

Guidelines

for Designing and Conducting

Joint Workshops for Tutors from VET and Mentors from Enterprises

to Support High Quality
Apprenticeships



Q PLACEMENTS

VET ENTERPRISE COOPERATION

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Lifelong
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Programme



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Introduction

This material was prepared within EU LLP LDV Transfer of Innovation project “VET-Enterprise Cooperation for Quality Assurance of VET Placements and Apprenticeships: Introducing Q-Placements Model” (2013-2015).

The aim of Q-Placements Project was to improve the quality of national and transnational work placements, apprenticeships, other forms of work-based learning (WBL) through better cooperation between VET and enterprises/host companies.

Q-Placements Project outputs are:

- 1)** Research report reflecting the views of VET schools, stakeholders and enterprises regarding organization and quality of apprenticeships;
- 2)** Joint training methodology for VET tutors and mentors from host companies involved in supervising apprenticeships: see Guidelines;
- 3)** Training events at EU level and in 4 countries: Train-the-Trainer workshop; workshops in Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, Slovenia;
- 4)** Lead-trainers in each partner country; Trained tutors from VET and host companies with better skills of cooperation, with skills of ensuring better quality of placements;
- 5)** Recommendations, proposals for improved procedures, policies, etc.;

Despite different VET systems and different levels and forms of work-based learning (WBL) in project countries: Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain and Slovenia, the needs analysis results were similar. All key players: VET schools, employers and stakeholders recognize the important role of the apprenticeship tutor/mentor. Schools emphasize the need for professional and qualified mentors in companies and believe that close cooperation with mentors in companies is of utmost importance. At the same time, they note that one of the barriers for successful apprenticeship process is unwillingness of companies to be involved and cooperate. On the other hand, employers and stakeholders expect sufficient and regular assistance from VET schools. The survey indicates that both sides see cooperation, mutual and continuous support to each other and to the Trainee essential for quality of apprenticeships. Joint training

of tutors/mentors from VET schools and host companies is a practical way to communicate expectations, initiate and strengthen on-going cooperation, improve communication and guidance skills.

More information about the Q-Placements Project and its results is available at the project website: www.qualityplacements.eu

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Background

In Europe the quality and relevance of vocational education has become a key priority. European Commission puts stronger emphasis on

- work-based learning, apprenticeships,
- stronger cooperation between VET sector and enterprises, stakeholders;
- international mobilities.

Thus, Europe 2020 strategy flagship initiative *An Agenda for new skills and jobs*¹ urges to “develop partnerships between the worlds of education/training and work”, and urges employers to co-invest in VET and to facilitate provision of work-based learning and apprenticeships. Flagship initiative *Youth on the Move*² calls for policies to reduce youth unemployment through “young people’s entry into labour market through apprenticeships...”

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0682&from=en>

² http://ec.europa.eu/youthonthemove/about/index_en.htm

*The Bruges Communiqué*³ lists key priorities for VET, among them, high quality I-VET. The concept of Quality and Relevance is elaborated:

- quality assurance which implies national quality assurance frameworks for VET providers which apply to work-place learning and which is compatible with EQAVET;
- quality of teachers, trainers and VET professionals;
- labour market relevance should be enhanced through cooperation between schools and enterprises, social partners, stakeholders.

Bruges Communiqué sets short term deliverables, including the task to “maximize work-based learning, including apprenticeships”. Initiative *Rethinking Education*⁴ urges to promote work-based learning including quality of apprenticeships. “Apprenticeships require clear regulatory frameworks, defined roles of players”.

*Riga Conclusions*⁵ highlights necessity

- to promote investment in work-based learning by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship;
- to further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET;
- to enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems;
- to further strengthen key competences such as language skills and digital literacy in VET curricula;
- to introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for the initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf.

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1389776578033&uri=CELEX:52012DC0669>

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf.

Q-Placements Model for Quality of Apprenticeships

To meet EU strategic objectives countries look for innovative solutions and tools. Project partners' earlier experience in HansaVET⁶ project focussed on training VET tutors for successful communication and guidance of the VET trainee/student and the host company during 3 stages of apprenticeship process (preparation, implementation, evaluation). HansaVET Project experience showed that workshop participants could benefit more if tutors/ mentors from companies were also involved in the same training workshops. Another valuable initiative was *Q-Placements Handbook for the Quality of International Workplace Training*⁷ which is a comprehensive guide for cooperation of the 3 key actors (VET, Enterprise, and Trainee). Although the Q-Placements Handbook was designed for international mobilities of IVET, research suggests that about 80 % of procedures are the same for national/local placements and apprenticeships. The Handbook defines the quality concept in the context of placements, roles and responsibilities of involved parties: tutors from VET schools and companies, students; procedures, documentation, and most importantly - guidance which is needed for high quality placements.

The Handbook served as impetus to start a new project „Q-Placements: VET-Enterprise Cooperation for Quality Assurance of VET Placements and Apprenticeships: Introducing Q-Placements Model“.

Q-Placements Model, in the context of this project, is based on the assumption that the quality of guidance provided to VET students depends on the communication and cooperation skills of the tutors/mentors both at VET schools and host companies. Therefore, the Q-Placements approach is to offer a unique methodology emphasizing joint training programme for tutors from VET schools and mentors from enterprises on how to ensure quality of apprenticeships.

To use the Q-Placements Model in Project partner countries, Guidelines for conducting joint workshops were developed. It is advised to read these Guidelines in conjunction with Q-Placements Handbook, in particular, Sections 4 and 5 as they set out quality assurance process and procedures.

The Guidelines are indicative and have to be adapted to the specific national or local context.

⁶ "HansaVET - Hanseatic Tradition for VET: Mobility Strategies for Promoting Enterpenrenship Skills of VET Students".
http://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/projekti_old/hansavet_old.shtml

⁷ <http://www.q-placements.eu/results.html>

Joint workshops for tutors from VET schools and mentors from companies

Follow these tips to make sure your workshop is a valuable experience for every participant:

1. The content of the joint workshops should focus on ensuring quality during the three stages of workplace training process: preparation, implementation and evaluation by key stakeholders - VET institution, apprentice and the company. All three stages are important and should be equally addressed when planning and running Q- Placements workshop.
2. Both, the content and training methods of the workshop, should aim at strengthening cooperation between VET and host company throughout the process of apprenticeship, and therefore, should strive to improve communication between VET school and enterprise, tutors and mentors, and their communication with the Trainee.
4. Before designing Q-Placements workshop program review practices in providing apprenticeships – make use of findings from Q-Placements Project Needs Analysis Report and existing best practices, re-examine legal framework and quality assurance system, pay attention to problem issues, current developments, etc. The issues discussed during training will vary based on different workplace training systems and players.
5. To create added value, it is recommended that the training program is developed and workshop moderated by 2 tutors – one representing education, the other - labour market.
6. Clarify the requirement area and scope of the workshop. Try to answer the following: What are you trying to accomplish by bringing the participants together? How will you know the workshop has been successful? Consider VET stakeholders' needs.

- 7.** Use Workshop Planning Template (Annex 1) to help you organize and complete the workshop planning and preparation activities. When planning workshop content do not forget about organizational and practical issues which are equally important.
- 8.** To reach the workshop objectives, it is crucial that Q-Placements workshop is attended by apprenticeship tutors from VET schools and mentors from companies, not just representatives from these institutions. If necessary, consider organizing separate event for VET school and host company managers to introduce Q-Placements Model, discuss the quality aspects of apprenticeships and training needs of tutors/mentors.
- 9.** Although the direct target audience of the workshop is tutors from VET schools and mentors from companies, stay focused on the most important player – VET trainee/apprentice.
- 10.** The motivation to participate can be achieved by designing clear and understandable objectives and outcomes of the workshop. Remember that all participants should benefit from the workshop. If the workshop is not valuable for everyone involved it would be waste of time and money.
- 11.** When selecting participants it is advisable to keep balance between participants from VET schools and companies to reflect different opinions and experience during the workshop, as well as age and gender balance.
- 12.** The promotion channels for the workshop may vary among different countries, e.g., the VET school representatives could be reached directly by sending invitations to schools and companies, via respective bodies in charge of delivering apprenticeships, social partners, etc. Another effective communication tool could be company or school visits to promote the workshop.

- 13.** Be creative in designing the training program. Formats can vary according to the specific needs. For example, trainings could be organized in three parts: introductory workshop followed by practical application of knowledge and skills when working with apprentices, and by a concluding workshop with analysis and reflection. Workshops can be organized for participants coming from the same or different sectors, or even - for one profession.

- 14.** To make workshop practical and achieve high intensity of sharing experience, we advise to use interactive teaching techniques (e.g. case studies, problem solving, coaching elements, simulations, role-plays, peer learning, brainstorming, group work, e.g., dividing participants into small groups of 3-4 people, pair work, etc.).

- 15.** Training format requires active involvement and it is recommended that the group is not too big. The optimum size is between twelve and twenty participants.

Covering Three Stages of Apprenticeship Process

The content of the joint workshop can be summarized in a short formula: 3 key actors during 3 stages of apprenticeship process. The 3 key actors are: the VET Student/ Trainee, VET school (VET tutor), host enterprise (mentor). The workshop should focus on the roles and responsibilities, documentation, actions, and especially – on communication of the three actors during the whole workplace training process: preparation, implementation and evaluation. All three stages are important and should be equally addressed when planning and running Q- Placements workshop. Consult *Q-Placements Handbook*; in particular, Sections 4 and 5 as they set out quality assurance process and procedures.

Preparation stage issues:

From VET institution perspective:

- Making sure that necessary policies, procedures, documents are in place;
- Selecting trainees for companies;
- Understanding trainees and company expectations from apprenticeship;
- Explaining the expected learning outcomes by delivering a work program (plan) to trainees and company representatives;
- Preparing trainees for apprenticeship (good code of conduct, necessity to communicate problems if any with company tutor and VET tutor);
- Explaining to trainees the requirements of apprenticeship report;
- Signing agreement from VET side on apprenticeship with trainees and the company;
- If necessary, meeting trainee's family members.

From company perspective:

- Making sure that necessary policies, procedures, documents related to preparation stage are in place;
- Understanding the apprenticeship program and expected outcomes of apprenticeship via effective communication with VET representatives;
- Preparing working place;
- Appointing company tutor for apprentices;
- Informing company staff about incoming apprentices;
- Preparing welcome package to apprentices;
- Preparing welcome session to apprentices;
- Signing apprenticeship contract/s with apprentices and VET.

Implementation stage issues:

From VET institution perspective:

- making sure that necessary policies, procedures, documents related to implementation stage are in place;
- monitoring progress of apprenticeship by providing regular visits to company;
- ensuring communication with the apprentice and the company tutor on regular basis.

From company perspective:


- making sure that necessary policies, procedures, documents related to implementation stage are in place;
- conducting welcome and introduction session in workplace;
- ensuring that assigned tasks are provided to the apprentice;
- communicating with VET tutor about problems if any occur;
- delivering feedback to apprentices on progress achieved and fulfilment of program.

Evaluation stage issues:

From VET institution perspective:

- making sure that necessary policies, procedures, documents related to evaluation stage are in place;
- receiving and evaluating report on apprenticeship;
- preparing and presenting apprenticeship report (wherever is appropriate);
- gathering feedbacks from apprentices on their experience in the company;
- analysing results of apprenticeship in order to improve quality.

From company perspective:

- making sure that necessary policies, procedures, documents related to evaluation stage are in place;
 - providing feedbacks to apprentices on their progress during apprenticeship;
 - signing apprentices' reports (wherever is appropriate);
 - communicating results/ experience with VET representatives/ tutors, providing feedback.
- 

Annex 1

Use the Workshop Planning Template to help you organize and complete the workshop planning and preparation activities.

Workshop planning template

Aims of the workshop:

Timing	Topic/Theme/ Activity	Content description	Expected outcomes	Methods used	Hand-outs	Resources (e.g.projector, pens, etc.)

Annex 2

Example of a Training Programme for VET and Enterprise Tutors/Mentors (Latvia)

Joint Workshops “Cooperation between VET and Enterprises for High Quality of Work Placements/Apprenticeships”

Day 1					
Timing	Topic	Content	Learning Outcomes	Methods	Handouts
14:00 – 14:15 (15 minutes)	Opening of the Workshop. Introduction	Opening of the workshop. Information about Q-Placements project: project goals, expected results;	Participants understand the importance and relevance of Q-Placements project.	Presentation	Presentation slides electronically and printed;
14:15 – 14:45 (30 minutes)	Introductions of participants; Key issues for quality of apprenticeships	“Who are the people in our group?” Key issues for quality of apprenticeships as seen by participants of the workshop	Positive workshop environment, the feeling of a professional community sharing the same goals	Individual task “Collective knowledge”: — please present yourself; define challenges which you face when trying to ensure the quality of apprenticeships; what could be my contribution to improving the quality of apprenticeships	Paper or post-its of 2 colours Presentation „Goals of the Workshop”
14:45 – 15:15 (30 minutes)	The process and stages of an apprenticeship; Key actors, their expectations, roles and contribution to high quality of apprenticeships.	Participants’ express their views regarding “what is apprenticeship of good quality?” Participants discuss the process of apprenticeships and stages, and interrelation between stages, as well as how each of the stages contributes to overall quality and results of the apprenticeship.	Improved understanding of the apprenticeship process and its separate stages and of factors contributing to quality	Discussion or brainstorming with contributions from participants	Ppt presentation “The process and stages of a high-quality apprenticeship”
15:15 – 15:45 (30 minutes)	Coffee break				

15:45 – 16:15 (30 minutes)	Stage 1: Preparation stage. The roles and responsibilities of 3 key actors; Documentation	Activities, procedures during preparation stage at VET school and at the Host Enterprise; What communication is necessary among Key Actors; Documentation which has to be identified and discussed during preparation stage	Knowledge of the required activities and procedures, documents. Participants are able to define the roles and responsibilities of 3 key actors.	Ppt, discussion	PPT „Preparation stage, roles and responsibilities of key actors; Documentation“ Q-Placements Handbook
16:15 – 17:00 (45 minutes)	Using coaching as a guidance method for high quality apprenticeship	Introducing coaching as a guidance/support method and options for using it in communication with the Trainee	Participants understand the concept of coaching and why it can be useful as a guidance method during apprenticeships	Presentation/ demonstration (if time permits); discussion	PPT “Coaching as a guidance method for ensuring high quality apprenticeships”; Video
17:00 – 17:15	Coffee break				
17:15-18:00 (45 minutes)	Preparation stage: Case study	Presenrtation of a case description for preparation stage; Case analysis in small groups, presentations by participants of solutions	Skills/ability to identify and discuss causes and seek solutions	Case study; Group work; Presentations; Discussions	Presentation “Case study method” Case No.1 description
18:00 – 18:45 (45 minutes)	Practical skills of communication and cooperation during preparation stage.	Participants act within small groups, taking the roles of key actors covering one situation	Understanding the role of preparation stage for the whole apprenticeship process. Getting into shoes of another party (VET or enterprise, or trainee) and experiencing the challenges of preparation stage from another point of view; better understanding of interests and expectations of other key actors	Group work; Simulation game; Feedbacks on group work; Discussion	Case description for simulation game

Day 2					
Timing	Topic	Content	Learning Outcomes	Methods	Handouts
9:00 – 9:15 (15 minutes)	Warming up				
9:15 – 10:00 (45 minutes)	Stage 2: Apprenticeship implementation stage Main issues to be dealt with; best practices;	Identifying key problems for good quality of apprenticeships during implementation stage from VET point of view and from ENT point of view; Best practices/ experience of participants in overcoming/resolving problems	Knowledge and understanding of main problems for quality of apprenticeships during implementation stage, understanding different perspectives: VET perspective and ENT perspective; Learning about and from best practices of other participants	Group presentations; Brainstorming; Peer learning; Discussion	PPT „Implementation stage of an apprenticeship“ Q-Placements Handbook
10:00 – 10:30	Implementation stage: roles and responsibilities of Key Actors; Documentation	Activities, procedures at VET schools and ENT for ensuring good quality of apprenticeship. Roles and responsibilities of Key Actors, Cooperation and Communication. Documentation.	Knowledge and understanding of all procedures and documentation, as well as communication from VET and ENT side During implementation stage. Participants are aware of roles and responsibilities of all key actors and their cooperation and communication tasks during implementation stage.	Presentation; Group work; Discussion.	PPT „Implementation stage of an apprenticeship“ QP Handbook
10:30 – 11:00	Implementation stage: Case study	Discussing and analyzing a case for implementation stage of an apprenticeship. Discussing involvement and actions of involved parties.	Understanding the role of each Key actor and the need for communication and cooperation between them during implementation stage.	Group work Case analysis Presentations Discussion	Case No.2 description Q-Placements Handbook
11:00 – 11:30 (30 minutes)	Coffee break				

11:30 – 12:00 (30 minutes)	Questions and Answers about ensuring quality during implementation stage. Identifying best practices.	Identifying and discussing best practices of overcoming problems and ensuring quality during implementation stage.	Knowledge and understanding of possible actions, including cooperation and communication between VET and ENT, and Trainee, to achieve good quality of an apprenticeship.	Discussion; Brain-storming Peer learning	Q-Placements Handbook
12:00 - 13:00 (60 minutes)	Stage 3, Final Stage: Evaluation stage of an apprenticeship	Activities, procedures and documentation to be completed by each of the involved parties/key Actors; Communication and Cooperation during evaluation stage;	Knowledge and understanding of activities and procedures, including communication and cooperation among parties, during evaluation stage of an apprenticeship. Participants can define the role and responsibilities of involved parties during the final stage;	Presentation; Group work Discussion	PPT „Evaluation stage of an apprenticeship“ Q-Placements Handbook
13:00 – 14:00 (60 minutes)	Lunch				
14:00 – 15:00 (60 minutes)	The role of evaluation stage for ensuring good quality of current and future apprenticeships	Participants share their experience and best practices for evaluation stage	Understanding the role and relevance of procedures at evaluation stage for overall quality of the apprenticeships. Learning from experience of other participants; Skills of problem-solving;	Group work; Presentation; Discussion; Peer learning;	Q-Placements Handbook
14:30 – 15:15 (45 minutes)	Review of the process of apprenticeship and the role of cooperation and communication; What needs to be changed in our actions and procedures	Participants share their thoughts about what they have earned/ gained; Participants answer question: What shall I change in my routine or working procedures?	Understanding the perspectives of involved parties/key actors in ensuring quality throughout the process of apprenticeship; understanding the role of communication between VET, ENT and Trainee, understanding participant's own potential for improving the quality of apprenticeships	Feedbacks and comments of participants; Discussion	Q-Placements Handbook
15:15 – 16:00 (15 minutes)	Closing of the workshop. Satisfaction survey of participants. Awarding certificates.				

Conclusions and Recommendations of Q-Placements Project

1. The developed Q-Placements Model can contribute to the quality of apprenticeships in different VET systems (e.g., dual or not) whenever there are 3 main actors involved in VET process: VET Trainee/Apprentice, VET school, Enterprise;
2. While in all project countries there is VET-Enterprise cooperation at macro-level (VET systems – stakeholders) to support quality of placements/ apprenticeships, there is a need to improve communication and cooperation at micro-level (individual VET schools – host enterprises), since their expectations and perceptions of their roles may differ;
3. VET-Enterprise cooperation is not limited to providing places for apprenticeships. Stakeholders representing employers and enterprises create or support much of “infrastructure” for apprenticeships or other forms of WBL: list or accredit companies which offer apprenticeship places, maintain platforms for searching and applying for apprenticeships, develop guidelines or handbooks regarding apprenticeships for sectors or companies, take care of professional development of mentors at enterprises, organize training and/or certification;
4. It is profitable for companies to be involved in apprenticeship schemes. However, there are many obstacles, legislation matters, requirements (very different from country to country; they may be related to salaries, social securities, other specific demands) which make it too complicated and not attractive for companies at all. We need to lift those barriers, whilst keeping an eye on the employability in general for apprentices. Regulations regarding apprenticeships should be simple and flexible.

5. Cooperation and communication between VET schools and host enterprises must cover all stages of apprenticeship process and many issues to ensure the quality of apprenticeship. For involved parties, it is necessary to establish procedures for cooperation, and to train both sides (VET tutors, mentors from enterprises) for their roles.
6. Best practices of cooperation between VET and enterprises, especially, enterprises offering high quality apprenticeships, should be actively promoted. The best companies should be awarded. For this purpose, national or EU-level awards/prizes should be established.
7. Joint training for VET tutors and mentors from enterprises will help to reach better understanding of their roles, to learn about the expectations of the other party, to establish desired cooperation in supporting the trainee/apprentice;
8. Joint workshops can be used for specific sector and/or to address a specific problem (e.g. drop-outs in WBL in hairdressers' sector, the Netherlands);
9. Joint workshops (Q-Placements training content) can be integrated into other training programmes for VET tutors or mentors from enterprises.
10. Alternatively, the Q-Placements programme of joint workshops can be expanded by adding topics or creating modules relevant for both groups: e.g., expectations of VET, Enterprise, trainee/apprentice; abilities of young people/youth culture; learning methods; validation of skills, qualification; etc.

Abstract:

“Guidelines for Designing and Conducting Joint Workshops for Tutors from VET and Mentors from Enterprises ...” were developed within Q-Placements project “*VET-Enterprise Cooperation for Quality Assurance of VET Placements and Apprenticeships*” (2013-2015). One of the main assumptions of the project was that the quality of apprenticeships depends on cooperation between VET schools and host companies, as well as communication between tutors and mentors, and their communication with the Trainee throughout apprenticeship process. Guidelines outline the content and methodology for organizing joint workshops, i.e., training tutors from VET schools and mentors from enterprises together. The publication also presents conclusions and recommendations of project partners regarding organization of apprenticeships/WBL, cooperation between VET and enterprises and training for tutors from VET schools and mentors from enterprises.



