WORK PLACEMENT PACKAGE

Summary Report

Prepared by the UIIN and Groningen WEXHE teams

Principal author: Hacer Tercanli

Amsterdam and Groningen, 2020

PROJECT PARTNERS

Contents

INTRODUCTION

This summary report compiles the information and guidelines from the Work Placement Package of Work Package 4 of the WEXHE project, composed of content discussing three work placement approaches - integrated approach, clearing house / intermediary approach, and corporate approach - identified through the analysis of around 30 WEXHE case studies of good practice. This summary report is based on three detailed packages which cover the different approaches. The full reports can be accessed through the WEXHE website: https://wexhe.eu.

The cases identified by WEXHE covering a range of different countries, show a great variety of work placement modes, even though they are limited to learning and training of university students in real work environments, i.e., at the workplaces carrying out meaningful workloads and assignments.

The three work placement approaches

The integrated approach refers to work-integrated learning that comprises a range of programmes and activities in which the theory of the learning is intentionally integrated with the practice of work through specifically designed curriculum, pedagogic practices and student engagement. In other words, this means that a work placement is an obligatory element within a degree programme.

The clearing house / intermediary approach refers to the model where universities and employers establish special foundations or non-profit institutions/ agencies, such as career centres, and authorise them to make the necessary arrangements for a work placement. These institutions step in between universities and employers and take up a clearing house role in terms that they provide information on students interested in work placement and on work placement posts offered by employers. They also provide services that enable effective matching of students and placement posts as well as high quality work placements.

The corporate approach focuses on the autonomous initiative of various types of organisations to offer work placements to students. This is not a model to strive for. However, in the absence of cooperation between employers and universities this approach helps meet short-term interests of students to earn some money and employers to engage additional labour as well as long-term interests of students to try out the knowledge acquired at the university, to develop further some competences and to get in touch with employers, and interests of employers to assure the development and recruitment of talents needed in the future as well as to demonstrate their social responsibility.

Organisation of the Report

This report presents targeted sections for the three types of work placement approaches. Each section provides information on the (i) learning and training arrangements and the (ii) organisational arrangements, as well as outlining goals and objectives of the work placement scheme. The learning and training arrangements focus on goals and objectives, key competences and learning outcomes, forms and methods of learning and

teaching, admission criteria and assessment of students. Organisational arrangements, on the other hand include the steps leading to effective implementation of work placement schemes.

The report is prepared as reference material, which helps public and private employers as well as universities dealing with work placements to find the best fitting ways to their particular circumstances/conditions. Therefore, it also contains a number of appendices, which serve as examples of practical tools taken from various WEXHE and other cases and literature.

1. THE INTEGRATED APPROACH

1.1. How can universities, employers and students benefit from the work placement scheme within an integrated approach?

Universities benefit from a work placement scheme as it allows them to follow rapid changes in industry and society, foster understanding and use of theory in practice, acquaint students with the world of work, evaluate study programmes and increase the image of the university.

Employers gain the opportunity to identify talents, motivate, socialise and assess future employees, acquire new ideas and technologies based on cooperation with universities, disburden existing employees and achieve better image in the eyes of clients.

Students benefit as they acquire and improve competences that are essential for life and work, and which can be best developed in a work environment. Spending a substantial amount of time with an employer brings a student experiences on how to practically apply theoretical knowledge and skills at the work place. It enables the development of job specific skills and competences as well as introducing and familiarizing a student with an organisational environment and culture.

1.2. What does an integrated approach to work placement entail?

- Integration of the work placement in a study programme as an integral element
- Identification of competences and skills to be developed during a placement in a regular work environment (work place)
- Identification of prior knowledge, competences and skills needed (and developed by course work) for a successful work placement
- Identification of work situations, projects and methods of competences' and skills' development
- Attraction of sufficient employers who offer high quality work placements to students providing appropriate workplaces, mentors, equipment, supervision and working conditions
- Provision of mentors at the university and prepare students for work placement
- Provision of placements to all students of a certain study programme who do not find appropriate placements themselves
- Upgrading of students' existing competences and skills and develop additional ones
- Assessment of acquired competences and skills and awarding of students credits and certificates.

1.3. What are the learning and training arrangements to be considered?

a. Competences and skills: The cases collected in the WEXHE project indicate that a work placement is very much focused on the development of transversal/ generic competences and skills. The most frequently mentioned competences include: Communication, social relations and negotiation; Team working and networking; Problem solving and decision making; Initiating creative and/or innovative ideas;

Independent learning and working; Capacity and enthusiasm to learn; Entrepreneurship and Leadership; IT skills. The cases from soft pure (e.g. humanities) and hard applied (e.g. engineering) disciplinary areas additionally include the competence design and management of projects and processes; Soft-applied (e.g. social sciences) and hard-applied fields' cases identified organisational abilities (attention to details, timeliness, work under pressure); Soft-pure (e.g. humanities) and soft-applied fields' (e.g. social sciences) cases put forward abstract, strategic and analytical thinking and skills; and Soft-applied field cases only highly accentuate critical reflection on work experiences and ethics.

b. Learning/ teaching format: Forms and methods of learning and teaching of students involve different combinations and configurations of (i) course work, (ii) project work, and (iii) placements in a regular work environment.

c. Admission and submission of applications: In an integrated approach all students of a certain study programme are obliged to do a work placement. The university should require an active placement approach of every student including a well-designed plan, which provides for expected learning outcomes during placement. For an integrated approach to work placement, it is expected that universities maintain their network of placement offering organisations. In spite of this, students are expected to apply for a placement position and a placement provider decides on one's acceptance or refusal. If a placement provider mentor is involved in the preparation of a placement plan this procedure can be simplified. The selection procedure to find students for a placement is carried out by the placement provider, by universities or in cooperation between the two. Candidates for a placement are usually asked to submit an (informal) application.

d. Assessment of Students and Certification: Frequently mentioned assessment instruments are:

- Students' records/ diaries/ personal journals on daily/ weekly activities
- Students' written reports on the projects' realisation, process and placement results – interim and final
- Students' physical/ oral/ video presentations of project results and reports
- University supervisor's examination and assessment of students during and at the end of a placement
- University and placement provider supervisors'/ mentors' performance appraisal and feedback to interns
- University and placement provider supervisors'/ mentors' progress and final reports

1.4. What are the organisational arrangements to be considered?
a. Process:

The placement process is composed of several activities and steps. It should be noted that universities can only implement a successful placement programme in cooperation with employers. Universities may agree with employers on different models of responsibility sharing. On the one extreme both partners agree on a clear division of tasks and responsibilities where each partner has its own. On the other extreme both partners decide to share tasks and responsibilities wherever possible, such as curriculum

planning, preparation of students for placement, elaboration of individual placement plans, mentoring, assessment of students' placement, etc.

The main steps are presented in the diagram 1 below:

```
┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 1. Curriculum /      │     │ 8. Placement         │     │ 9. Assignment of     │
│ study programme /    │     │ agreements:          │─────│ mentors: double      │
│ placement module     │     │ university,          │     │ mentoring            │
│ planning             │     │ employers, students  │     │                      │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
          │                           │                           │
┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 2. Updating /        │     │ 7. Selection of      │     │ 10. Start of         │
│ creating a placement │     │ students for         │     │ placement            │
│ provider network     │     │ placement            │     │                      │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
          │                           │                           │
┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 3. Preparation of    │     │ 6. Elaboration and   │     │ 11. Coaching /       │     │ 14. Evaluation of    │
│ staff for placement  │     │ approval of          │     │ mentoring /          │     │ placement and        │
│ mentoring,           │     │ placement plans /    │     │ supervising students │     │ reporting            │
│ assessment           │     │ projects             │     │                      │     │                      │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
          │                           │                           │                           │
┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 4. Preparation of    │     │ 5. Students'         │     │ 12. Midterm          │     │ 13. Assessment       │
│ students for         │─────│ application for      │     │ evaluation and       │─────│ (intermediary and    │
│ placement:           │     │ placements           │     │ reflection           │     │ final) and rewarding │
│ interviews,          │     │                      │     │                      │     │ of students          │
│ instructions         │     │                      │     │                      │     │                      │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
```
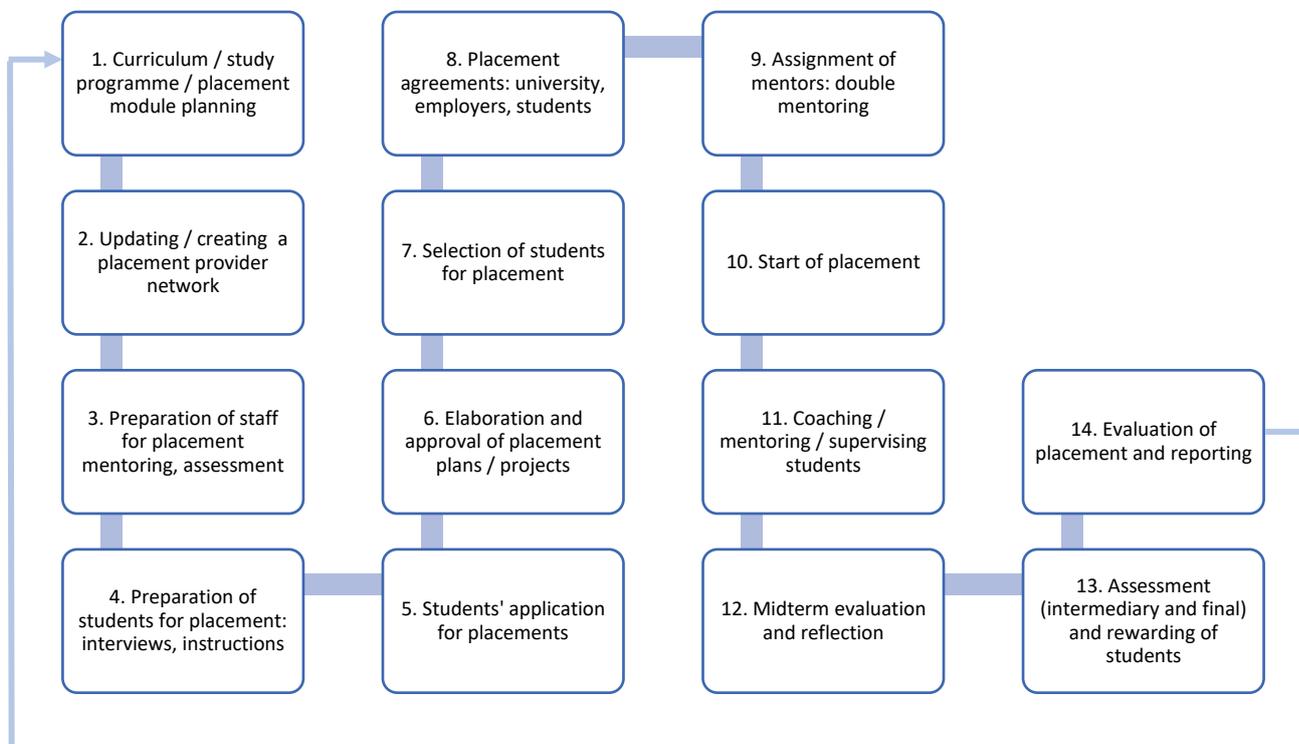
Diagram 1: An example of a placement process specification – integrated approach

b. Roles specifications: Main roles involved in a placement scheme include:

(i) Mentors / tutors / coaches: At the placement provider, mentors are chosen from among the experienced workers. Mentors at the universities may be teachers or a coordinator in charge of placement. Mentors can instruct students how to do the assigned jobs directly. However, a more important role of a mentor than direct instruction is overall guidance, support to students throughout their placement period, empowerment and building of self-confidence.

(ii) Supervisors/ project managers/ lecturers in charge/ course directors: Supervisors at the placement provider are responsible for supervising the student's placement activities. At the universities the role of supervisors can be taken by lecturers in charge of placements or by course or study programme coordinators.

(iii) Instructors/ personal educators/ facilitators: Supervisors would often assign an instructor/ personal educator/ facilitator from his/ her staff members to train the student. Instructors guide students throughout the work processes in order that they try out and practice various tasks.

(iv) Coordinators: They manage the placement and coordinate the activities of the other staff members involved in the work placement in the placement providing organisation

and at the university: supervisors and students. At the university they also attract placement providers and keep in contact with them.

1.5. How are the finances managed?

Work placements infer certain costs to the placement providers, universities, and students, as well as the benefits obtained in return. For the placement providers, the costs include labour, material, and administrative costs to match legislative and public schemes' requirements; for universities, it includes labour costs expressed in terms of time or additional jobs, and material costs that involves workplaces and equipment for additional staff, and insurances of students; and for students it is the costs of travel, meals, dresses, and additional insurances. Placement costs are substantial at the universities which are supposed to provide placement to all students. However, in the integrated approach to placement it is expected that all the placement costs are already covered by financing study programmes of which placement is an integral part. The students' costs are usually covered by placement providers or shared between them and universities. In some cases a third parties step in, e.g., the state which offers tax allowances to employers who provide placements or which subsidises specific placement projects; EU Erasmus programme offering money for international placements. Government schemes usually only allow for modest financial solutions.

1.6. How is the quality of the placement assured?

Quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation of a placement is a responsibility of universities and placement providers in most of the WEXHE cases. Various quality assurance and evaluation activities that interns and their supervisors are expected to perform are mentioned. The quality of a placement is usually assured by:

- A strong coordination by the university
- Examination of placement plans tailored to individual trainees
- Good preparation of staff before the placement cycle starts
- Good preparation of students before they go on placement
- Placement agreements between all three partners
- Training of mentors/ instructors/ supervisors for their teaching and coaching roles
- Mentors /instructors/ supervisors counselling and giving advice to students
- Regular meetings of supervisors with their students including their reports to coordinator

2. CLEARING HOUSE / INTERMEDIARY APPROACH

2.1. What does a clearing house approach to WBL refer to?

In the clearing house approach, universities and employers establish special foundations or similar non-profit institutions/ agencies, such as career centres, and authorise them to make the necessary arrangements for a work placement. Such an agency can provide services not only for multiple employers but also for more than one university. These institutions step in between universities and employers and play a clearing house role in terms that they provide information to students interested in work placements and show work placement posts offered by employers. They also provide services that enable effective matching of students and work placement posts as well as high quality work placements.

2.2. What is the goal of the clearing house approach to work placements?

The main goal of a clearing house approach to work placement is to match students' and employers' placement needs and to provide well-organised placement leading towards high quality learning outcomes.

2.3. What are the learning and training arrangements to be considered?

Many universities provide a window for a work placement for all students enrolled in a certain study programme. It can happen that a work placement module is not embedded in a study programme beyond a general requirement that students must obtain certain practice in a work environment. In many study/ teaching programmes a work placement is not even required. Yet, a clearing house approach to work placement enables all students to access well-structured work placements in which they may be interested, whether a placement is obligatory or optional.

a. Competences and skills: Most frequently mentioned competences include Communication, social relations and negotiation; Team working and networking; Problem solving and decision making; Initiating creative and/or innovative ideas ; Independent learning and working; Capacity and enthusiasm to learn; Entrepreneurship and Leadership; IT skills. The cases from soft pure (e.g. humanities) and hard applied (e.g. engineering) disciplinary areas additionally include the competences: Design and management of projects of processes, soft-applied (e.g. social sciences) and hard-applied fields include Organisational abilities - ability to plan and manage time (organisational skills); Soft-pure and soft-applied fields' cases put forward Abstract, strategic and analytical thinking and skills, and Soft-applied field cases accentuate Critical reflection on work experiences and ethics.

b. Learning/ teaching format: The main forms and methods of learning and teaching of students include (i) course work, (ii) project work, and (iii) placements in a regular work environment.

c. Admission criteria: In a clearing house placement approach, students of various study programmes contact the intermediary agency (foundation, career centre, etc.) expressing their interest to do a work placement and actively seeking the most appropriate

placement offer. For a clearing house approach to work placement it is expected that an intermediary agency maintains its network of placement offering organisations. The core of clearing house activities consists of an IT supported platform which enables employers to publish placement places and students to register their interests for placement. The matching can flow directly between employers and students, or intermediary agency can provide various kinds of assistance to make the process easier and better. At the end students are expected to apply for a placement position and a placement provider decides on one's acceptance or refusal. If a placement provider mentor/ supervisor is involved in the preparation of a placement plan this procedure can be simplified.

d. Assessment of students and certification: Certification of placements are naturally integrated into the study programmes. Students are awarded with a mark after completion of a placement and if this mark is sufficient with credits points. Some placement providers, in addition, issue certificates when students finish their placement. This practice provides a public recognition of work placements.

2.4. What are the organisational arrangements to be considered?

a. Process: In the clearinghouse approach universities and employers authorise intermediary agencies to organise work placements. Agencies can have the following responsibilities:

- Establish and maintain an IT supported platform for collecting and matching of information about placement posts and students interested in placement,
- Prepare students for work placement by offering courses/workshops on for example writing a CV, how to write an application letter, etc.
- Assist students, employers and universities in the process of preparing placement plans and approval,
- Organise meetings for students and placement provider representatives
- Assist in the preparation of learning agreements,
- Train and assist supervisors at the placement provider for their roles of supervision and mentoring,
- Assist in getting public subsidies for work placement if available,
- Monitor and evaluate work placement process,
- Write reports,
- Help dealing with legal issues; provide templates needed for work placement activities.

Employers can perform: Approval of work placement plans; Final selection of interns; Placing interns in workplaces, in work units and departments; Supervision of interns in terms of assignment of jobs and projects; On-the-job training; Daily monitoring of interns' activities, assessment of interns. *Universities* also retain responsibilities, such as: Curriculum planning; Preparing students for their placement; Approval of individual placement plans; Mentoring; Assessing students on placement; Awarding credits to students.

```
┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 1. IT placement     │      │ 6. Implementation of│   │ 7. Monitoring       │
│ platform            │      │ work placement plan │   │ placement           │
│ establishment and   │      │ and learning        │   │ – assesment and     │
│ maintenance         │      │ agreement           │   │ rewarding of        │
│                     │      │                     │   │ students            │
└─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 2. Organisational   │      │ 5. Assistance to    │   │ 8. Evaluation of    │
│ assistance to and   │      │ partners in         │   │ placement and       │
│ training of         │      │ placement/ learning │   │ reporting           │
│ partners' personnel │      │ agreements          │   │                     │
│                     │      │ preparation         │   │                     │
└─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
│ 3. Preparation of   │      │ 4. Assistance in    │
│ students for        │      │ placement plans/    │
│ placement:          │      │ projects            │
│ interviews,         │      │ elaboration         │
│ instructions        │      │                     │
└─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘
```
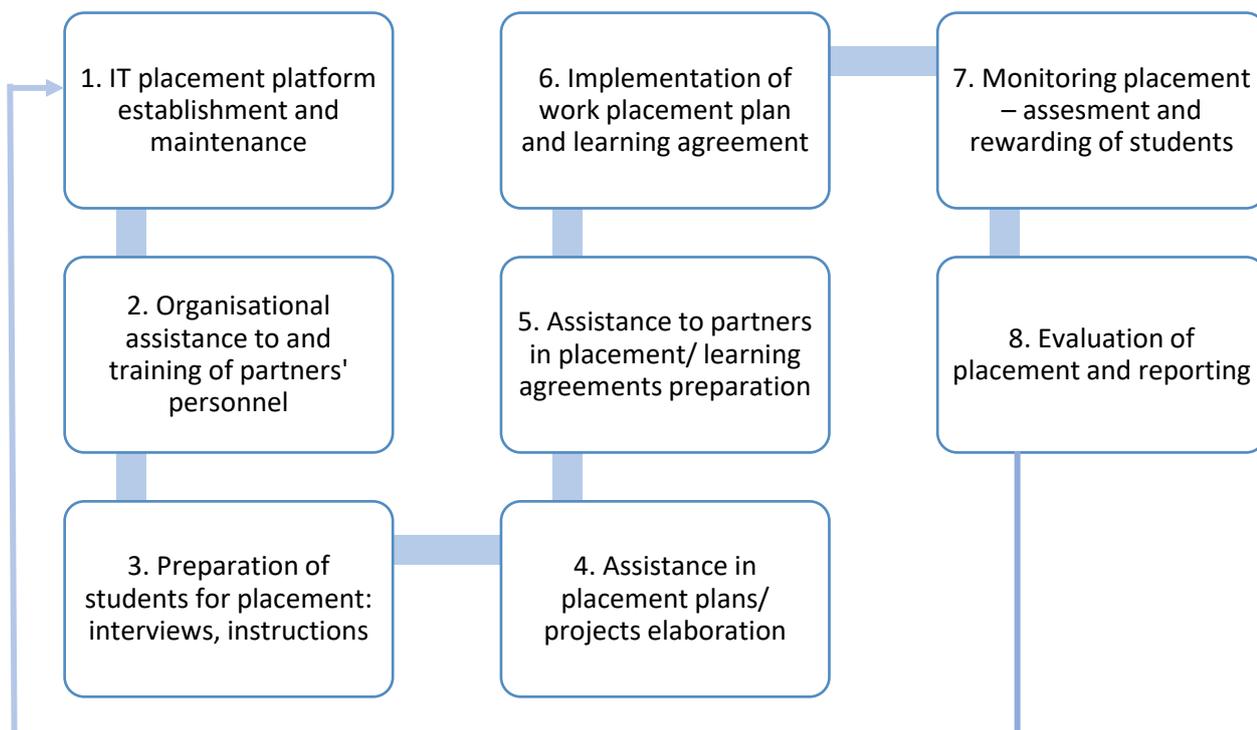
Diagram 2: An example of a placement process specification – clearing house approach

b. Roles specifications:

(i) Mentors/ tutors/coaches: At the placement provider, mentors are chosen from among the experienced workers. Mentors at the universities may be teachers or a coordinator in charge of placement.

(ii) Supervisors/ project managers/ lecturers in charge/ course directors: Supervisors at the placement provider are responsible for supervising the student's placement activities. At the universities the role of supervisors can be taken up by the lecturers in charge of placements or by course or study programme coordinators.

(iii) Instructors/ personal educators/ facilitators: Supervisors would often assign an instructor/ personal educator/ facilitator from his/ her staff members to train the student. Instructors guide students throughout the work processes in order that they try out and practice various tasks.

(iv) Coordinators: Coordinators manage the placement and coordinate the activities of the other staff members involved in the work placement at the employer, at the university and at the intermediary agency where they attract placement providers and keep contacts with them.

2.5. How are the finances managed?

In a clearing house approach of work placements one would expect that placement providers and universities will put together enough resources so that the authorised agency will be able to cover all the costs related to a work placement. In any case, costs coverage is a part of agreement between employers, universities and intermediary agencies and can vary from case to case. If the government offers placement subsidies,

this can either go directly to the placement providers or through the intermediary agencies.

2.6. How is the quality of the placement assured?

When universities or intermediate agencies design and coordinate a placement that is carried out in various employers' organisations with the involvement of public money it is recommended that an external evaluation is made. The agency performing the external evaluation may check the internal organisations' reports, reports prepared for the financier, and collects additional information by means of interviews, for instance.

The WEXHE cases do not reveal special attempts made to get placements publicly accredited probably because most often it is an integral part of a study programme and is therefore directly accredited and publicly recognised. A successfully finished placement provides interns with credit points, which contribute to the meeting of study requirements. In the countries with well-developed national qualifications systems there is a possibility to accredit placement as a specific study module.

3. CORPORATE APPROACH

3.1. What does a corporate approach to WBL refer to?

Corporate approach to WBL refers to the autonomous initiative of various types of organisations to offer work placements to students. This is not an ideal solution. However, in cases there is no cooperation between employers and universities this approach helps meet short-term interests of students - to earn some money - and employers to engage additional labour. The approach might serve long-term interests of students to try out the knowledge acquired at the university, to develop further some competences and to get in touch with employers. It serves the interests of employers to assure the development and recruitment of talents needed in the future as well as to demonstrate their social responsibility.

3.2. What is the goal of a corporate work placement approach?

The main goal of a corporate work placement approach is to establish a proper learning environment at an employer in order to achieve high quality learning outcomes.

3.3. What are the learning and training arrangements to be considered?

a. Competences and skills: The most frequently mentioned competences are Communication, social relations and negotiation; Team working and networking; Problem solving and decision making; Initiating creative and/or innovative ideas ; Independent learning and working; Capacity and enthusiasm to learn; Entrepreneurship and Leadership; IT skills. The cases from soft pure (e.g. humanities) and hard applied (e.g. engineering) disciplinary areas additionally include the competences: Design and management of projects of processes, soft-applied (e.g. social sciences) and hard-applied fields include Organisational abilities - ability to plan and manage time (organisational skills); Soft-pure and soft-applied fields' cases put forward Abstract, strategic and analytical thinking and skills, and Soft-applied field cases accentuate Critical reflection on work experiences and ethics.

b. Learning/ teaching format: Forms and methods of learning and teaching of students involve different combinations and configurations of (i) course work, (ii) project work, and (iii) placements in a regular work environment.

c. Admission criteria: In a corporate approach for work placements, placement providers can set up a placement programme/ module each year or periodically for a certain number of students involved in certain study programmes. Employers specify criteria that students need to meet in order to be admitted to the placement programme, e.g., field of study and achievements of students during their study period. SMEs can be more selective in their selection procedure. They do not need many interns because of the limited possibilities to properly place them due to their size and higher specialisation level. Therefore, SMEs tend to define the admission criteria for new interns more specifically. In the obtained WEXHE cases these criteria are Field of study; Marks obtained in the study process; Competences, such as language and communication skills; A draft of a placement plan; Extra-curricular activities and special achievements.

d. Assessment of students: Mentors and supervisors monitor students on the basis of their use of critical incident diaries, log books, or portfolios of work-based 'products' accompanied by evaluative comments highlighting what has been learnt. Other approaches could be the testing of and reapplying learning through discussion. Assessing strategies should include: what will be assessed and for what purpose, who will be involved in carrying out the assessment, what criteria will be applied, and in what form will public recognition of the learning be provided.

3.4. What are the organisational arrangements to be considered?

a. Process: The process specification for corporate approach is presented below:
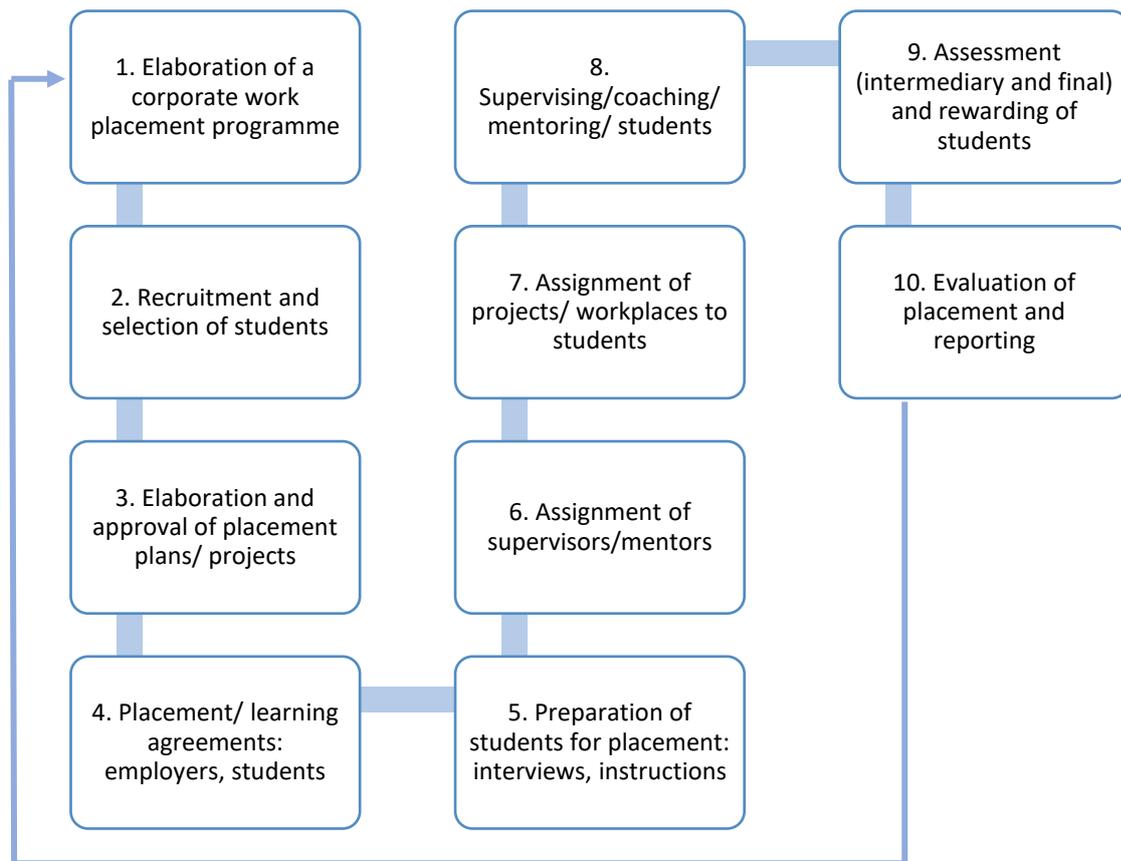
Diagram 3: An example of a placement process specification – corporate approach

<u>b. Roles specifications</u>:

(i) Mentors/ tutors/coaches: At the placement provider, mentors are chosen from among the experienced workers. Mentors at the universities may be teachers or a coordinator in charge of placement.

(ii) Supervisors/ project managers/ lecturers in charge/ course directors: Supervisors at the placement provider are responsible for supervising the student's placement activities. At the universities the role of supervisors can be taken by teachers in charge of placements or by course or study programme coordinators.

(iii) Instructors/ personal educators/ facilitators: Supervisors would often assign an instructor/ personal educator/ facilitator from his/ her staff members to train the student. Instructors guide students throughout the work processes in order that they try out and practice various tasks.

(iv) Coordinators: Coordinators manage the placement and coordinate the activities of the other staff members involved in the work placement at the employer, at the university and at the intermediary agency where they attract placement providers and keep contacts with them.

3.5. How are the finances managed?

Work placements infer certain costs to the placement provider and the students. However the WEXHE cases demonstrate that a placement may be organised in a rather modest way, meaning that there is a modest or no payment to students, students are not sent to additional courses and conferences, there is few investments in additional facilities and projects for the work of students, and rewards to supervisors and coordinators are modest - if given at all. The crucial point is that well trained supervisors are provided. The opposite situation can occur in case of rich placement providers that can raise enough resources to organise students' work placements. In some countries governments offer subsidies to placement providers, which decreases the amount of their investments. However, government schemes usually only allow for modest financial solutions.

3.5. How is the quality of the placement assured? The quality of a placement is usually assured by: Examination of placement plans tailored to individual students; Good preparation of students before they start working on placement; Placement agreements between partners; Training of mentors/ instructors/ supervisors for their teaching and coaching roles; Mentors/ instructors/ supervisors counselling and giving advice to students; Regular meetings of supervisors with their students including their reports to coordinator.

Evaluation of a placement should be structured in every organisation as a system of permanent activities ranging from goals setting, choice of measures to attain goals, implementation of measures, monitoring of the placement process and evaluation of the results, criteria of evaluation should be specified. Among the criteria special attention should be paid to meeting the goals and objectives of placement, i.e. to what extent the competences and skills specified in the placement plans are developed in the course of placement and to what extent the learning outcomes are achieved.