



# Strategic Paper From WBL cases to Applicable Packages

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## INTRODUCTION

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The initial approach of the WEXHE project was that seven national project teams would - as a first step - identify and describe 84 cases of work-based learning (WBL). On the basis of these case studies it was intended to elaborate modules of internship, traineeship and entrepreneurship in the defined disciplinary areas. approximately 75 of the expected cases were indeed collected. Finishing the additional cases was thought not worth the effort, because they would not really contribute to the overview obtained already.

This overview of the available cases reveals certain discrepancies between reality and what was expected in the project application. What the cases show us, is that not all of them clearly fit into a disciplinary area and mode of work-based learning as assumed in the application. Therefore, clear definitions of work-based learning delivery forms and disciplinary areas are required. Also the need has been identified to reflect on the observed discrepancies and their implications for the modules design. This will be done on the following pages with the aim to avoid misunderstandings. This analysis made has resulted in guidelines for the elaboration of modules.

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# 1. DEFINITIONS OF THE DIFFERENT MODES OF DELIVERY AND DISCIPLINARY AREAS

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After analysing a substantial number of WEXHE case studies, members of the Groningen, Münster and Ljubljana teams reached the conclusion that a clearer definition of how we have defined and classified the cases into the different modes of delivery and disciplinary areas was needed. By means of that, it gives the ‘outside world’ a common and clearer view of the definitions and criteria applied in the project, but also offer insight in the present debate about work-based learning, including entrepreneurship.

## Modes of Delivery

**Work placement/Internships:** The first issue refers to the term itself. The term internship is confusing, as it is also understood as traineeship (aimed at graduated students) and apprenticeship (aimed at vocational education and training (VET) and secondary students). We believe that the term ‘work placement’, on the other hand, does not suffer from the same problem. We, therefore, suggest **to avoid the terms internship and apprenticeship and use the term work placement instead** in all WEXHE materials.

A second issue refers to the definition of ‘work placement’. Our initial definition was: “a learning mode as a part of a degree programme, or related to that programme, in which a student gets practical training and work experience at the workplace. A placement is based on a formal contract or written arrangement between the provider, the HE institution and the student involved.”

In our analysis, we have found that a few of our cases do not meet these criteria. There were cases where students work with company-related tasks (e.g. issues/problems to be studied/analysed /solved) but which are not necessarily set *at* the workplace (Germany, UK). In others, there was no workload involved, only a brief ‘immersion’ in the workplace dynamics (Spain). Finally, there were cases which combine elements of work placements and traineeships as they are aimed at both current and graduated students.

Consequently, to avoid conflicts, we propose the following: **for a case to be named a ‘work placement’, the activities performed by students needs to be set *at* the workplace and carry a meaningful workload.** Cases where a meaningful workload exists but which are not set *at* the workplace were classified as intrapreneurship (see entrepreneurship section). Cases with no meaningful workload have been classified as ‘alternative modes of WBL delivery’.

**Traineeship:** Traineeship carries fewer terminology issues than work placements. Nevertheless, it is important to reiterate that a **traineeship is aimed at students who have finished their educational training (graduated students<sup>1</sup>) but have not yet entered the labour market.** It includes not just structured trainee programmes aimed to attract new talents and prepare them for leadership roles (normally offered by larger organizations), but

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<sup>1</sup> Not to confuse the term ‘graduated student’ with ‘graduate’, which in the UK and the US is often associated with postgraduate students. Graduates are still students, graduated students not.

also schemes for the reinsertion into the workforce, such as the ones found in Spain and Cyprus.

Likewise, we found a number of cases aimed at both current and graduated students (UK, Slovenia and The Netherlands). In these situations, cases can be classified according to three criteria: i) do current and graduated students fulfil separate tasks? then we have two separate cases; one is a work placement, the other a traineeship. ii) do current and graduated students work together? then we have one single case that can be classified as both work placement and traineeship. iii) does the work placement leads to a traineeship? Then, like item ii, the case that can be classified as both work placement and traineeship.

**Entrepreneurship:** This mode of delivery offers more flexibility in terms of design and delivery than the other two. Entrepreneurship cases are not bound to workplace environments, nor aimed specifically at current or graduated students. **What differentiates entrepreneurship from the other modes of delivery is that it is innovation-driven and/or project-driven.**

That definition comprises not only new venture planning (the most common form of delivery) but also activities aimed to raise entrepreneurship awareness and related competences such as speeches, courses, workshops, etc. It also includes innovation within the organizations. In other words, if the tasks include creative problem solving and taking autonomous initiative in dynamic settings we classify this as entrepreneurship, which is clearly distinguished from placement or traineeship. In case entrepreneurial activities are trained / developed in the setting of an already established entity, one can speak of **intrapreneurship** instead of entrepreneurship.

### Disciplinary Areas

Regarding Disciplinary Areas the terminology issues are not related to the understanding of disciplinary boundaries. It is rather clear if an area of study is hard or soft, applied or pure. The confusion arises because disciplinary classification needs to account for both the area of study and the activities performed by participants.

**Pure or Applied?** We found a tendency among partners to classify cases into 'applied' simply because students perform practical work. It is intrinsic to the definition of WBL that participants perform practical activities. Consequently, if performing practical work was enough to classify a case into 'applied', all our cases would be applied.

Therefore, **to determine if a case is pure or applied, there needs to be a match between education and work.** According to this understanding, a case is pure if one comes from the pure education area and works in the pure area, e.g., an artist in the theatre, a mathematician in a statistical office, etc. In these examples, even though participants perform practical work, this criterion alone is not sufficient to classify the case as applied. The case should be classified only as 'pure'. On the other hand, if an artist works as a designer in the automobile industry or a mathematician in a bank, this is an applied case, not pure. Logically, when the education area is already applied (e.g., social work or engineering) the case is defined as applied.

**Hard or Soft?** We also observed a tendency to include 'soft applied' anytime tasks performed by participants require interpersonal/managerial competences. Although management as a



discipline is 'soft applied', the presence of managerial tasks alone is not sufficient to classify a case as 'soft applied'. Again, the focus should be on the match between education and work. In a work placement associated with the school of engineering, for example, the disciplinary area is hard-applied even if participants now-and-then perform project management tasks.

## 2. (SUB-) PACKAGES STRUCTURING

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The first issue related to modules is the meaning and understanding of the term 'module'. *Merriam Webster Dictionary* includes five different meanings. According to the *Cambridge English Dictionary* a module could be understood in general as "one of a set of separate parts that, when combined, form a complete whole". However, it is also understood as "one of the units that together make a complete course, taught especially at a college or university".

In order to avoid misunderstandings we keep the term module for a teaching unit. However, since project WEXHE has a broader focus than the teaching / learning dimension it was decided to use the more neutral term 'package', which should contain several elements. As a result it was decided to prepare three packages:

1. **Work placement package**
2. **Traineeship package**
3. **Entrepreneurship package**

Originally, the plan was to elaborate four modules in each package, i.e., hard-pure, hard-applied, soft-pure and soft-applied. However, the term module seems not to be very appropriate because in practice because of the intention to prepare 'packages'. Such packages should contain many other elements than just 'learning and teaching modules' which are clearly relevant for all packages and therefore overlapping. Therefore, it was agreed to structure each package into sub-packages to do justice to both the overlap and the different types of disciplines involved. This with the intention to tailor these sub-packages to various users and to make them as user-friendly as possible.

### Work Placement

In case of **work placements**, two main stakeholders have been identified: the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the employer/provider of the work placement. The research done in project WEXHE shows that close cooperation between these two parties is a prerequisite in the preparation and running of a teaching / learning programme that includes a work placement. It was assumed – on the bases of the case studies analysed - that the Work Placement package, in comparison with the other two, contains more variations related to the four disciplinary areas due to the fact that work placements are often related to study programmes which are discipline specific (covering a particular set of subject-specific and generic competences) and related to relevant practices. These variations are apparent not only in the competences to be developed but also in the tasks and roles to apply. Therefore, the work placement package could consist of a:

1. hard-pure sub-package
2. hard-applied sub-package
3. soft-pure sub-package

#### 4. soft-applied sub-package

However, during the elaboration of the developing these package it became clear that there would be a very substantial overlap. This would very much reduce the usefulness of having these distinction and therefore different sub-packages. What proved instead to be much more useful was to prepare sub-packages for three formats / levels of application. In the project, we came along huge variations with respect to the duration and organisation of work placements, which on one extreme may occupy the majority of learning time, e.g. in dual system arrangements, and on the other extreme only a small part of learning time, e.g., in school-based education and training.

Taking these different variations and approaches into account to allow for difficult levels and types of implementation it was decided to make the following distinction:

1. **Integrated Approach**
2. **Clearing House / Intermediary Approach**
3. **Corporate Approach**

*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.

#### **Traineeship**

The available cases show that there is no significant difference between traineeship and entrepreneurship with regard to disciplinary areas (hard-pure, hard-applied, soft-pure and

soft-applied). The ‘customers’/users of packages also differ to some extent in comparison to the work placement package.

The costumers/users of the **traineeship** package will be employers and employer organisations, which includes governmental organisations, non-profit organisations (NPOs, NGOs, big enterprises as well as SMEs and SME associations). All these enterprises and organisations, but in particular SMEs seem to be in a need of strengthening their long-term recruitment policy by means of a traineeship as well as to provide enough talents for their current and future needs. They see recent graduates as a means to bring new knowledge into the organisation, who will contribute to technological and organisational development. The capacity of SMEs to recruit, select and train new graduates on their own however, are limited due to the lack of expertise and resources. This is why SME associations could step in and utilize the prepared package, because as a group the SMEs have more resources. Big enterprises are less likely to become customers/users of the traineeship package, since they usually have a strong human resources department and offer training services in order to successfully attract and retain the talent they require.

Other users of the traineeship package will be governmental and non-governmental agencies and organisations (NPOs and NGOs), but also universities. While universities can support traineeships in order to increase the employability of their recent graduates (especially in those disciplinary areas where graduates have difficulties to find a job), the agencies and (local) governmental institutions and organisations may in addition strive to strengthen the development in and of their region. This way a traineeship can serve as a means for graduates to enter into employment, but also as a means to keep them in the region and to stimulate the development of regional companies. Therefore, the composition of the following three different traineeship sub-packages has been applied:

1. **Small and Medium Seize Enterprises sub-package**
2. **Governments, Governmental Agencies and Non-governmental Agencies and Organisations (NGOs) sub-package**
3. **Universities sub-package**

### **Entrepreneurship**

The cases collected make clear that the main users of the **entrepreneurship** package will be universities. They perceive entrepreneurship as one of the ways to prepare their graduates for the world of work because of the specific competences that are developed. Additionally universities see entrepreneurship as a service to society and as a source of income. Universities often collaborate with governmental bodies and other stakeholders to (co-)establish an entrepreneurial environment, e.g. by creating techno parks, incubators, accelerators etc. The government and other stakeholders promote entrepreneurship to revitalise the economic structure and increase possibilities for employment for the new generation. The available cases indicate that activities focused on the promotion of entrepreneurship are threefold:

1. Promotion of entrepreneurship through special courses, seminars, project work etc. which aims to enhance the entrepreneurial culture, to motivate students to solve

problems and generate ideas about new products and services. These type of cases often end with a competition between the students' business ideas, with the best idea being rewarded. Large groups of students may participate, especially in the workshops and seminars.

2. Enhancement of new business creation which includes: generation of business ideas, elaboration of business plans, selection of the most promising ones for further development, offering support to students who decide to start their own business, new product and service development, company registration, organisation of the production process, market research and penetration, attraction of risk capital for investments, development of support services etc. Agencies and organisations usually also take an active part in these activities in order to promote/stimulate entrepreneurship. In this form of entrepreneurial education, a smaller number of students participate, as they usually have been involved in some type of entrepreneurship education programme before.
3. Activities focused on innovation of work processes in an existing organisation. Initially they do not aim to establish new businesses but to improve and enrich existing products, services, technological and organisational processes. Students are assigned specific projects that entail challenging issues an organisation is facing. The students then seek solutions individually or in groups under supervision of their mentors either at the organisations' facilities (*intrapreneurship*) or at the universities. The number of participating students is limited.

On this basis, it has been decided to develop:

- 1. An Entrepreneurship promotion sub-package**
- 2. A Business creation sub-package**
- 3. An Innovation / intrapreneurship sub-package**

*Entrepreneurship promotion* refers to the development and delivery of entrepreneurial courses and other activities at universities and their foundations, career centres, incubators, technological parks, accelerators and similar semi-autonomous university institutions. Entrepreneurship promotion involves helping students develop an entrepreneurial mind-set via acquisition of relevant competences and skills.

*The business creation approach* focuses on helping students to develop their own set of entrepreneurial competences and skills, which encourages to pursue an entrepreneurial career, including registering their own business. Business creation involves support in elaborating and fine tuning business ideas, registering new businesses, providing space, material and human resources to start the production, creating prototypes and setting up production processes, marketing and sales activities, and fund raising.

*The innovation enhancement approach* refers to *intrapreneurial* culture and the development of students' *intrapreneurial* skills and competences. Students should be encouraged to call upon their risk taking abilities and innovative spirit and to face challenges in which they need to find solutions for technical, organisational and social problems. They should be empowered to implement technical, organisational and/or business ideas in an existing context.

### 3. (SUB-) PACKAGES CONTENT

The Packages prepared are based on the collected cases, inputs available from other projects and relevant literature. The packages represent a kind of ideal or aspirational cases that can serve as examples that various users can use and adjust to their context and needs. In other words, they are not meant as prescriptions but rather as menus out of which various users / organisations can take what fits best to their specific conditions and purposes. The available cases show that design depends a lot on the WBL culture in a country, which should be taken into consideration to some extent if one wants to successfully implement various modes of work-based learning.

Each sub-package contains the following main components, each of which includes several specific elements:

- 1. Learning and training arrangements: content of the module**
- 2. Organisational arrangements and procedures regarding learning and training: tasks and responsibilities**
- 3. Financial arrangements and procedures**
- 4. Contractual arrangements and procedures**
- 5. Evaluation and quality assurance procedures**
- 6. Accreditation, recognition and certification procedures**
- 7. Appendices (such as templates of documents that could be used, for instance)**

#### *1. Learning and training arrangements: content of the module*

- Defining key competences, sub-divided in subject-area related learning outcomes and generic learning outcomes
- Defining Learning format: teaching and learning units / project work / etc., including preparatory activities (personalised strength – weakness analysis / preparing CV / writing of application letter)
- Preparing content description of activities for the placement/traineeship/ entrepreneurship

Description of the specific tasks and responsibilities of the learner and level of execution

- Defining assessment procedures and assignment(s)

The learning module is the core component of each sub-package. It includes elements such as the purpose and objectives of the module, eligibility criteria, etc. However, the starting point of a module should be the student's competences and skills to be developed (further). On their basis, learning programme units can be specified, including learning and training units, project work and regular tasks performed in various work environments.

## *2. Organisational arrangements and procedures regarding learning and training: tasks and responsibilities*

- Defining training programme: components, planning / sequence of activities (roadmap)
- Identifying appropriate placement / traineeship / entrepreneurship (learner/trainee perspective)
- Recruitment and selection (HE and provider perspectives)
- Description of tasks and responsibilities supervisors (tutor, mentor, organiser, adviser, coordinator) and learner (student/trainee)
- Assignment of supervisors, deciding on contact moments between supervisors and learner/trainee (before, midterm and after).

This section involves the specification of the process to apply in terms of a sequence of activities performed, e.g. from training needs analyses, training programme design, recruitment and selection of students/trainees etc. to assignment of tutors to students / trainees, monitoring of training, its evaluation etc. It includes also specification of different roles played in the learning / teaching process, such as roles of students/trainees, supervisors /tutors/mentors, organisers, coordinators, (student) advisers etc.

## *3. Financial arrangements and procedures*

- Compensation for time investment (salary)
- Compensation for additional costs: travel and subsistence
- Insurance arrangements

This component covers all issues, which involves finances, that is salary or compensation for time invested, covering of additional costs, such as travelling, accommodation, subsistence, and insurance related issues. Examples of different financing models and modalities will be made available to accommodate a variety of types and situations.

## *4. Contractual arrangements and procedures*

- Learning agreement (to be signed by HE institution / provider / student-trainee)
- The contractual arrangement should describe (and cover) the items listed in 1, 2 and 3.

## *5. Evaluation and quality assurance procedures*

- Defining and description of preparatory and evaluation moments
- Description / steps of the procedure to apply to assure the quality of the WBL mode: quality of process, quality of the WBL mode, quality of coordination and supervision, etc.



The evaluation and quality assurance component specifies various evaluators (mentors, supervisors, coordinators, teachers, co-workers, agencies etc.), how they carry out evaluation/assessment and which methods of evaluation/assessment they have at disposal.

#### *6. Accreditation, recognition and certification procedures*

The accreditation, recognition and certification component will provide information on whether, how, when, by whom etc. WBL/training is certified and recognised. It will also provide information on whether and how accreditation would be sensible and possible.

#### *7. Appendices*

Apart from the description of the mentioned components there will be a number of appendices provided. The appendices will include cases of good practice, samples of contracts and certificates, models of evaluation etc.