# Employer Handbook for the Joint Vet Curricula

### D2.6. Training Material
### WP2 DESIGN OR IMPROVEMENT OF A JOINT QUALIFICATION IN VET

## Document Identity

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| **Abstract:** | This document aims to provide support to the Postal Managers and Employers who are going to accept and train at their workplace the postal employees or those who wish to enter in the postal sector.<br>This handbook ensures that employers are fully au fait with what is required to support work-based learning, what is expected from the employer, and what to expect from the student, the tutor and the institution. The employer manual contains information including: role and responsibility of the employer; how to manage and mentor a student during placement; how to provide effective feedback to students; the benefits of work-based placements, etc. These complements the short training course for employers delivered in WP2. |
| **Authors:** | AKMI SA |
| **Contact Person:** | euprojects@akmi-international.com |

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The NeWPOST project

Welcome to the NeWPOST project. This Handbook intends to offer you an overview of the project's scope, key activities and expected outcomes, provide concrete information on the role employers will play on the Work Based Learning (WBL) Scheme and clarify potential sources of concern.

The NeWPOST project aims to establish a strong partnership to provide a new approach towards the needed skills which are necessary for the postal sector, a vibrant economic sector in Europe. The project addresses three specific challenges:

1. **Postal offices should operate on the same way through EU countries**. Postal Offices should have common operational framework and interoperability in order to facilitate the e-commerce and the communication for efficient parcel's delivery.

2. **Making cross-border parcel delivery more efficient**. The inconvenience of cross-border parcel delivery is obstacle for consumers and retailers. The new postal services environment requires the enhancement of the needed skills through a Joint Curricula. The lack of skills should be diminished and the employees to adjust their qualifications in the new environment to ensure the reliable parcel delivery.

3. **Emphasis on digital skills & ICT shortages**. Postal employees are heavily exposed to e-commerce processes and tools. Digital skills will dominate in the future, so postal employees should be adapted in the new context, as drones, high tech tracking devices and other IT tools will prevail in the near future.

The project addresses the following objectives:

- Increase the employability of young people, providing adequate required skills in a constantly changing postal sector environment.

- Substantially contribute towards the development of a highly skilled, qualified and mobile workforce in the postal sector.

- Support Joint developments in VET in Europe with a view to strengthen the quality, relevance and attractiveness of postal sector employees incorporating Work Based Learning.

The NeWPost target groups are professionals and enterprises, in particular:

- End-users: Current and future potential employees in the postal sector.

- Stakeholders: Post offices, Postal Institutions, enterprises on e-commerce sector and associated partners.

Therefore, the project is structured around two main pillars:

- **Designing or improving of a joint qualification in VET**. This pillar includes the development of the Joint Occupational Profile for Postal Sector Employees, the design of a VET Joint Curricula with Strong WBL focusing on new ICT and soft skills and competences of postal employees supporting cross-border mobility.

- **Setting up of a new sustainable cooperation structure**. The specific pillar will be addressed through the set-up of a sustainable cooperation structure for the cooperation and recognition of qualifications for the Postal Service Providers and the increase of awareness and attractiveness of VET for Postal employees.

## 1.2   The scope of the "Employer Handbook for the Joint Vet Curricula"

It is vital that employers are fully au fait with what is required to support work-based learning, what is expected from the employer, and what to expect from the student, the tutor and the institution. The employer manual will contain information including: role and responsibility of the employer; how to manage and mentor a student during placement; how to provide effective feedback to students; the benefits of work-based placements, etc.

***This is a Employer Handbook that has been designed in order to provide guidance on:***

- ➲ To get familiar with the training material of the NeWPOST training programmes
- ➲ To select the activities and the case studies for the learners
- ➲ To prepare the materials for the WBL and a decide a particular schedule
- ➲ To offer guidance to the learners
- ➲ To facilitate the all the procedures of WBL
- ➲ To deliver the WBL report and the evaluation documents at the end of it

## 2   The NeWPOST Training Programmes

The NeWPOST project has developed the Joint Curricula using the Learning Outcomes approach. The learning outcomes approach is of significant importance in designing common curricula for different countries because it functions as a common tool for interlinking the VET relevant tools such as EQF, ECVET, and EQAVET.

The methodology selected for the development of the NeWPOST learning outcomes is the Bloom's Taxonomy broken into the six levels of objectives, as shown in the picture:



The NeWPOST Training programmes use the modular approach (modularity). They are made for both online and physical (in-person) learning environments and it is structured in large and small units, while at the same time it utilizes various educational resources and training types in order to approach the different learning styles.

In this context, the material will be organized as following:

- **Joint Curriculum:** it contains all the courses content
- **Course:** it contains the modules of each of the courses
- **Module:** it contains the units
- **Unit:** each unit consists of different sections and multiple training materials, such as video lecture, ppt presentation, manuals, extra reading, videos, etc.
- **Sub-units:** the smallest sections
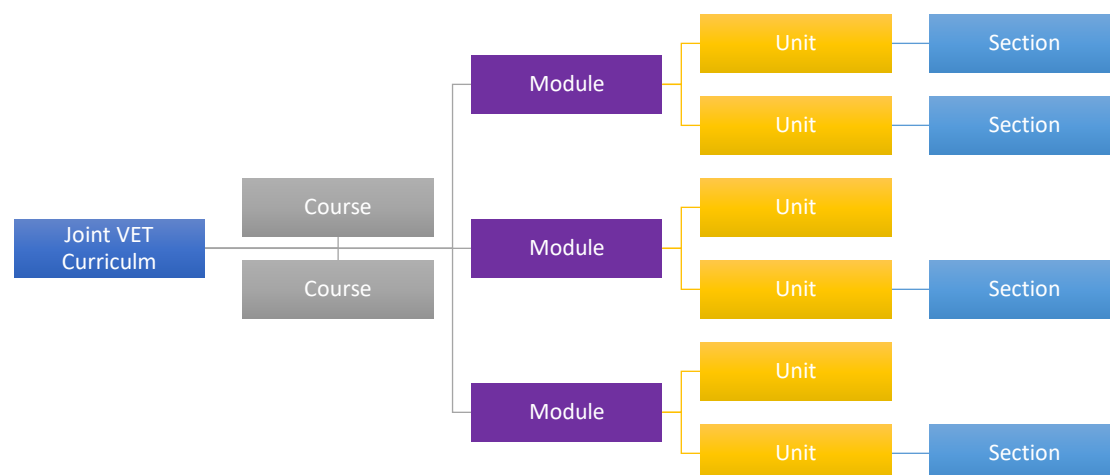


The Postal sector, due to technological advances, must focus on the up-skilling of the current employees in digital skills and soft skills since it is clearly in need of familiarization with technological tools which will ultimately enhance customer support and front-office tasks and duties.  This course targets **two Occupational Profiles**, _Postmen and Front Office Employees_ and will help learners acquire a great number of skills and competences needed the most

NeWPOST

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
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(digital, soft/intercultural, other) in order to cover the skills gaps in the postal sector and thrive in their new job positions.

The NEWPOST Training Programme provides **a Core Course for both Occupational Profiles**, and **two Specialization Courses for each one of them**, supporting, in this way, flexibility and a personalized learning experience.
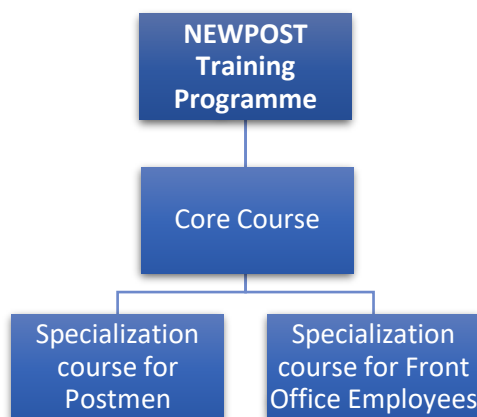


*Graph 1. Curricular Structure of NeWPOST Joint Curriculum*

In terms of online appearance, the NeWPOST Joint Qualification Curriculum consists of **two different online training programmes**; one for Front Office Employees and one for Postmen.



NewPost
FOE-EN
Front-Office Training Programme
1.

NewPost
P-EN
POSTMAN Training Programme
2.

*Figure 1. The NeWPOST Training Programmes for Front Office Employees and for Postmen.*

The *MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)* course will last **4 weeks** and consists of 6 core modules and 2 specialization lessons (2 Modules for PM and 3 for FOE). Each week will contain 2-3 lessons (modules). The total length of whole MOOC course is 36 hours of study for Postmen and 39 hours of study for FOE including the quiz and extra readings. The learner could add an amount of additional educational materials into his/her learning path (extra links and online resources) provided by NeWPost project in order to increase the course length.

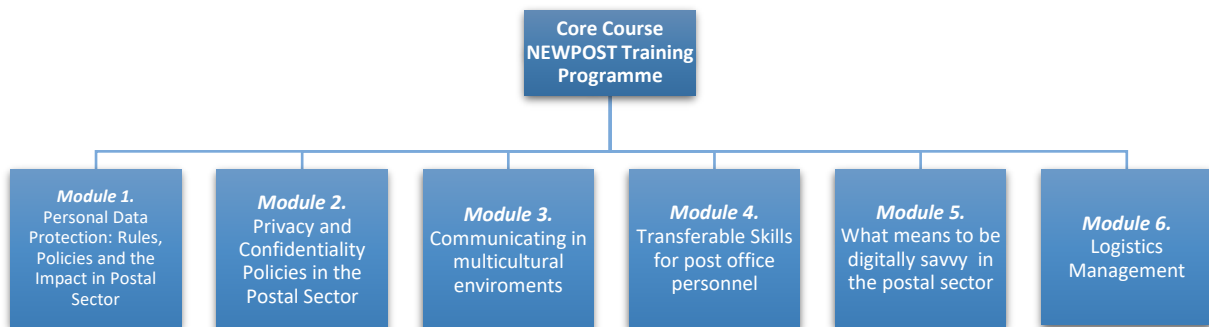| | Postman (hours) | Front Office Employee (Hours) |
|---|---|---|
| Core Course Modules | 27 | 27 |
| Specialization Course Modules | 9 | 12 |
| Total Length | 36 | 39 |

*Table 1. Course Length*

Every module consists of 4-5 Units and 10-13 assessment activities/ quiz (evaluation part).

The learning material provided for each lesson (module) is differentiated. We chose to include multiple types of learning material in order enrich the quality and the interactivity of the course. Indicatively, we produced video lectures, PowerPoint presentations, animated videos, cases studies, scenarios, self-reflection questions, activities, dialogues, extra reading documents and extra educational online resources (videos, articles, links).

The **Core Course consists of 6 Modules**, as you can see in the following graph.
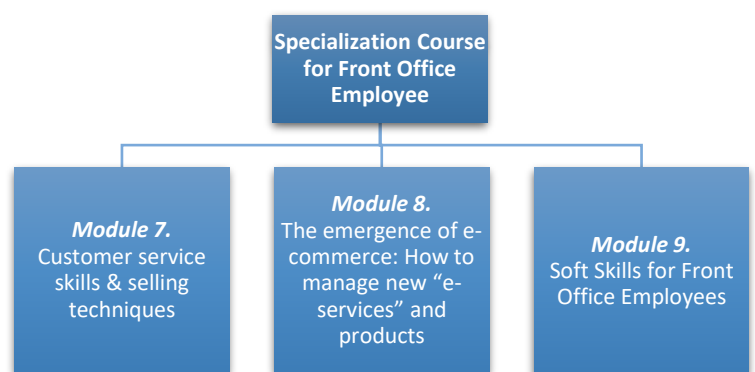


*Graph 2. The Modules of the Core Course.*

The **Specialization Course for Postmen** consists of **two modules**, while the **Specialization course for Front Office Employees** consists of **three modules** (Graph 4 & 5).
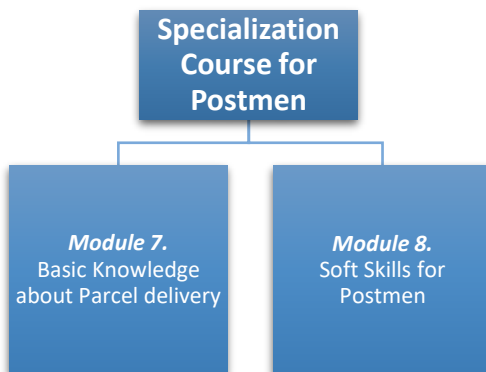


Graph 3. Modules of Specialization Course for Postmen.



Graph 4. Modules of Specialization Course for Front Office Employees.

**The main objectives of the courses are:**

- To understand how the GDPR's has been shaping the postal sector and the importance of privacy protection in postal communications.
- To apply the principles of Confidentiality & Security in the postal sector
- To familiarize learners with handling of information & IT equipment.
- To enhance communication in multicultural environments
- To understand the importance of transferable skills in the postal sector
- To enhance their digital skills when using IT equipment, collaborating and operating tasks
- To understand the basic logistic services and related techniques in postal sector

➕ To understand the new drivers of change and current trends that have been transforming the postal sector

The learning material provided for each lesson (module) is differentiated. We chose to include multiple types of learning material in order enrich the quality and the interactivity of the course. Indicatively, we produced PowerPoint presentations, animated videos, cases studies, scenarios, self-reflection questions, activities, dialogues, extra reading documents and extra educational online resources (videos, articles, links). In the following tables, there is the concrete outlines and overview of the courses:

*1. Front Office Employees (EQF Level 5)*

| 1 | Course title | **FRONT OFFICE EMPLOYEE** Training Progamme (EQF Level 5) |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Course Module description | The Postal sector, due to technological advances, is clearly in need of digital skills and familiarization with technological tools which will ultimately enhance customer support and front-office tasks and duties.  This course will help learners acquire a combination of DigComp, legal and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and thrive in their new position / job. |
| 3 | Knowledge domain | • Postal Sector<br>• Post e-shops and websites<br>• Logistics, orders &  delivery options |
| 4 | Course Addressed to | • Postal Agents<br>• Staff/employees from the postal sector |
| 5 | Learning objectives | • To understand how the GDPR's has been shaping the postal sector and the importance of privacy protection in postal communications.<br>• To familiarize learners with E-sales and managing e-deliveries.<br>• To manage Post e-shops and websites, product search and comparison features in mobile apps<br>• To enhance communication in multicultural environments, as well as the understanding of being digitally savvy in the postal sector<br>• To use easily and effectively promotion channels including direct marketing techniques, e-mail marketing, web advertisements or social media campaigns. |
| 6 | Course Length | 4 Weeks (+2 weeks for WBL) |
| 7 | Course schedule | M1. *Personal Data Protection: Rules, Policies and the Impact in Postal Sector*<br>M2. *Privacy and Confidentiality Policies in the Postal Sector*<br>M3. *Communicating in multicultural environments*<br>M4. *Transferable Skills for post office personnel*<br>M5. *What means to be digitally savvy in the postal sector (IT and Digital Skills)*<br>M6. *Logistics Management*<br>M7. *Customer service skills & selling techniques*<br>M8. *The emergence of e-commerce: How to manage new "e-services" and products*<br>M9. *Soft Skills for Front Office Employees* |
| 8 | Learners Profile | Front Office Employee |

| 9 | Participation Prerequisites | Postal sector knowledge, adaptability, basic computer skills |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | Special needs from the educational environment | Participants of the course are needed to have access to a Personal Computer and the Internet. |

*2. Postmen (EQF Level 4)*

| 1 | Course title | **POSTMEN** Training Progamme (EQF Level 4) |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Course Module description | The Postal sector, due to technological advances, must focus on the up-skilling of the current employees in digital skills and soft skills from a customer service point of view. This course will help learners acquire a combination of DigComp, legal and 21st century skills and thrive in their new position / job. |
| 3 | Knowledge domain | • Postal Sector<br>• Post e-shops and websites<br>• Logistics, orders & delivery options |
| 4 | Course Addressed to | • Staff/employees from the postal sector |
| 5 | Learning objectives | • To understand how the GDPR's has been shaping the postal sector and the importance of privacy protection in postal communications.<br>• To familiarize learners with handling of information & IT equipment.<br>• To enhance communication in multicultural environments, social & problem-solving skills.<br>• To carry out advanced Postal Items delivery options, to reflect today's hectic lifestyle: delivery outside regular times, scheduled delivery, change of delivery address notice in social media/email should be carried out with speed and efficiency from postal employees. |
| 6 | Course Length | 4 Weeks (+2 weeks for WBL) |
| 7 | Course schedule | M1. *Personal Data Protection: Rules, Policies and the Impact in Postal Sector*<br>M2. *Privacy and Confidentiality Policies in the Postal Sector*<br>M3. *Communicating in multicultural environments*<br>M4. *Transferable Skills for post office personnel*<br>M5. *What means to be digitally savvy in the postal sector (IT and Digital Skills)*<br>M6. *Logistics Management*<br>M7. *Basic Knowledge about Parcel Delivery*<br>M8. *Soft Skills for Postmen* |
| 8 | Learners Profile | Postmen |
| 9 | Participation Prerequisites | Postal sector knowledge, adaptability, basic computer skills |
| 10 | Special needs from the educational environment | Participants of the course are needed to have access to a Personal Computer and the Internet. |

Theoretical training, which will be delivered using an online asynchronous learning model via the MOOC platform, is followed by a Work-Based-Learning which will last ***2 weeks*** (8-10 hours). The learners will have the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom and check their relevance with the actual demands of the market.

Before the WBL is put in place, three short training programs will be implemented, each one corresponding to the particular needs of the parties involved in the piloting: learners, tutors and employers.

***During the Train the Employers' seminar, the following issues will be dealt with:***

- Importance of WBL approaches for students and employers
- Benefits for the employer (see below a brief reference)
- Content of the Work-Based Learning in alignment with NeWPOST Curriculum
- Providing feedback according to the criteria and milestones set
- Efficient mentoring

The Work based learning will be implemented by front office employees and postmen in the post offices in order to acquire a professional experience.

This practical, hands-on postal industry experience will benefit the learners in each country by enhancing knowledge and delivering first-hand experience of working in the postal sector, increasing opportunities for future employment and labour mobility. Employers benefit by being able to feed into the development of the curricula, ensuring their industry needs are better met by learners and by having access to future employees.

A detailed list of tasks/case studies that have to be successfully performed during the WBL period is going to be developed, assuring the learners will continue to develop their skills and competences during the WBL period.

Each learner will have to apply the theoretical knowledge he gained through specific activities and tasks that will take place in the real workplace, which is post offices and postal enterprises in case of NeWPOST project. Trainers and employers have to guide the learners during the WBL. The work-based learning can be completed by learners who would like to work on this sector. Some learners may have re-skilled or up-skilled from a previous profession, while others will have no work experience at all.

# 3   The Work – Based Learning as a pedagogical method

*"Work-based learning refers to learning that occurs when people do real work. This work can be paid or unpaid, but it must be real work that leads to the production of real goods and services" (Sweet, 2014).*

The Work Based Learning is a short-term work experience opportunity that is set to offer the practical learning in real work environment. It is an extension of the learning that can also take place during and in parallel with the theoretical learning. The main aim of WBL is to give the learners the opportunity to practice their knowledge in real work tasks/duties and to enhance and strengthen the quality and effectiveness of our project.
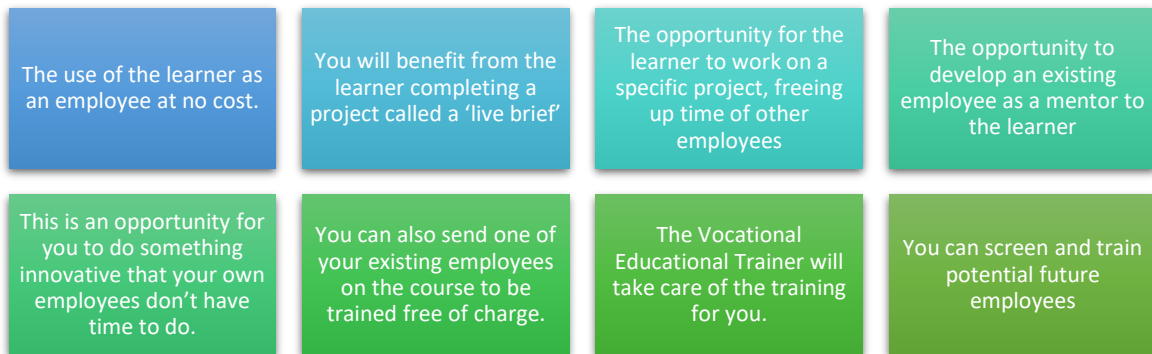
### Types of Work-Based Learning:

- **Job Shadowing** - An unpaid experience where a student follows an employer for a short period of time (a few hours to an entire day) to learn about a particular occupation or industry.
- **Unpaid Work Experience** - An unpaid work experience is a limited-term opportunity, longer than a job shadow, for students to learn about a particular occupation or industry by working at a specific workplace.
- **Internship** - Student internships are situations where students work for an employer for a specified period of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Student's workplace activities may include special projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs, or tasks from a single occupation.
- **Paid Work Experience** - A structured paid work experience is a competency-based, educational experience which occurs at the work site and is tied to a student's curriculum. The experience is guided by a training plan which coordinates and integrates a student's school-based instruction with a work site experience.
- **Cooperative Work Experience** - a program of work experience in an actual employment setting related to the vocational interests and educational programs provided to a student at an area vocational/technical education center. A Student Apprenticeship is a more structured Cooperative Work Experience.
- **Supported Employment** - Enables students with disabilities to gain paid employment where they are supported by an employment specialist to obtain and maintain the job who have not been successfully employed to work and contribute to society.
- **Apprenticeship** - An agreement through which the apprentice gains instruction and support in exchange for work. The apprentice learns with masters of the trade, craft, or profession and begins an occupational career while contributing to the productivity of the enterprise. Youth 16 and older can enroll as a pre-Apprentice.
- **Service Learning** – A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
- **Student Entrepreneurship** – A student entrepreneur is a student who starts a company or non-profit while still attending school.

## 4   The benefits of employers

Employers take part in work-based learning programmes for several reasons. The reasons for taking part can depend on the nature of the programme and its quality. For example, in programmes such as work experience and unpaid work placements, where contact with the workplace is brief and those who participate are unpaid students, employers often take part so that they can screen trainees and check how suitable they would be as future workers, or to show that they are good members of their community or their industry, but expect few other direct business benefits.

The advantages for employers who partake in the NeWPOT project are:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The use of the learner as an employee at no cost. | You will benefit from the learner completing a project called a 'live brief' | The opportunity for the learner to work on a specific project, freeing up time of other employees | The opportunity to develop an existing employee as a mentor to the learner |
| This is an opportunity for you to do something innovative that your own employees don't have time to do. | You can also send one of your existing employees on the course to be trained free of charge. | The Vocational Educational Trainer will take care of the training for you. | You can screen and train potential future employees |

# 5   Foundation of a Strong WBL Program

High quality WBL opportunities require planning, and are carried out by trained, qualified, and properly credentialed professionals either based at the VET school or in the company. Whoever is responsible for helping to support students and employers with setting up quality learning experiences, should be well prepared to make these experiences safe, successful, and meaningful for the student. *His/her responsibilities include the following:*

- Orienting students, parents/guardians, and employers
- Working with students to develop measurable learning goals and objectives that connect their experience to academic standards
- Conducting or arranging classroom activities related to pre-employment skills, work readiness and job search skills
- Counseling students about jobs and careers
- Assisting students with questions and forms relating to work
- Developing job sites and work-based learning placements
- Matching students with employers
- Providing basic safety training as appropriate to the placement
- Assessing student performance at school and at the worksite
- Conducting on-site employer visits to monitor and evaluate student progress
- Maintaining professional relationships with employers
- Taking disciplinary action when necessary in relation to classroom activities or worksite placements
- Attending professionally related trainings and conferences
- Completing records and forms

It is essential that learners are **carefully selected** and **properly matched with workplaces** if quality is to be ensured. This helps to make sure that learners are motivated and are learning what they want to learn, and that employers feel that they will fit into the workplace and meet their enterprise's expectations. In programmes where the learner is an employee, such as apprenticeship, the selection is normally carried out by the employer, but this is not the case in NeWPOST project. In programmes where the learner is a student, matching is an important way of ensuring that employers do not have to try to teach students who are not interested,

not motivated, or lack basic work habits, all of which will reduce their willingness to take part. Involving employers in the selection process can help to avoid this. Careful screening by the school or college is another way of ensuring that learners and enterprises are well matched. Guidelines to ensure this, and the resources to do it, are matters that policy should recognize. Careful matching is important both in programmes where only a short period is spent in the workplace, such as work shadowing, and in programmes in which work placements occur over a longer period, such as alternance. In some programmes it may also be important to make sure that parents are fully aware of, and comfortable about, the workplaces where students will be spending time.

Where workplace learners are students, schools and colleges should make sure that enterprises can meet occupational health and safety requirements, that working conditions are appropriate for students, and that enterprises have the capacity to teach the skills required by the programme.

Personal learning plans should be developed for those taking part in work-based learning. These set out what the learner is expected to learn in the workplace, and can also show roughly when things are to be learned, who is to do the teaching, and how learning is going to be assessed. They can act as a checklist so that learners can assess their progress. Where programmes also include classroom-based learning, the personal learning plans should set out what is to be learned in the classroom. Students can be asked to keep diaries of what they have learned, and to record their experiences and reactions. This may be particularly useful in programmes such as work shadowing that are trying to teach students about work, to assist career choice, and to develop general employability skills. Simple skills checklists for employers will help them to be sure about what they are expected to teach in the workplace.

Debriefing learners after they have been in the workplace is important. This helps them to reflect on what they have learned, and thus helps to reinforce learning. Debriefing sessions can also be a way of assessing progress and identifying any problems. School and college timetables need to allow for these debriefing sessions.

# 6   Preparing the WBL

## 6.1   Preparing the students

- **Educational link:** The teacher or coordinator determines the learning objectives and links to the academic standards. The work experience should enable a student to achieve the competencies of the particular program in which they are enrolled.
- **Education agreements**: These agreements outline the responsibilities of the worksite supervisor, the student, and the education coordinator. The forms should be carefully reviewed by parents, the instructor, and signed by all. As part of these agreements, a training plan should be developed. The training plan outlines the goals and activities of the experience. The list should include skills the student needs to acquire and/or practice and concepts the student needs to understand and apply. Goals and objectives should relate directly to classroom work and career development activities which the work experience supports.
- **Dress and behavior expectations:** While classroom preparation for career exploration activities usually covers this information, work-based experiences offer a great

opportunity to reinforce the message that dress and behavior standards in the workplace are different than those at school. Remind students that they are representing the school as well as themselves. The coordinator should be aware of dress codes at each worksite and discuss appropriate attire with students.

- **Follow-up**: Meet with students to inquire as to their satisfaction with the experience. Asking specific questions related to the training plan will provide insight relative to the need for in-school or on-site training and need for employer contact.

## 6.2   Getting prepared as an employer

- There are many **legal issues** that worksite supervisors need to be aware of. Make sure that worksite supervisors understand their legal responsibilities and potential liabilities in advance. For unpaid experiences, all parties need to be aware of federal guidelines related to unpaid work experience/training. School personnel should ensure that all participating students are covered by accident insurance.
- Remind worksite supervisors that the purpose is to provide students with an environment where **learning can take place**. Encourage supervisors to allow students to participate in as many learning activities as possible, including staff meetings and trainings, and job tasks in all areas of the business.
- Employers will probably find a **checklist** very useful. Checklist items might include arranging meeting times, planning with the program coordinator to ensure that academic requirements are met, signing work agreements, arranging student workspace as appropriate, and informing students about company policies and procedures.
- Review **evaluation forms and procedures** with employers at the beginning of the work experience. Set up a time for the employer, student, and cooperative education coordinator to conduct formal evaluations. Contact the employer and student prior to the evaluation in order for all to be prepared and to avoid any surprises. Remind employers and students that the evaluation should be a positive experience that highlights student accomplishments and enables students to make plans for future training goals.

## 7   Implementing the WBL and supporting the placement student

We recommend that you **assign the placement student a mentor** within your organization, perhaps someone who is in the course of development as an emerging manager or leader. The role of the mentor will be to:

- ⮑ supervise the NeWPOST placement student
- ⮑ advise and support the placement student
- ⮑ allow the placement student the **independence** to lead his tasks/activities, but will be there to **guide** and **motivate.**

The WBL process will be supported by a **tutor/trainer** who will have a mediating role between the learner and the employer. The tutor/trainer will be responsible for:

- ⮑ collecting feedback from the employer,
- ⮑ coaching and updating the learner on their progress,
- ⮑ exchanging ideas and solving any potential issues that may arise.

The three parties (learner-tutor-employer) involved in the WBL scheme will collaborate and communicate with each other on a weekly basis. For this purpose, **trainers' manuals have also been developed** in the framework of the project and will be delivered.
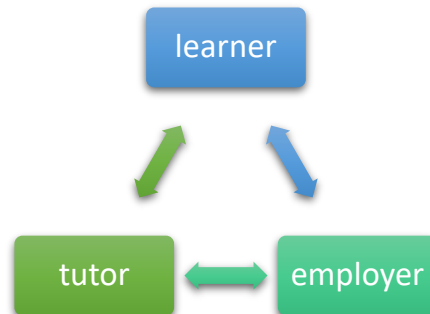


In cases this is possible, we recommend the employers to **assign an in-company mentor** so as to enhance the learning experience and professional confidence of the learners. The in-company mentor will guide and support the learner, acting as a first-responder and filtering any concerns or questions before them being addressed to the tutor. Nevertheless, the learners could address their inquiries directly to their tutors if they feel more comfortable.

For the **monitoring of the WBL** a sheet of attendance including the name of the trainers and the trainee, the daily activities and the thematic areas will be used. Two more tools have been designed for the successful operation of the WBL: *(a) A reporting tool for trainers/supervisors/employers, and (b) Evaluation Questionnaires for both the trainer and the learner.*

## 7.1 Strategies to create a good learning environment for the learner and a fruitful cooperation

- Organize **an induction training**; this will enable the learner to familiarize with the culture of the company, be aware of the applicable rules and follow the guidelines.
- Introduce him/her to his/her supervisor/in-company mentor. Make him/her feel **part of the team**. The sooner a learner is integrated into the company, the sooner he/she will perform his/her duties in an efficient way. An employee who is satisfied with the working environment and the relationship with his/her colleagues and supervisors, he/she is expected to be more productive.
- **Set boundaries and clear rules**; WBL could be the first step on a future career, thus it should be treated with professionalism. To this end, the establishment of a Code of Conduct could be helpful.
- Ensure that the learner is **aware of his/her learning objectives** and how his/her tasks contribute to reaching these objectives.
- Encourage the learner to clearly **motivate and describe his/her impressions or opinion**, even if they are about to complain as well, but ensure the learner know how to do that in an appropriate and clear way!
- Ensure that the learner is **not afraid to ask** senior staff.

- Remind the learner of the importance of **being proactive** when carrying out tasks and **showing the right attitude**, even when he/she is requested to deliver tasks that might not interest him/her as much as others! Make him/her aware that a positive approach to every task will get him/her noticed and remembered.
- **Concentrate on the Tasks/Duties:** Whilst ad hoc duties such as answering phones and completing databases are useful for the placement student, it is important to focus on the project. Concentrating on the tasks will give your placement student the motivation to complete the course and it will also help you with your workload. NeWPOST is all about giving learners the autonomy to become qualitative caregivers with high ICT and soft skills.

## 7.2   Key to Connecting to the Classroom

*Pre-experience Activities*

- Students research the general career fields and specific organizations in which they will be working
- Students write about their preconceptions and expectations
- Students and employers discuss professional standards for behavior and dress
- Teachers emphasize practical applications of the concepts and skills they teach in class
- Students and teachers develop training plans which outline students' learning objectives
- Students learn academic skills which they will use at the worksite

*On-site Activities*

- Students learn actual job and employability skills by participating in work activities
- Students observe and participate in practical applications of academic concepts
- Students work toward achieving individual goals and objectives
- Seminars provide students with opportunities to better understand their paid work experiences and enhance their learning. Curriculum may include the following.
- Job search skills and techniques (such as resume writing and interviewing skills)
- Development of goals and objectives
- Reflective assignments (such as weekly logs and journals)
- Education and discussion on workplace issues such as sexual harassment, workplace ethics, managing conflict, responding to criticism, labor laws, discrimination, and professionalism
- Workplace skills and techniques related to student placements
- Guest speakers
- Round-table discussions
- Collaborative learning activities
- Term projects in which students extend beyond the work experience through in-depth investigation
- Career exploration activities, including informational interviewing and research on continuing educational opportunities
- Development of portfolios which include a description of the work experience, agreements and training plans, photographs and descriptions of exemplary work or interesting experiences, resume, cover letter, and evaluations

*Post-experience Activities*

- Students write about the difference between their expectations and the reality of the workplace
- Students and teachers discuss the connections they see between classroom learning and the workplace
- Students and teachers together evaluate the student's progress toward meeting the learning objectives
- Students continue their career research in light of what they have learned during the work experience
- Students write, revise, and send thank you letters to the employer and the worksite supervisor/mentor

# 8  Providing Feedback

## *Why will this be useful?*

- The learner will be better prepared for the tasks that he/she has to deliver within the week
- The mentor has the chance to improve the learner's awareness of his / her learning path and learning outcomes - both for professional and transversal skills
- The mentor can improve the learning experience path in the company by adapting it to the aptitudes and learning styles of each apprentice.

## *How will the employers benefit?*

- The learner could work on a specific project, disengaging other employees of the company
- The employer invests on training a potential employee who will be ready to accomplish his tasks once hired.

## *How to provide feedback?*

Many learners ask for response on their performance which may not be provided at all, provided partly and with a delay or provided in a wrong way. It is, therefore, a good idea to guide and monitor their competences while they are developing them and to give them feedback on successes and possible failures

Feedback should be given in a way that is:

- Clear and conceivable by the learner; perplexed analysis with indicators/data may not serve the real purpose
- Specific; general and indefinite feedback does not help the learner to improve himself/herself. On the contrary, it may confuse him/her
- Objective; the feedback must not be based on personal bias or opinions but on results, performance and professional requirements
- Not offensive and intimidating, gender/age/nationality etc. neutral
- In private and on time;

- Balanced; it focuses on the characteristics that could be improved but also highlights the individual's strengths or is formulated in a positive way

*What to observe when giving feedback:*

- How does he/she approach new tasks;
- Does he follow the rules/guidelines set by the company;
- How does the learner handle customer service (eg. professional attitude, dealing with complaints etc);
- Does he respect hierarchy;
- How does he/she cooperate with colleagues, especially the ones from foreign countries

Besides, feedback should not be referred only to the learners' technical / professional development but should also include comments on their social and personal progress (soft skills). For example:

- Willingness to take responsibility;
- Planning skills;
- Independence;
- Problem solving skills;
- Ability to assess own effort;

**Techniques of providing feedback include:**

- **Ask-Tell-Ask**: This technique focuses on the ability of the learner to assess himself/herself. It can be performed through open-ended questions or a semi-structured questionnaire so as to ensure that the learner will provide feedback on the areas to be evaluated. Based on the learner's responses, the trainer will make his observations regarding his/her performance and overall attitude and, in the end, he/she will ask the learner what they could do to improve the topics in discussion.
- **Feedback sandwich**: It is an approach which merits the provision of balanced feedback; it combines one area where corrective actions are needed with two elements of performance excellence and reinforcement. The trainer starts with a positive introduction, describing the individual's strengths, traits or attitudes that are highly appreciated and should maintained. Then, he/she refers to the areas that need improvement and closes up with another area of exceptional performance.
- **Bridge:** It is an approach which aims at offering a continuity on the **learner's appraisal.** It links positive behavior of the past with current observations which either intend to maintain the preceding attitude or change it accordingly if it comes in contrast with the company's expectations. Consequently, the learner and trainer will formulate future actions in accordance with the comments provided.
- **Evidence, Effect and Change:** It is an evidence-based methodology which makes use of data, indicators and verifiable incidents and a cause-and-effect analysis, which is most likely to be achieved through a detailed discussion on the roots of the problem.

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- **Group Feedback:** It is given only when feedback is applicable to more than one member. Although it is a time saving approach, it is not recommended as the discussion is not tailored to each person's needs and it frequently leads to misunderstandings.

*Employers or in-company mentors are encouraged to use the technique(s) that are more suitable for each learner or each occasion (eg. the feedback technique may be more applicable when the learner seeks motivation or reinforcement, the ask-tell-ask technique when the learner is familiarized with his/her tasks while bridge technique would be more applicable at the end of the piloting when comparable information is at the employer's disposal.*

### *Weekly Appraisal*

A **short appraisal** form should be filled by the employee in collaboration with the employer/mentor at the end of each week. The placement student should assess his or her own progress and complete the survey alongside the mentor. This should take no longer than five minutes.

Self-appraisal, although it might be an uncomfortable process, is useful for the learners as it helps them assess their strengths and weaknesses and improve themselves. In practice, it will constitute a short briefing on the trainee's weekly performance and progress against the list of specified skills and competences determined for each Curriculum. Tutors and employers will later comment on the trainees' self-appraisal and provide their own feedback.

## Annex 1: FAQs

**1. Will the NeWPOST placement student be entitled to bank holidays?**

Yes, your placement student will be entitled to the same bank holidays as other employees.

**2. Will the NeWPOST placement student be entitled to annual leave?**

There is no annual leave on the NeWPOST programme.

**3. Do I need to pay the NeWPOST placement student?**

No. This is an unpaid work placement.

**4. How old will the placement student be?**

They will be over 18.

**5. How long will the work placement last?**

22 days

**6. Do I have to employ the placement student at the end of the work placement?**

No, but we hope there will be a lasting relationship that helps both you and the placement student.

**7. What level of education will the students have?**

The A-typical learners of the NeWPOST courses will be studying at EQF Level 4 and 5. However, there may be some learners who are upskilling or re-skilling and who have other qualifications.

**8. Do we need to have a contract with the NeWPOST placement student?**

No. It is not necessary to have a contract of employment. However, we recommend that you apply the same rights to the student as to your employees. It is also possible to have a work *placement agreement* that explains:

- the level of supervision and support the placement student will get
- the induction and the reporting process
- whether you cover the placement student under the organisation's employer or public liability insurance
- health and safety issues
- any expenses the organisation will cover

The work placement agreement is not compulsory and it does not form a contract between the placement student and the organisation.

## Annex 2: Weekly Appraisal

(This document can be adapted by the tutor and mentor as necessary.)

1. **Please, provide a short description on the objectives set for this week with regards to the applicability of NeWPOST's learning objectives:**

*Learner's comments:*

*Tutor's comments:*

2. **Score your performance during this week in the following areas:**

| | Learner | Tutor | Employer |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Health Related Skills / First Aid* | | | 23 |
| *Positive Attitude/Non-verbal communication (smile, eye contact, cheerful and polite approach)* | | | |
| *ICT and Digital Skils* | | | |
| *Interpersonal Skills* | | | |
| *Problem Solving Skills / Crisis Management* | | | |
| *Appropriate communication with patients with special needs (if happened)* | | | |

## Annex 3: Template of Work placement Agreement

This work placement agreement has been made in the framework of the NeWPOST project, on *[Insert Date]* between *[Organization's Name]* (the Company) and *[Placement student name]* (the Placement student). The purpose of this educational work placement is for Placement student to learn about the Organization's scope and to gain valuable insight and practical experience.

The work placement begins on *[insert date]* and ends on *[insert date].*

The Company agrees and acknowledges the following:

- The Company will provide the placement student with an induction and assign a mentor to ensure the placement student is made welcome in the Company.
- The Placement student will receive direct and close supervision by an appropriate mentor, who will support the Placement student and supervise a short weekly appraisal with the Placement student.
- The Company is not liable for injury sustained or health conditions that may arise for the unpaid placement student during the course of the work placement.
- The Placement student will be insured by the education provider. The Company will not be required to provide public liability insurance for the placement student.
- The Placement student will not replace or displace any employee of the Company.
- The Company may at any time terminate the work placement if the placement student does not comply with the Company's business practices and procedures.

The Placement student specifically agrees to and acknowledges the following:

- This work placement is educational in nature and there is no guarantee or expectation that the work placement will result in employment.
- The Placement student will work on a project or a series of tasks determined by the education provider and mentor.
- The Placement student will demonstrate honesty, punctuality, courtesy, positivity, appropriate dress and a willingness to learn.
- The Placement student will obey the policies, rules and regulations of the Company site and comply with the Company's business practices and procedures, including the Company's confidentiality procedures.
- The Placement student will provide his/her mentor with all necessary information relating to the work placement, including assignments and reports.
- The Placement student should not leave the work placement without first conferring with his or her mentor.
- The Placement student is not entitled to wages or any compensation or benefits for the time spent in the work placement.
- Transportation to and from the work placement site is the responsibility of the Placement student.

Emergency

In the event that an emergency should occur while the Placement student is providing services, the following contact should be notified immediately.

Emergency Contact Name: *[Emergency contact name]*

Emergency Contact Phone: *[Emergency contact phone]*


Agreement

By signing below, both parties agree to the terms of this work placement agreement.


*Employer:*

*Date:*


*Placement student:*

*Date:*

## Resources

- ✓ Bringing Work Home: A Framework for Virtual Work-Based Learning https://edsystemsniu.org/a-framework-for-virtual-work-based-learning/
- ✓ Feedback techniques, University of Leicester https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/red/rd/career-development/research-staff/mentoring/feedback
- ✓ Three methods to avoid feedback failure in project management https://www.brighthubpm.com/monitoring-projects/125744-three-methods-to-avoid-feedback-failure-in-project-management/
- ✓ Work-Based Learning Manual: A Guide for Developing and Implementing Quality Experiences for Students, Secondary & Adult Division, Vermond, Agency of Education, March 2014

- ✓ Work-Based Learning: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Social Partners In Etf Partner Countries, European Training Foundation, 2014