of Learning Objectives to no more than six.
- Each Learning Objective should be specific, measurable, and limited to a single definite result. A measurable Learning Objective is a statement that clearly and precisely describes what it is the intern will accomplish by performing a task(s).
- Specific learning objectives may be included in a digital internship.

#### *Example:*

- Acquire hands-on experience and demonstrate skills of working in a virtual team.
- Explore and recognize the different information acquisition styles and preferred information handling strategies of virtual team members.
- Use the diverse working styles and traits of virtual team members to successfully collaborate in virtual environments.
- Explore effective general learning strategies and those applicable specifically to virtual learning environments.

- Carry out self-directed learning and learning in an online environment.
- Recognize how various learning approaches and strategies have direct workplace application.

### Steps to Writing Learning Objectives

1. Identify the noun, or thing you want students to learn.

*Example:* alternative text for images.

2. Identify the level of knowledge you want. In Bloom's Taxonomy, there are six levels of learning. It's important to choose the appropriate level of learning, because this directly influences the type of assessment

you choose to measure your students' learning.

*Example:* Apply alternative text for images.

3. Select a verb that is observable to describe the behavior at the appropriate level of learning using Bloom's Taxonomy.
4. Add additional criteria to indicate how or when the outcome will be observable to add context for the student. Example: Apply alternative text for images based on the context of the page.

An article that might be helpful for creating learning objectives: [Model for writing objectives](#)

## 1.2. PREPARE MATERIALS FOR INTERNSHIP

The package of necessary materials (documentation) should be developed and made available to students and supervisors before the internship. The list of materials useful for internship and digital internship can be expanded according to the needs of your HEI.

### BASIC DOCUMENTATION FOR INTERNSHIP

- Internship agreement
- Internship program description/regulations
- Template of process description for internship organization/ timeline of internship process
- Intern's self evaluation form
- Host organisation's evaluation form of intern's performance
- Template of internship report

### GUIDELINES

- Guidelines for supervisors at HEIs
- Guidelines for supervisors at receiving organisations
- Guidelines for students
- Communication guidelines
- Guidelines on how to organise online introductory event for internship supervisor

## 1.3 HELP STUDENTS FIND THEIR HOST ORGANISATION

In general, it is the responsibility of a HEI to ensure that students get an internship, and many HEIs are taking a great role in connecting students to internship opportunities. Some institutions basically help with a résumé, however, a list of potential host organisations and student's preparation for the interview with them are all crucial components to the satisfaction and success of an internship experience.

Make sure to provide students with basic information and resources for finding internship places. Several possible ways are useful:

- provide information about organisations – potential internship sites – in HEI career centre or similar structure; outline in-person and remote internships;
- provide information about ways to find vacancy notices on companies' and organisations' websites;
- provide guidelines on how students can optimize their profile on LinkedIn or similar platforms to apply for internship ;
- provide information about Erasmus+ internship offers (see [Erasmus+ internship offers](#)).

It is important to match the student with the right host organisation. A student-industry and student-organisation profile matching approach is proposed to evaluate students' profiles and map the academic criteria to potential companies offering internship placement. Student's internship should be tied to desired career fields.

In many cases, it can be difficult for students to find good internships, particularly if they're interested in entrepreneurial or non-profit opportunities or if they're unable to pay the fees that some internship matching services charge. But it can be a challenge for small companies, startups, and nonprofits to find qualified interns. Different internship search sites might be helpful to match the intern with the organisation at national or global level (especially in case of digital or remote internship) (e.g., [Getting an Internship | InternMatch](#)).

## 1.4. PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR THE INTERNSHIP

### Informative preparation

**We suggest organising the introductory lecture about the internship.** It serves as an orientation event for students before the internship starts and gives an opportunity for students to receive essential information about internship requirements and process, to hear examples of good practice and ask questions, as well as to get to know their internship supervisors from HEI. Introduction to internship can be done through video conference. The presence of the director of the study program or coordinator of internship (or similar position) and supervisors from HEI in the introductory lecture is recommended.

### Topics to be presented in the introductory lecture:

- The role of internship in obtaining the qualification
- Internship objectives
- General description of internship (duration and process, tasks, deadlines, etc.)
- Requirements for internship (deliverables (report, diary, etc.)), communication with supervisors, etc.)
- Criteria of assessment of internship performance
- Information about documentation/materials related to internship
- ICT tools useful for digital internship (see the list of digital tools)

- Suggestions and resources for seeking internship sites (receiving organisations)
- Introducing students to internship supervisors from HEI
- Examples of successful internship experience (possibly, presented by alumni)
- Support provided by HEI to interns in the course of internship and channels of asking for support
- Q and A session

## Technological preparation

HEI should consider the needs of students to have some basic training in the use of digital tools necessary for video conferencing, networking etc. Interns need to have a lot of technological skills before they can get started and specific skills in using the ICT platforms because the technology used has an impact on the degree of involvement

from the student. Consider providing training in the specific technology that will be used for online communication with the company supervisor. Students in digital internship must possess the same skill-set as students in online study – high level of technical competence.

## Psychological preparation

HEI should consider providing students with some training (seminar, introductory course) or material (written or in video format) as to how to be self-motivated, self-directed learner and disciplined intern to achieve internship objectives. Not all students have developed these attitudes and skills enough. Students who have been successful in online courses may find digital internships easier

to manage in the sense of time management skills, autonomy and self-motivation. High motivation for successful achievement of internship objectives is very important since even very well-designed digital internships assign the predominant responsibility for asking questions and seeking advice to the student.

## 1.5. PREPARATION OF SUPERVISORS FOR THE INTERNSHIP

Internship represents a mutually beneficial relationship between supervisor and students, in which interns apply conceptual and theoretical classroom knowledge to the organisation to gain valuable skills and experiences that are useful to their future professional endeavors. **Supervising relationships are characterized by an “expert” providing support and guidance to a “novice”.**

**Important characteristics of internship supervisors both in HEI and organisations are:**

- Interest in working with students;
- Having time to invest in the internship, especially during the first few weeks;
- Having qualities such as leadership, strong communication, and patience.

Usually supervisors might be consumed in other activities, meetings, or phone calls, which can lead to a lack of time for supervision over the intern. So it is very important that the internship materials, supervision process and methods as well as digital tools for doing it remotely are well described, adapted and prepared. Internship supervisors need guidance and direction on how they can make supervision more effective and what to expect from it.

**Supervisors play an essential role in the shaping of the (online) relationship, specifically in terms of how available they are to the intern and the use of various tools that allow them to support the intern effectively.** Highly structured guidance is necessary to ensure independent

working. Meeting both internship supervisors before the internship is important – a student's close relationship would be the best for the success of an internship. Initial connection that the supervisor and student make is crucial to the expectations of the student and sets tone for the relationship throughout the internship.

We recommend to organise a meeting with all the supervisors before the interns are assigned to them and to organisations and talk through the main points and provide information as to:

- what is the minimum frequency of meetings with interns and what forms of meetings are expected – individual or group;
- what is the role of supervisor at all stages of internship;
- what are the deliverables of intern during and after the internship and the evaluation criteria of intern's performance;
- what technologies for communicating with and reviewing student's work are available in HEI;
- when or in which cases should they contact the student's supervisor from the receiving organisation;
- what support from HEI supervisors can receive in the course of supervision, including guidelines, handbook, advice etc.

**Make sure that supervisors from receiving organisations** receive all the necessary information about the internship before it starts – no later than

when a student is assigned to the organisation. HEI might consider organising an online event for interested supervisors from organisations to give a short introduction into the internship program. Develop a process description in HEI about who (student or HEI representative) and when sends information about the internship program and interns to the host organisation and develop a list of materials/information that should be provided to host organisation and supervisor, for example:

- intern's name and contact information
- the name of higher education institution, study program, level of study
- name and contact information of supervisor from the higher education institution
- the duration of internship and the number of internship hours; part-time or full-time internship
- the list of goals/objectives and tasks of the internship defined by HEI
- materials/documents of internship provided by HEI (guidelines or handbook for supervision, assessment forms, regulations etc.)
- digital tools (programs) that are specific for the study field and business field, useful to carry out internship tasks and/or available to intern (e.g., architecture or design software)
- what time zone intern is in (in case of digital internship)
- the approximate number of hours a supervisor will have to devote to an intern.