

# MENTORING & TUTORING

## Short Guide on Essentials to Quality Mentoring and Tutoring of an International Internship



A mentor is commonly described as a critical friend, or guide who is responsible for overseeing the career and development of another person outside the normal manager/subordinate relationship. Clutterbuck and Sweeney (1997)

Mentoring taps a basic instinct most people share – the desire to pass on their learning, to help other people develop and fulfil their potential. Zulfi Hussain (2009)

### CHECK OUR NEXT TOPIC:

Checklist for Mentors/Tutors to Prepare, Follow and Evaluate Internships

## INTRODUCTION

This brochure was produced by the Project PLACET. Two of its main objectives are: to promote the potential of hosting a European trainee and to create support materials for the hosting companies. You will find more information about PLACET at <http://www.placet.org/>.

With this document we intend to SYSTEMIZE AND SHARE REFLECTIONS, IDEAS AND TIPS FOR A POSITIVE PLANNING AND SUPPORT FOR YOUR EUROPEAN TRAINEES. We will present ideas and reflection in a short format. We hope this will help to improve the internships you will host and for which you are responsible for. They are the results of many readings, but also of our work in supporting entities and companies that host foreign people in internships within transnational mobility projects.

## INTERNSHIPS<sup>1</sup>

In the present brochure we'll use the term "internship" referring to learning on the job programmes in general. Before starting, let us list some elements we consider peculiar, in order to share a common understanding on internships:

- They are integrated in **learning strategies and experiences** for the participants / trainees within formal or non-formal training programmes;
- They provide a context that facilitates the acquisition and consolidation of job specific skills and generic/soft/transversal skills, as personal and social skills;
- They sustain the **entrance into active life**, making the change from school/university to work smoother, as for many participants these internships are their first job experience;
- They can be an obligatory step/condition to have access to a recognized qualification;
- They may represent an opportunity for participants to have some **practice/previous experience or a specialization** in their professional sector;
- They contribute to career guidance, developing knowledge on specific work activities so to get information and awareness to make further decisions.

<sup>1</sup> Please be aware that there are several schemes for training/learning in work context, such as: Traineeship, Internship, Informal Apprenticeship, Workplace Learning and Apprenticeship. ILO proposes its distinction according to: Wage, Legislative framework, Workplace based, Programme of learning, On/Off-the-job training, Formal assessment, Recognized certification and Duration. (ILO, 2012).

In the case of *programmes co-financed by public authorities*, European Commission or National/Regional Governments, these programmes are part of **public policies** with rules and objectives that demand a wide **cooperation and commitment among diverse actors**: public authorities, education institutions, labour market/employers and trainees.

## HOSTING ENTITIES ALSO BENEFIT FROM A GOOD PLACEMENT

Hosting institutions are asked to take time and resources in order to allow trainees to learn, test, practice, discover... It may sometimes look like too much work for little gain; however, companies that are used to receive people in **internships highlight them as a valuable contribution to the company's objectives and mission**. They recognize that **it is a win-win process for both sides** that:

- Gives **access to up-to-date knowledge, techniques, skills** taught in schools and universities, bringing interest in **continuous learning** and helping institutions to **update and adapt** themselves to changing needs and environments;
- Brings **new perspectives** on work and its challenges, contributing to **potential innovation** within the working teams;
- Allows companies to **deeply meet and interact with human resources** they might hire, because they are able to verify they are in line with their organizational cultural and professional needs;
- And, while being integrated, trainees **help the production processes** and therefore create richness in the company, compensating the investments initially made.

Therefore, it is for the benefit of all parts to assure that a trainee has a good mentor/tutor!

## MENTORING & TUTORING

### MENTORING VS. TUTORING

We chose to talk simultaneously of mentoring and tutoring, because most of the times, these roles are assumed by the same person, especially in SMEs.

There are different definitions for their specificity, here we will share those which are mostly applied in European training projects:

- A mentor is more oriented to give advice to the mentee in a general way like career guidance, professional relations and networking, personal development, professional specialization choices, among others according to its professional and life path. Mentoring can be more informal, trust based and longer in duration;
- A tutor would be more focused on professional improvement of the trainee, acting more as an expert that can teach, supervise, help solving problems, share techniques and strategies, etc. according to its professional experience and in order to attain more defined objectives and expectations. Tutoring would be more formal and time framed.

## THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR/TUTOR

The **support by a qualified and competent reference person proved to make the difference** in quality and successful internships resulting in professional, social and personal development, especially when trainees' profiles present lack of work experience and expertise, young age, lack of maturity, anxiety towards the new role and tasks.

In the **context of mobility**, the fact that trainees are living far from their cities/countries of origin and of their cultures, customs and traditions may represent the loss of a safety network and cause cultural shock. On the other hand, the fact that most of the time they are travelling and living on their own for the first time may put on them much pressure for autonomy and decision making that might lead to insecurity and self-esteem problems. For all this, the choice and clarification of the role of the Mentor/Tutor is even more crucial.

Being a Mentor/Tutor is not an easy role and some characteristics and behaviours enhance the possibility of good support to the trainee. Among others, we can highlight trustworthy, honesty, reliability, assertiveness, emotional and physical availability, tolerance and capacity to look from others' perspectives, life experience and maturity, generosity, cooperative, and relational abilities.

The fundamental **roles and functions** required are multiple, from leading trainees to face/confront reality to give motivation, from criticizing to help decision making. Kram (1986) organized the different roles of the mentor in 4 blocks: role modelling, giving counsel, providing acceptance and confirmation, and offering friendship. In any case, the capacity of giving negative feedback, causing confrontation by telling the truth or giving criticism are most often the hardest parts of the mentoring process. This cannot be avoided, because these are important aspects of the trainees' development that will benefit from this.

Eventually, knowing that the mentoring and tutoring are **relations that can be long, intense and with different stages**, the mentor/tutor has to be able to recognize the different stages of this relation, including the moment to let the trainee proceed on his/her own. Along with this relationship, different needs can appear leading the mentor to use different styles and approaches adequate to each moment. Normally, there will be a moment of creating the connection between mentor/tutor and trainee and negotiating objectives, rules and expectation. It is only after this that ascension and full wind progress can happen until the moment has come for each part to follow on different directions.

### FIRST MEETINGS

Pay attention to this moment, as first impressions are collected. There should be a sharing moment where each party sets its expectations and objectives. Choose a cosy place, be open-minded and friendly. More regular meetings are advisable in the beginning of the internship. Do not forget, you are the one who is at 'home'.

### CLOSE BUT NOT TOO MUCH

To be friendly and attentive to a trainee does not mean you are friends for life. Empathy, respect and intensity are possible in other frameworks. Also, sharing personal information is not about telling one's life story. It can be simply to convey personal information that facilitates empathy, like life paths, where you have lived, studied, worked or what are your hobbies, interests... It is a hard balance.

### SELF-AWARENEES

Before the meeting, mentor/ tutor and trainee should reflect in order to achieve greater self-knowledge and clarity on their life plans, because parts of this will be fundamental for the development of the relation. Some items are: my strengths, needs and objectives; what I expect from the other; what communication suits me best; what do I want to share/offer.

**BE CLEAR AND CLARIFY**

Make sure you both understand the same, repeat and reformulate agreements and decisions, until you are sure.

Ask for opinions, intuitions, and preferences even before you share yours. A trainee should have space to cultivate his/her autonomy, self-esteem and empowerment.

**ATTENTION TO DETAILS**

Your follow-up cannot be strictly professional or task related.

Attention should be put on issues like integration in the institution, relations with colleagues, satisfaction, fears and challenges, personal balance, leisure time, life plans on short and long term.

**NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Be sure you ask the right questions and that you use all the senses to collect information and answers.

Not all information is conveyed with words. Body language, the tone of voice, speaking too much or too little, delays or lack of energy can also send a message, which might be the strongest one.

**FUNDAMENTAL MENTORING/TUTORING STEPS**

1. **MEET** - After you get to know the trainee. You should promote meetings with him/her. These should be more regular in the beginning, to transmit a sense of support and availability. In these meetings, verify the working plan, life project, emotional and personal balance. Write down conclusions and decisions to make sure you have a good starting point in the next meetings;
2. **INFORMAL PRESENCE** - Be sure that you are not only present in the formal moments, pass by the trainee from time to time and say – Hi! How are you?. Note however, that you have to do this with the real intention of stopping and taking action if the trainee tells or gives you a hint that he/she needs to talk or is facing problems;
3. **GO BEYOND WORDS** - Observe the trainee, care for his/her body language, notice the silence or changes in the way of talking, see if and how he/she interacts with the team. For several reasons, a trainee might not call for help, and it is also up to you to anticipate and avoid to overlook issues that could cause problems at a later stage;
4. **PUT YOURSELF IN THE TRAINEES' SHOES** - There are always differences between people, and bridging gaps and differences is fundamental for good discussion and resolutions, as they allow to share meaning. With a trainee, differences might be of age, culture, life style, stage in life, among others. Not losing your perspective, try to understand from which perspective and world vision the trainee speaks so you can reach him/her better;
5. **BE CONSISTENT, PLAYING ROLE MODELS** - Common sense tells us how 'actions speak louder than words', this is so, because coherence is connected with trustworthiness, reliability, credibility and reputation. The more your advices, reflections and tips correspond to facts and past experiences, the more your trainee will pay attention to you;
6. **THE MENTOR IS NOT ALONE** - The fact that you are the mentor, does not exclude that other people and knowledge to be involved in the relationship to support your mentoring efforts. It is the case not only for specific knowledge or perspectives, but also to diversify and open possibilities to the trainee. Imagine that a trainee says he/she got curious about techniques, professional expertise or company departments other than the ones you master. This can be a good timing to open the mentoring process, introducing and sharing contacts of other people that can also act as references or by sharing thematic books, authors or blogs;
7. **BE A CRITICAL FRIEND** - Reinforcing behaviours, giving compliments or support to decisions or actions are precious abilities and tasks required to a mentor. Sometimes you need to tell negative truths, too. Honesty and a critical perspective are equally important for development, just like support and understanding are. Do not avoid these moments. Be emotionally caring when time has come to say negative things, be assertive and focus on change and solutions;

8. **GIVING FEEDBACKS** – When giving feedbacks, especially the negative ones, never judge the person or use general expressions, just focus on the specific action; do it promptly, don't wait for days to pass. This is a matter of fairness, mistakes should be tackled as such, not as personal issues; but also a matter of making it possible for the trainee to understand and assimilate the critics done, with no bias created by bad feelings or resistance to listen;
9. **OPINIONS AS LAST RESOURCE** – It is easy to give opinions, advices and solution to trainees dilemmas and problems, however, it is more relevant for his/her autonomy and growing process to develop reflection skills, decision making and scenario projecting. Therefore, transform your support in discovering pros and cons of scenarios and hypothesis, in guiding the trainee to understand his/her needs and objectives and to accept and manage his/her feelings;
10. **SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE** – In the internship, service or products are to be delivered, the mission of the hosting institution has to be achieved; as well as procedures, codes of conduct and rules are to be followed. Nonetheless, innovation and change only come with experimentation, trials, errors and risks. Support the sharing of opinions and proposals, consider the contributions of the trainee, give them continuation and recognition whenever it fits the future of your institution;
11. **INTERNSHIP AS PART OF A BIGGER SCENARIO** – You should create an atmosphere where the career plans and future choices of the trainee can be debated, as it will be important to use the experience and the lessons of the internship to guide choices, preferences and options. Do not shorten the visions of the future of the trainee, keep his/her horizons wide open, stimulate their interests, help them breaking stereotypical ideas on job descriptions;
12. **CARE ABOUT LIFE** – For a trainee and persons in general, and for someone in mobility in particular, life goes much beyond the internship. Leisure time, weekends, occupation, tips on shopping, tourism and culture discovering, housing, local transports, are some of the several issues that might preoccupy the trainee and make him lose focus and efficiency in the internship. If you can help or advise the trainee than, do it. You might gain more commitment and motivation to work.

## CHECK RESULTS REGULARLY

If you dedicate real efforts to mentoring/tutoring, you and the trainee will benefit. Among others, some improvements and achievements might be:

- More motivation and ownership of work and results;
- Increased possibilities of status and influence;
- New relationships and better abilities in creating and maintaining interpersonal connections;
- Satisfaction with the process of growing and self-esteem;
- Ability to change, adapt and accept challenge;
- Chance to make contacts and network;
- Opportunity to learn and to improve.

## THERE IS NO MENTORING WITHOUT PREPARATION

Quality and success of an internship depend also on other issues that should be prepared in advance, before the arrival of the trainee:

- A clear work plan specifying objectives, strategies, content, dates, roles, actors, integration in the team...;
- Description of the mentoring and tutoring strategy;
- Presentation of the mission, culture, ethics, code of conduct and procedures of the organisation;
- Risk assessment and prevention plan for health and security;
- Identification of a third independent party apt to provide support when there is the feeling that there are deviations from the initial plans or specific competencies are required. This third party can be, for instance, an intermediary organisation, a member of the board of the company or the responsible for human resource management.

For these reasons, a **contract or agreement** should be negotiated and signed before the starting date. In some specific cases, trial and mutual observation of skills and areas of interest are to make the working plan more complete and detailed. Following decisions made within these first days of trial, a new contract or an amendment can be signed. In the case of skills accreditation under ECVET or ECTS, the objectives, contents, points and process have to be previously agreed also in a document support.

Among other things, make sure that:

1. **You meet the trainee before the start of the internship** for a final confirmation of the planned agreements and which learning needs have to be approached. This depends on knowing and discussing them with several actors that are involved, even before you meet the trainee face-to-face;
2. **You take time at the first day** of the internship for a complete welcoming and integration. This should include: a tour in the facilities, team presentation, organisation and department presentation, health and safety at work information;
3. **The trainee gets to know the institution:** history, code of conduct, strategic plan, organisation chart...
4. During the first weeks (at least in the first two ones), you have an official meeting per week. Try to **get in contact with the trainee every day**. The first period is fundamental, because most of the difficulties will appear during adaptation and integration. Your intervention should rather be sooner than later;
5. **The trainee knows when you will meet and work together** and how he/she can reach you outside these agreed times and that he/she knows the documentation, rules and the purpose of your mentoring/tutoring, matching expectations and assuring a constant support network;
6. **The work plan is verified and evaluated regularly**, and changed if necessary, as the learning process, skills and capacities, interest and needs of the trainee may have been misunderstood or change;
7. There is **public recognition of the trainee's contribution** and that positive feedback is explicitly transmitted to him/her, reinforcing positive behaviours;
8. **You foresee formal and written evaluation**, certificate and recommendation letter (if adequate) in order to assure that he/she can use this experience as a leverage in future work experiences.

## MENTORING IS ENHANCED WITH FOLLOW-UP

Many of the impacts from the mobilities and internships become visible a long time after they finished. This happens because the learning process is long. We need to assimilate, practise, test and sometimes face new situations in order to apply the things that have been learnt into a new context. Time is needed to make changes in our personal and social skills after the internship has ended. Professional challenges are needed to make the best use of what was acquired.

We told before, and we reinforce, a mentor/tutor/trainee relationship does not need to give space to friendship, even if this has happened many times. Most likely, it can be maintained and transformed after the internship has finished; heading towards a relationship among equals, as the trainee will become a professional with his/her own experience.

An ex-mentor/tutor can benefit from news and reflections from the trainee in the same way the trainee still might want to share, discuss and listen to opinions from a person he/she respects and that has been fundamental at a point in his/her life.

Why not to keep in contact? From time to time you can check Linked In, Facebook or other social networks that you both share. But attention, here we have to repeat some of the ideas already stated above: taking a look at one's life is not the same as caring about it. Once every six months you can send an email or a message and have direct contact and interaction with you ex-trainee(s). And you will be fascinated to see how a life story evolves and how much you could bring a positive difference into it!

## CONTACTS

### TALK TO US:

Give us feedback on this brochure.  
For information, doubts & suggestions, write us.

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

[www.placet.org](http://www.placet.org)

### CHECK OUR NEXT TOPIC:

**CHECKLIST**  
for Mentors/Tutors  
to Prepare, Follow & Evaluate  
Internships!

## FURTHER READINGS

CEDEFOP (2013). The Mentor Handbook - A Practical Guide for VET Teacher Training

CEDEFOP (2014). Developing apprenticeships (Briefing Note). ISSN 1831-2411

### EUROPEAN PROJECTS

European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. [www.qualityinternships.eu](http://www.qualityinternships.eu).

First (2007). Mentoring Guide.

Hemstead K.L., Cates, R.L. & Cadwallader T. A Mentor-Intern Handbook for Dairy and Livestock Farmers

International Labour Organization. (2012). Overview of apprenticeship systems and issues

Mobility Coach - <http://www.coach4mobility.net/>

Q-Mentor - <http://www.q-mentor.eu/>

Q-Placements - A handbook for the Quality of International Workplace Training for Initial Vocational Training Students  
+ User's Guide - <http://www.q-placements.eu/>

T-Tactic@school - Transfer of tools for managing and mentoring the international work placements to guarantee the recognition of the competences acquired and the quality of the learning process in the school system - <http://www.tacticschool.eu/>

Wiley, Tonya & Schineller Kate. The Wisdom of Age - a Handbook for Mentors.

Zulfi Hussain (2009). The Good Mentoring Guide. Global Synergy Solutions