



QAFP - Quality Assurance in Foreign Placements

Guidelines for the recognition of learning outcomes achieved during international traineeships

Developed by EVTA in the framework of work package 2 of the QAFP project.

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Introduction

What is QAFP?

QAFP: Quality Assurance in Foreign Placements aims to improve the quantity and quality of international traineeships in a structural way. As the international internships are often a part of a formal training pathway, the quality assurance of international traineeships is of high importance in order to ensure the civil effect of a certificate or diploma. In other words: "How to make sure that the training and assessment which is carried out in another context is of good quality and value to contribute to the completion of a qualification?"

Within QAFP, a network of 'agents', which function as ambassadors, experts and regional and/ or contact points for international traineeships is set up in Europe. These agents make sure that there are good and sufficient work placement companies available for learners to realize their international traineeship in Europe.

Why these guidelines for recognition of learning outcomes?

Besides the quality aspects, one of the returning questions is the recognition of the learning outcomes which are achieved during the international traineeships. How to set up a system to make sure that learning outcomes are validated and recognized by the 'sending' educational institute in a way that the learner doesn't have to do that part of the training and examination again in the educational institute? Besides, the learner achieves much more skills and competences than only technical skills. For example intercultural competences, professional working attitude and language skills. They are often not a formal part of the training programme, but if we manage to recognize these skills as well, it means a huge added value for both the learner as the future employer.

These guidelines do not only deal with the recognition as such, but also with aspects of quality assurance and learning outcome based training and assessment, as it seems that they contribute to a large extend to the success of the process of transfer and recognition of learning outcomes.

For whom?

This document is developed for all actors in international traineeships, at operational and strategic level, like trainers, mobility coordinators and policy makers, inside and outside the QAFP network. The document addresses both levels (practice and policy) as they are both essential for a successful implementation of international traineeships.

How to read these guidelines?

The guidelines should not be seen as a "to-do" checklist, but as an inspiring and operational tool to improve the organization, realization and management of international traineeships in your organisation. It shows essentials elements which should be taken into account for successful and sustainable international traineeships policy in your organisation.

However, good practices are always context related and it is this context that often makes that a methodology works or not. Where possible and relevant, the critical success factors and the conditions for transfer are mentioned and these should be seen and put in the context of the QAFP network or in your own context.

What can you expect in these guidelines?

There are five main elements which can be seen as “critical successfactors” for successful recognition and transfer of competences gained during the international traineeship. The coherence and the meaning of these five elements are visualized in figure 1.

- 1 **“Mobility”**: the benefits, the roles and the purposes of international traineeships for all actors.
- 2 **Quality Assurance**: the functioning and the importance in all stages of international traineeships;
- 3 **Learning outcome based approaches in training**: the importance of international traineeships in the achievement of learning outcomes;
- 4 **Assessment of learning outcomes**: examples and criteria for a good assessment of learning outcomes;
- 5 **Transfer and recognition of learning outcomes**: how to make sure that the achieved learning outcomes are valued and recognized in the training organisation.



Factsheet 1: About international traineeships

Different purposes of mobility:

When we speak about ‘mobility’ in the context of learning or geographical mobility, it means that a learner is doing a part of his/her vocational training programme in another country in a placement organization: an international traineeship. In the context of vocational education and training, this placement organisation is often a company.

There are different purposes of international traineeships:

- To exchange experiences, without a direct link to a formal qualification (often short)
- To learning intercultural competences and language skills
- To learn technical skills and competences, without summative assessment
- To learn technical skills and competences, with summative assessment
- To learn in different learning context, which cannot be done in country of origin

Depending on the purpose, the duration and the learning objectives of the international internship, the learning programme, the assessment and evaluation will be different. Therefore it is good to bear in mind in advance the purpose and aims of the internship and also what to do with the competences which will be achieved during this internship. Is the internship ‘just’ an enrichment of experiences, or does it really contribute to the completion of the training programme and the achievement of units/ modules?

Different actors, different benefits

International traineeships often require more organization than national traineeships. However, the impact and the return of invest can be very high, when prepared and managed in the right way. One of the challenges is to create full commitment of all actors and this can be done by making the benefits for all actors clear, understood and well communicated. Some examples:

- For learners, it offers the opportunity to work and learn in a context which differs from their home country. This has not only impact on the achievement and improvement of their technical skills, but also on their language, intercultural and personal skills and competences.
- For trainers, it offers the opportunity to get familiar with other training content and methods, especially when preparing the learners for their traineeship abroad and when receiving learners from abroad. It is also recommended for teaching staff to do an internship abroad, to become updated with other technical methods, and to become familiar with other languages under which technical jargon) and cultures in the sector
- For educational institutes, In times of recession, international traineeships are often eliminated from the priority list. However, they should be seen as a solution and not as a problem. It makes vocational education and training more attractive, relevant and makes people more employable on the (international) labour market.
- For companies, coaching of learners is often seen as a mark of quality and commitment with professionalization of people. Therewith, it offers for the company the opportunity to get in contact with other cultures and working methods as well. Learners from another country can bring a ‘fresh air’ of ideas and insights for the employer and employees.

Example 1: How QAFP fosters International traineeships

The QAFP ‘network of sector agents’

To organize international traineeships, there is always a sending and hosting organization involved. Finding the right hosting organization (often learning companies) is not always easy and requires intensive networking between partners at European level. For the green sector, QAFP has therefore set up an international network of sector agents.

These sector agents are an ambassador and contact point for both learning companies and educational institutes and they play a role in the promotion of international traineeships in the green sector in their own region and/ or country. On the other hand the agents are an important actor in the improvement of the quality and quantity of international traineeships. The agents can have direct contact with the learning companies and/ or the educational institutes, which means that the ‘quality check’ of hosting organisations is not only one on “distance”, but also one of direct contacts. This means that the network can speed up the process of matching between an sending and hosting organization. When there is a need in a company for learners, the agents can help in finding a suitable learner. The other way around, when a learner in one of the partner countries wants to do a traineeship in one of the other countries, a contact with the agent can fulfill in matching the learner with a suitable company.

The agents can be educational institutes, sector organizations, intermediary organisations or (learning) companies. Important is that the agents are familiar with the process of international traineeships and all have an interest in improving the quality and quantity of international traineeships. Depending on their nature, the role can differ: where sector organizations can bring in new learning companies, educational institutes and intermediary organizations play a role in the search and matching of learners with learning companies.

The biggest advantage of this way of working is the “win-win” situation: Investment of being an agent can result in an improvement of international traineeships rates and quality of mobility in your own context. In other words, the network of agents can make international traineeships more sustainable, cost efficient and effective

Different roles and responsibilities

In the AQUAP project¹ (being the foundation for the QAFP project), a protocol is developed for all actors in international traineeships. It describes the different stages in traineeships (before- during- after) and for each of these stages, the roles and responsibilities of the different actors are described. As all actors have their own roles and responsibilities, it is important that from the beginning of the organization of international traineeships, these roles and responsibilities are clear.

This protocol is an example of how an effective communication can be set up between the actors and how mutual trust between can be ensured. It should therefore be an integral part of the coordination and management of the international traineeships (quality assurance).

¹ The AQUAP project <http://www.greenplacements.nl> or find AQUAP in the [ADAM database](#)

Protocol for international traineeship

	Trainee/ learner	Educational institution	Learning company	Intermediate organisation
Phase 1: Preparation & matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulates own learning plan - Orients at international companies and learning possibilities - Looks for information of companies in the database leading to 2 opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Direct contact with the learning company o Contact with the intermediary organization - Prepares his presentation to the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepares the learner for the traineeship - Takes care of a good match of learner and learning company - Takes care for orientation presentation and application skills of the learner - Gives information to the learner about responsibilities and obligations of learning company and educational institution - Makes clear agreements with learning company/intermediate org. about the traineeship in a learning agreement - Informs learner about insurance and other costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is accredited by the national accreditation board - Checks the match of learners and learning company - Makes clear agreements with the educational institution about traineeship in a learning agreement - Subscribed the agreement in a contract, delivered by the educational institute/ intermediate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will search a suitable learning company, on request of the learner - Informs the learner on the possibilities - Gives the suggestion for the final choice - Checks the match between learner and learning company - Makes clear agreements with the educational institute and the learning company about the traineeship in a learning agreement - Informs learner about insurance, accommodation and other costs - Subscribes the agreement in a contract
Phase 2: Traineeship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is prepared and motivated to start - Follows the agreements made in the contract - Follows instructions of the mentor - Gives feedback to the coordinator in the training organization - Prepares for the assessment based on the learning programme 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizes the coaching of the learner by a competent mentor/ coach - Stimulates communication between learner and mentor - Develops dialogues with the learner and the contact person of the educational institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcomes the learner with an introduction to the learning company the host and the country - Introduces the learner at the learning company and discusses the learning programme - Act as contact person for the educational institution - Gives assistance where necessary
Phase 3: Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goes through the assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulates objectives of the assessment - Communicates with the learning company and/ or intermediate organization about assessment and evaluation of the traineeship - The education institution has the overall responsibility of the assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assesses the learner based on the learning outcomes of the learning programme - Communicates with the educational institution/ intermediate organization about the assessment of the learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks if the learning company has assessed the learner according to the learning outcomes of the learning programme - Checks the assessment procedures and reports to the educational institution
Phase 4: Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluates their traineeship - evaluated the learning company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluates the traineeship - evaluates the collaboration with the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluates the traineeship - evaluates the collaboration with the training institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluates the traineeship - Gives feedback to the educational institution and learning company

Factsheet 2: Quality Assurance in international traineeships

Quality Assurance in mobility

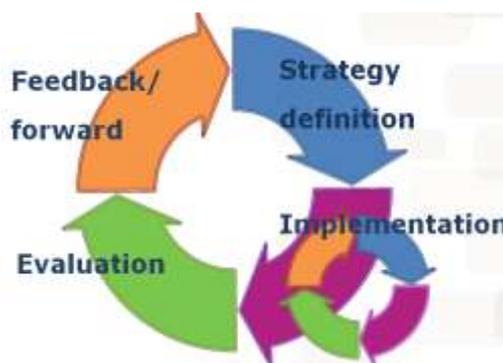
Quality assurance models are based on 4 pillars: “planning, implementation, evaluation and review”. This means that an action in each of the four phases, has to be followed up by an action in the next phase: When international traineeships are carried out, this means that the traineeships have to be evaluated (by learners, sending and hosting organization), followed by actions for improvement when necessary. Only then this quality circle is closed and only then we can speak about improvement and innovation.



When a learner does a part of his formal training abroad, this means that the training provider has to rely on the validity of the coaching and assessment of the learner, carried out by the mentor in the learning company. This requires a lot of mutual trust and quality assurance can help. For example, by checking if the learning companies complies with the minimum quality criteria, by training the mentor, by providing tools for assessment and to make agreement on the procedures for coaching and assessment.

Quality assurance models can applied at different levels:

- strategic/policy level, resulting in an embedding of international traineeships in a structural and sustainable way within formal training programmes.
- operational level (the smaller cycle within the macro cycle), for example at the level of the functioning of international traineeships, leading to a direct improvement of the quality of international traineeships.



Tools and methods which can help improving the quality of the internship:

- quality criteria for companies to become a learning company(example 2.2).
- signing a learning agreement, describing the learning outcomes and regulations of the placement (example 5).
- signing a memorandum of understanding, describing all the procedures for the placement, including the assessment and validation (tools, methods, responsibilities etc. see example 5).
- a competence profile and a training for mentors in the learning company (example 2.3).
- assessment procedures and tools provided by the training institution (example 4).

Example 2 shows how quality assurance models can be worked out at both strategic and operational level.

Example 2: How Quality Assurance models can be applied in the QAFP network

2.1 Quality assurance models at strategic and operational level

	Strategic/ policy level (macro level)	Operational level (micro level)
Phase 1: Planning	<p>Setting up and agree upon clear and measurable goals and criteria for the implementation of international traineeships in VET curricula as a part of innovation of VET and making VET more attractive.</p> <p>Issues to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of actors - Allocation of resources (HR and finances); - Capacity building of actors - The role of QA and culture for QA in the organisation 	<p>All measures which ensure that the preparation and the organization of the international traineeship is carried out in an adequate and qualitative way.</p> <p>Issues to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating a sustainable network (QAFP agents!) - Who are the actors and what are their roles (example 1)) - Providing mentor training (example 2.3) - Accreditation of companies (example 2.2) - Preparation of the learner (language, intercultural, company) - Signing learning agreements and memorandum of understanding between sending/hosting org. (example 5)
Phase 2: Implementation	<p>Developing a system for international traineeships conform the criteria and procedures defined in step 1.</p> <p>This phase is the operational part of the international traineeships and is worked out at micro level in the columns on the right hand side</p>	<p>All measures which contribute to a successful traineeship of the learner, tuned to the learning needs.</p> <p>Issues to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing coaching, training and assessment methods & tools for the mentor - Setting up reflecting & feedback mechanisms - communication between sending and hosting org - putting in place a system for transfer and recognition of the achieved learning outcomes.
Phase 3: Evaluation	<p>Designing mechanisms for the evaluation of the quality, effectiveness and attractiveness of VET (as a result of the international traineeships) by the different stakeholders.</p> <p>Issues to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the impact, cost effectiveness, resources used for international internships? - What are the satisfaction/employment rates after completion of study with international traineeships? 	<p>All measures which contribute to the evaluation of the quality of the traineeship from the perspectives of the learner, sending/intermediary and hosting organization.</p> <p>Issues to take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up an evaluation of learner, the work placement and the sending/ intermediary org. - Evaluation of the effectiveness and validity of assessment methods & tools
Phase 4: Review	<p>Developing procedures and setting up actions in order to improve and innovate VET, responding the needs of the individuals, learners, the labour market and the civil society</p>	<p>All measures and actions to improve the processes and procedures of the functioning of the international traineeships and the network.</p>

2.2 Quality criteria for learning companies

Criteria for Learning Companies ²	
Overall goal: The learning company is a suitable place to train and coach the learners *	
1	The learning company is responsible for a social and physical safe training environment for the learner in which the learner can acquire the planned learning outcomes
2	The learning company cooperates with the educational institute/ intermediate and makes the appropriate agreements. The company provides a detailed work programme including introduction, evaluation interviews with the learner and the final assessment of the acquired competences
3	The learning company takes into consideration the entrance level of the student
4	The learning company informs the learner about regional customs, culture, about developments in the sector and about the applicable laws of the country
5	The learning company facilitates the coach with enough time, room, means and resources to coach the learner. The learner practices (under guidance of the coach) the activities in the company in relation to the work programme of the learner.
6	The learning company or the intermediate organization decide which part of the general company information can be made public in the register
7	The above mentioned criteria are subordinated to national laws and legislation.
* To become a learning company the company has to meet the above mentioned requirements, after which the national certifying body certifies the company.	

² Developed in the AQUAP project <http://www.greenplacements.nl> or find AQUAP in the [ADAM database](#)

2.3 Competence profile for a mentor in the learning company

Profile of the mentor in the learning company ³	
Main tasks and outcomes	Activities
<p>1. Intake and introduction of the learner.</p> <p>Outcome: The learner can start training</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applies selection techniques based on the professional training policy of the company 2. Develops and introduction plan 3. Presents the company and the coach in a professional way 4. Applies communication techniques which focuses at the introduction of the learner
<p>2. Coaching learner</p> <p>Outcome: The learner is able to develop himself in a safe training environment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Balances the supervising with the desires and needs of the learner 2. Motivates, stimulates and applies coaching techniques 3. Invites learner to reflect 4. Schedules individual training situations and applies methodological and didactical knowledge 5. Registers progress and evaluates the process of coaching
<p>3. Assessing learner</p> <p>Outcome: The learner has been evaluated according to the procedure agreed</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applies evaluation procedures 2. Gathers information conform the procedure 3. Executes interviews 4. Takes care for administration tasks and handles the information confidentially 5. Executes advise interviews and ‘bad news’ interviews
<p>4. Creating learning conditions</p> <p>Outcome: Optimal learning conditions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyses the starting situation 2. Determines the training aim together with the learner 3. Offers challenging training situations to the learner 4. Explains difficult and complex situations
<p>5. Quality management</p> <p>Outcome: All relevant procedures are described and applied</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan the procedures for the learner 2. Do the procedures 3. Check the followed procedures 4. Adapt the procedures (“deming circle”)
<p>6. Coaching the mentors/ activity instructors</p> <p>Outcome: The mentor/ activity instructors coach the learner according to the procedure</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizes meetings with activity instructors 2. Presents pedagogical skills/ tools to activity instructors and provides individual or group training 3. Motivates, stimulates and invites activity instructor to reflect 4. Applies communication techniques aiming at coaching

³ Developed in the AQUAP project <http://www.greenplacements.nl> or find AQUAP in the [ADAM database](#)

Factsheet 3: Learning outcomes based approaches in training

What is outcome based learning?

Most European countries realize that the design of vocational education and training programmes must start with employment requirements (occupational standards) and not with training programmes or curricula. If core activities of the occupation are taken as the starting point for learning, it seems that vocational training is much more relevant for the labour market and the learner. Then we speak about a learning outcomes based approach in training: the output is taken as the starting point and not the training input.

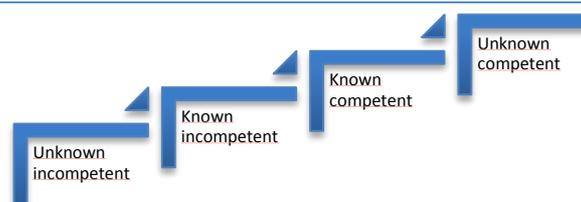


Learning outcomes are described in terms of competences, skills and knowledge. Accordingly to these learning outcomes, the learning objectives, programmes and assessments have to be developed. The bigger the overlap between these elements, the more successful is training.

Example: Learning outcomes which require that a learner has to be able feed animals correctly, should be trained in a way that the learner can develop his skills in practice and the assessment should be focussed on the demonstration of these skills. Practical observations in combination with interviews can prove that knowledge and skills are applied in the correct way and that he is able to act in different circumstances and be able to adapt his behavior to these different circumstances.

The importance of work based learning

We are learning when we climb the ladder from “unknown incompetent” (not knowing what you don’t know) to “unknown competent” (when a skill becomes a routine). However, learning doesn’t stop at the end of this ladder. When a context changes, it is possible that someone has to learn additional skills and competences in order to remain competent to do the job (he has to start again from “known incompetent”).



‘Context related learning/ work based learning’ is essential in making people competent to do a job. In real working life, the context of work differs as well and the learners have to be able to handle with these changes of contexts. It is the role of the educational institutes to provide these different learning contexts. In the QAFP network, companies are certified conform quality criteria. This means that they should be able to provide the learner a learning environment which is relevant for the level and the content of the learning outcomes he/ she wants to develop.

Example: Someone can be very competent in applying agricultural techniques in the Netherlands, but he is not necessarily competent to do this in the medditerreanean area (as climate, soil, crops and geomorphology differ). International traineeships can therefore be of great importance in the provision of these different learning contexts and make learners more outcome based competent and more valuable on the labour market.

Example 3: Practicing learning outcomes in a company

Transparency of learning outcomes between countries

Obviously, transparency and an easy process of transfer of recognition and transfer is the easiest when the partners in a network have developed common profiles and common training programmes and standards. However, the development of common standards is very time consuming and not feasible to realize for all the training programmes in all European countries.

Eventually this is not necessary when good agreements are made between the learner, the hosting and the sending organization and when there is a clear understanding of the learning outcomes which can be achieved in the practical training context of the company.

The learner, sending and hosting provider set up and sign an agreement about the duration, the learning objectives, the supervision, coaching and the assessments in the learning company. In this way all actors are sure that the learning objectives can be achieved within the time and the expectations are clear for all parties.

Example: A learner want to do an internship in a horse farm. The learner loves horses and has the assumption that he can ride the horses so every now and then during his traineeship. However, the horses are expensive and they are well trained for racing, so riding the horses is not allowed. Instead, the learner has to clean the farm and feed the animals. The learner is disappointed and complains about a bad learning company and the company complains about unmotivated learners. This is what can happen when the expectations and learning outcomes are not discussed and clear in advance.

Different levels: different coaching and assessment!

In the table on the next page, an example from the EQUFAS project⁴ shows an extended version of the EQF (the European Qualifications Framework). It is an operationalisation of the 8 EQF-levels (the columns). The table doesn't give any indication for the content of the qualification, but it gives insight in the complexity of the qualification.

Training methods (including training and coaching during the traineeships) and the assessment methods should meet this complexity in order to be valid. This implies that training and assessment on level 3 must be different than training and assessment on level 4. For the mentor, this document can give direction in how to coach and assess the learners.

Example: When feeding the animals at level 3, this implies that at level 3, the learner has to feed the animals correctly and autonomously (and at own initiative) conform the procedures of the farm. At level 4, the learner has to take into account the whole cycle of activities related to feeding the animals. This means also taking into account the ordering, storage and management of the food. The learner has to take into account the longer term perspectives (months, rather than weeks) and the effect on its work. In case of changes, the learner at level 3 has to signal and report changed circumstances, where at level 4 the learner is expected to act accordingly and adapt his way of working to the new context. This examples shows that a level 3 learner needs another type of coaching and assessment than a learner at level 4. It seems that these differences are often not taken into account in reality.

⁴ EQUFAS, 2009 "Working with EQF in the agricultural sector". Transfer of innovation project carried out in the framework of the LLP 2007-2013 <http://www.equfas.com>

A framework for learning outcomes at all levels

Expected from a learner at level 3

Expected from a learner at level 4

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
responsibility	Responsibility	carries out tasks under supervision	responsible for the tasks	responsible for its own actions + preparing, carrying out and closing	responsible for the full cycle of doing tasks, including reflection	responsible for the full cycle of doing tasks, including reflection on the tasks done by others	responsible for a team or a project	responsible for one or more teams, projects or a company	responsible for the strategy, vision and coordination of programmes
	Autonomy	carries out tasks under supervision after clear explanation	carries out tasks under supervision after clear explanation	carries out tasks autonomously after directed explanation * fully responsible for carrying tasks and shows initiative	carries out tasks autonomously in deliberation	has a mandate to carry out tasks autonomously and shows initiative	independent in the way they think and act * carries out tasks autonomously, entrepreneurial	independent in the way they think and act	fully responsible for carrying tasks and shows initiative
	Public	I, you and he	students in classroom	colleagues and customers	contacts in the working environment	colleagues and customers	divers people from layman to specialists	all employees and regional contacts of the company	employees, national contacts of the company, critical customers, government and NGO's
	Timeline	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Months	1 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	next generation, 10 to 30 years, historical awareness and being able to deal with the short term and longer term constraint
range	Tasks	simple sub tasks	simple tasks	several tasks in the same time	schedules - combination of tasks	combines and coordinates tasks	is able to analyze the work that has to be done in several tasks	has an overview of the consequences of his own work and the work of others	has an overview and understands the complexity and diversity of tasks
	Procedures	routine production	basic, explorative, productive	is able to adjust standard procedures	orientation, exploring, productive	to able to adjust standard procedures	develop new procedures	methodically and systematic analyzing	To innovate is a basic strategy
	Knowledge and understanding	knows functional facts	knows facts and is able to understand simple explanations	knows facts and methods and is able to explain	knowledge of facts and methods; applying knowledge in concrete situations	knows facts and methods and is able to explain. Knows facts and methods and is able to apply knowledge in practical situations	knows facts, methods and principles, is able to form arguments to analyze and to deliberate and is able to transfer special knowledge	combine facts, methods and principles and is able to integrate different disciplines to formulate arguments, to analyze and to deliberate...	develops new theories, concepts and models
	Ambiguity	transfer in steady context	transfer in situations with limited changing factors	transfer in situations with several changing factors	transfer related context	transfer in continuously changing context	transfer in a dynamic context	transfer in complex and hard to predict factors	integrates different contexts, making use of temporary... and social-cultural aspects
transfer	Change	changes under supervision	changes after instruction	is able to adjust oneself	is able to adjust the task in changing situations	is able to manage changes and to complete changes	is able to direct changes, to initiate changes, to come with new ideas for changes from practice	is proactive, comes first with new ideas, is able to design changes	is able to develop new concepts and takes the lead in realising changes
	Range	is able to transfer within the tasks	is able to transfer within the area of tasks	is able to transfer within the profession	is able to transfer within the sector	is able to transfer in related sectors	is able to transfer between the sector	able to integrate different disciplines	develops from another discipline

Factsheet 4: Assessment of learning outcomes

The impact of the learning outcomes on assessments

As seen earlier, the development of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, imply also the development of training methods, curricula and assessment standards and methods in terms of learning outcomes. In other words: The shift to learning outcomes **MUST** have impact on all stages in the educational process and on the involvement, roles and activities of actors. But how to make sure that the learning outcomes are assessed in the right way? For the assessment of learning outcomes, the assessment standards are leading and they describe the performance criteria of the learning outcomes (“When is this learning outcome successfully achieved?”).

Assessments must be transparent, fair, valid, flexible, reliable and workable. It should focus on vocational skills rather than academic knowledge. In fact, practical assessments are a focal point of the skills and competence development and its labour market relevance.

Example: If the learning outcomes at level 4 describe that a learner ‘should be able to milk the cows’, then the assessment should not only focus on the skill of milking a cow as such, but also on the complexity of the tasks (see example 3). This means that the learner should be able to adjust the activity in case of illness of a cow, or other circumstances which change the context of the activity. Therewith, the assessment should also be focused on the fact if he is able to do the work independently and in combination with other tasks, for example feeding the cows in case of illness.

Transparency in assessments

The method of assessment is defined in collaboration with the educational institute. They carry the overall responsibility and provide tools, as assessment grids and observation checklists related to the assessment standards. In many cases, the assessments are done via an observation checklist, where the learner has to demonstrate the activities in different contexts, in combination with an interview, carried out by or in the presence of the coordinator of the training organisation.

As the mentors/ assessors in the company are employees or employers, it is very likely that they do not have the pedagogic competences for coaching and assessing. Training of assessors and auditors can be a solution and is seen as a mark for quality, reliability and mutual trust in traineeships.

From the beginning of the assessment learners must understand the requirements and standards expected. All actors involved, including the learners, need to know the assessment and validation procedures including the assessment standards.

Example: Example 4 shows an observation grid as a part of a practical assessment. It shows the assessment criteria of the working process, which is a ‘subactivity’ of a ‘core activity’. The practical assessment consists of two parts:

- An observation during the execution of the activities, carried out by the mentor;
- A reflection interview carried out by the Educational institute. The main reason for the interview is to make sure that the learner is aware of what he/she is doing, why he/she is doing it in that way and how he/she would act when another situation might occur.

Example 4: Assessments in the QAFP context

Core task 1: Taking care of animals and the working environment (level 4)



working process 1.1: Feeding animals

observation	interview	Assessment indicators	sufficient	insufficient
	X	He/she is taking decisions about the correct food in the correct amounts and the correct amount of water for the animal in order to make sure that the animal has the right balance and condition of food and water.		
	X	He/she decide, based on the food advice and the specific characteristics of the animal, which consistence and amounts are good for the animal. He monitors and controls the taking of water and food by the animal and takes measures taking into account the advice, condition and production phase of the animals		
X		He/she chooses appropriate materials and means for the food and water supplies for the animals and handles effectively and efficiently in a way that there is a sustainable food and water supply and management.		
X		He/she works according the company and safety procedures, taking into account the legal rules and legislations.		

Result of working process 1.1: (3/4 activities have to be sufficient, all activities count equally)

- Sufficient
 insufficient

Total assessment of the core task:

Core task. 1	Taking care of animals and the working/living environment	sufficient	insufficient
1.1	Feeding animals		
1.2	Taking care of animals		
1.3	Monitoring animals		
1.4	Cleans and disinfects the working/living environment		
1.5	Taking care and maintenance of the working/living environment		

Result of core task 1:

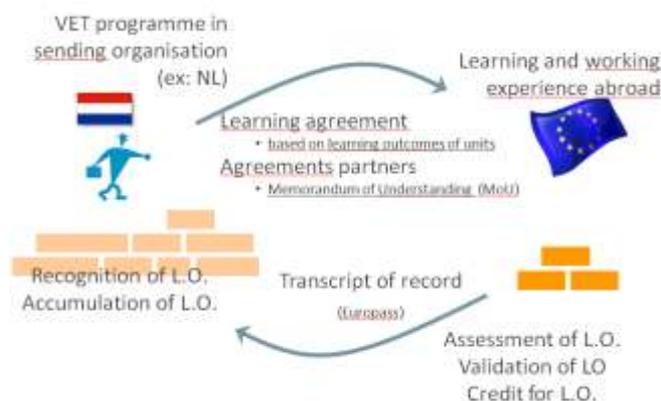
- good : all working processes of the core task are carried out sufficiently
 Sufficient : min. 4/5 of the working processes are carried out sufficiently
 Insufficient : the threshold of 4/5 is not reached

Factsheet 5: Transfer and recognition of learning outcomes

The principles of transfer and recognition of learning outcomes

Especially in the case of short traineeships, the assessment and recognition is not an issue. When a learner is doing an international traineeship of three months (or even longer), to develop technical skills and competences related to his qualification, then the traineeship is a substantial part of the formal training pathway. This means that both formative (to measure the progress) and summative (to qualify) assessments should take place in the company.

This implies also that the sending provider has to put in place a system for the transfer and recognition of these learning outcomes when he returns.



Example: a learner from the Netherlands goes to Germany to work in a farm for six months. All arrangements are made in the contracts and when the learner comes back after six months, he can show via his portfolio, assessments, evaluation and interviews reports (both formative as summative) that he has achieved the learning outcomes/ objectives. It is now up to the training centre to validate and recognize these learning outcomes as being achieved, so that he can continue with his programme in the Netherlands.

How to facilitate the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes?

There are some important conditions for the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes:

- Transparency in learning outcomes: It should be possible to train and assess the learning outcomes at the right level of performance in the company.
- Transparency in assessment of learning outcomes (procedures, methods and tools): The educational institute should provide the mentor the tools and methodology for the assessments.
- Trust in a quality assessment by the company: The company has the expertise to carry out the assessments related to the content of the learning outcomes, but it might be relevant to provide the mentors/ assessors a training and tools on how to carry out the assessments (pedagogics)
- Permeability/ flexibility: At Educational institutes level, it should be possible to accept the assessment which is carried out by the companies and to provide a flexible learning pathway to the learner.

Example: The European skills passport (ESP) can be used as a digital portfolio. The ESP can be created and kept up to date online. The learner can collect and add documents like a language portfolio, a certificate supplement, copies of diplomas, certificates, references, fotos etc. The ESP can be added to the European CV of the learner. A portfolio which is developed in such way can significantly contribute to the recognition of the learning outcomes by the training centre, especially in combination with a final interview.

Example 5: Transfer and recognition of learning outcomes in the QAFP network.

Steps:	How to make sure that the learning outcomes can be recognized?
1. A learner decided to do a traineeship in a company in another country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The learner selects a company which is accredited by the QAFP network and comply with the quality criteria via http://www.greenplacements.eu ; - The learner, sending and hosting organization make a learning agreement, describing the learning outcomes which are the subject of the traineeship; - The sending and hosting organization sign a “Memorandum of Understanding” describing the methods and procedures of assessment and other issues to ensure a quality placement; - The mentor in the company is competent to coach and assess the learner. If not, a training has to be provided by the training provider. - There is a clear agreement on the different roles and tasks of all the actors (see example 1 of this guideline)
2. The development of technical and personal competences in the company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mentor coaches the learner and provides feedback to the training centre; - There is regular contact between the learner, the Educational institute and the company; - The learner keeps a portfolio as a proof of the achieved learning outcomes. This can be done via the European skills passport; - The mentors carries out formative assessments to measure the progress.
3. The assessment of the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mentor assesses the learner conform the agreed procedures and uses the tools provided by the training centre; - The assessment is validated by the company conform the assessment standards (= “credits”); - The learner keeps up to date the portfolio (via European skills passport)
4. The learner come back in the training centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The training centre validates the assessments carried out by the company and assesses the portfolio developed by the learner; - The training centre can decide to do an additional interview with the learner; - The training centre recognizes the learning outcomes as a formal part of the training pathway and he/she can continue with the rest of the training pathway (accumulation of the achieved learning outcomes in the training pathway) - The company as a work placement is evaluated by the Educational institute and the learner

Different assessment methods can be used (in combination) to validate and recognize different types of learning outcomes:

	Declaration	Interview/ debate	observation	portfolio	Presentation	simulation
Verification	x					
In depth knowledge		x		x	x	
Communicative skills		x (oral)		x (written)	x (oral)	x (oral)
Self reflection		x		x		
Clarification		x				
Evidence of competence		x	x	x		x
Demonstrating skills			x	x		x



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