

YOUR WORK-PLACEMENT PROVIDER: EXPECTATIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

ERMES

ENHANCING
RESOURCES FOR
MOBILITY
EXPERIENCES AND
STRATEGIES

LLP-LdV-TOI-11-IT-592
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1.BEHAVIOUR RULES DURING YOUR WORK PLACEMENT

1.1 What do the companies prefer.

The first thing you have to know is what do the companies prefer:

1. Average knowledge of the foreign language needed;
2. For office work, information and technology skills;
3. If possible, intercultural experience;
4. If possible, commitment outside the course of studies (e.g. involvement in associations, field of sports, culture ... It reflects a positive image of a student's personality);
5. Specific requirements that concern the work placement wished;

1.2 How long could the work placement be.

The duration of the work placement varies and often depends on the training programme of each training centre.

1.3 What there must be in a Work Placement Agreement Contract.

When you sign a Work Placement Agreement contract remember that:

1. The exact terms of the contract depend on the country, on the institutions involved and national laws applicable.
2. You have to sign your contract **before** the work placement between learner, tutor company and training centre;
3. The contract must establish mutual rights and duties (duration and hours, causes for rescission, possible forms of compensation, ...);
4. The contract must specify tasks to be performed; it also may specify skills to obtain;
5. The contract must indicate methods of supervision and guidance of a tutor both in the work placement organisation and in the training centre;
6. The contract must include clauses respecting the norms envisioned in the host country (e.g. civil responsibility insurance).

1.4 When is the Training project adequate.

The training project can be often required from the company by the training centre. An adequate training project must contain realistic and achievable objectives considering the duration of the of the work placement and with the competences made available. The objectives have to be checked and possibly adapted several times during the work placement.

In many work placements, you will not get paid for the work you do. Often the placement may be a voluntary placement and you must remember that being paid a salary is not the point of getting work experience, especially abroad.

2. HOW TO GET THE RIGHT IMPRESSION

2.1 Golden rules:

To make a right impression you have to follow these golden rules:

1. Have an open mind about what and how you will work for your placement provider
2. Be flexible and patient
3. Remember that you are both a guest and a worker in your work placement, not a student or a customer
4. Work placements provide many opportunities for improving your language but are not conversation classes
5. You will almost certainly spend a lot of time in front of computers
6. Work can sometimes be (and almost always is) boring!

2.2 What you should know about..

...absence? If you are not able to go to work please inform your employer and the school. If you are ill for more than one day, you must contact the school and your employer every day to update them.

...days off? Generally employers will be flexible about you taking time off if your placement is more than 6 weeks. This will normally be similar to a regular employees holiday entitlement.

...web and social media? Many of you will have access to a computer. Do not be tempted to access your personal email, news websites or use Facebook during your working time. It's fine to do this at lunchtime but not at other times. Interns have been asked to leave placements because of Facebook.

...dress code? It is important to dress professionally on your first day. Most companies have dress codes even if they are informal. Ask about this on your first day.

...legal aspects? Your employer should show you fire exits to the building and inform you of emergency procedures. You should be aware that the information

you handle in your work is confidential and protected by law, for example be careful with names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses.

...office politics? You will experience a lot of human behaviour while on your work placement. This is definitely one of the most interesting things you'll experience!! We advise you to watch and listen but *not* to become too involved. Office politics involve people's opinions of others, power struggles and sometimes more uncomfortable things. Not all workplaces are happy and carefree places! As a temporary and transient member of staff, you have nothing to gain by becoming involved in office politics but you do have a lot to lose if you do.

If you are asked formally or informally for your opinion of something or someone, be very careful about what you say and who you might upset. Try not to join in discussions about someone's work performance or personal life.

3. OFFICE'S RELATIONS

3.1 How to consider the work placement supervisor?

You will have a named supervisor who will be your main point of contact in the office. They may not be your supervisor every day or every week and you might work as a general assistant where many people ask you to help them. If you are confused by the requests, speak to your supervisor about what you should do first.

The vocabulary used in some documents and briefings for European funded programmes sometimes talks about you as the trainee and your supervisor in the work placement as a tutor. It is very very unlikely that you will be seen purely as a trainee or that your supervisor will see themselves as a tutor. You are a student and you will be taught things and you will learn a lot about many things *but* the idea that your manager/supervisor role is simply that of a tutor is wrong. It can lead to problems.

Your supervisor and colleagues are not there to teach you or to help you improve your Language directly. You will learn and improve your language through the experience.

4. FIRST DAYS

4.1 Getting to know to the company

Your first few days and weeks in a work placement will be about the company getting to know you *and* you getting to know the company.

You will receive an induction to the company/organisation and to the department or team you will be working in.

Remember the company have only seen your CV, possibly a personal statement. They may have spoken to you on the telephone for a few minutes. They don't know you and you don't know them. They need to find out about your skills, abilities and, of course, your language abilities. They need to find out where you and your skills can fit within their organisation.

Some companies may have set, regular tasks for work experience students. Some companies may make up projects and tasks for each work experience student depending on the student's abilities.

This process takes time...

4.2 Tasks to complete

Remember – if the company was not busy they would not need you. This means that the companies students are placed in, are almost always busy places and staff, including your supervisor, will have limited time.

Companies and your supervisors will start by giving you basic tasks. This is a test to see how you work and to test your skills. If you are successful in completing these tasks quickly and efficiently they may give you more demanding or responsible work but this depends on the work they have for you. It is up to you to prove your capabilities to them not for them to find out the work you consider challenging.

If you are on a very short placement of a month or less, then the company might have a complete programme of activities for you and might not be able to develop a role to fit your skills and interests. This can normally only happen on longer placements.

Please also understand that tasks in the real world of work will also rarely correspond directly to your school/college/university studies.

5 GOOD HABITS IN WORK PLACEMENT

Some work experience students have lots of working experience and some have very little. This means work experience students have different levels of what we call 'work skills'.

By work skills we mean the very basic good habits for organising your work tasks and projects.

We have some recommendations for good basic work skills and practices to use:

1. **Take notes:** if you take notes about what people are asking you to do, it shows them you are listening and understanding. It also means you can easily repeat the instructions back to your supervisor *and* check back later when you are doing the work. It is very easy to forget how to do even basic things if you don't

write them down. For example if you have a database demonstrated to you on Monday but don't use it until Thursday, you will forget.

2. Repeat instructions to check you understood them: instructional vocabulary is difficult and together with new general vocabulary and the vocabulary of the work place, taking and understanding instructions can be difficult.
3. Write down processes and procedures: you may be asked to perform a task in week 1 of your work placement, and then not again until week 5. Write down procedures and keep them filed on your desk.
4. Write down vocabulary, acronyms and phrases you hear. Each company will have it's own language that you'll also need to learn including the names of processes, databases, suppliers, customers etc.
5. Listen carefully and always ask questions.
6. Do not be passive: if you run out of work, ask for some more. It can make people around you frustrated and angry if you are not working hard and they are.
7. **Remember: work can be and often is boring!!!**

7.PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS

Not all work placements go according to plan. Participants can perform below the company's expectations, and companies can suddenly find themselves with business problems, not enough work or the resignation of a key member of staff.

Like any 'real world' problem, solving problems can take time and requires patience and sometimes the solution is a compromise.

If you have a problem with your work placement please talk with your training centre first. It may recommend that you talk to your work place supervisor immediately or it may work on an alternative solution.

Any attempt to terminate a work placement without discussion with your training centre, either directly with the company or by poor performance or absenteeism can result in the withdrawal of centre's services.