



DISCUSSION PAPER

TOPAS NEW MODEL FOR INTERNSHIP: KEY PRINCIPLES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE INDICATORS

Comments to be received by 28 September 2018

Project	585603-EPP-1-2017-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP TOPAS From theoretical-oriented to practical education in agrarian studies
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Introduction

One of the results of the project should be a new model of internship, which must be based on 1) learning outcomes, 2) be in line with Bologna system and 3) have QA system for work placements and monitoring on progress. Detailed description of the project (thereafter – DDP) states that:

‘The revision of learning outcomes and development of a new model for internships will be based on review of best practice from EU regarding collaborative agreements, individualised monitorings and follow-ups, quality indicators for internships and detailed analyses of local farm and agriculture industry needs at partner countries. The model will be developed and presented in the form of a white paper (M6). It will define support structure and focus, suitable and needed resources for virtual and physical coaching, and key knowledge, attitude and skills that students need to achieve through the internships. In order to provide a more practice-based form of education teaching methodology, tools & infrastructure must be updated’ DDP, p. 30 .

Abovementioned item one falls within the realm of the WP1 of TOPAS and will be finalized on the forthcoming meeting in Wroclaw, we took the liberty and propose discussion paper on two other items. We have the honour to bring to your attention the Discussion Paper ‘TOPAS new model for internship: key principles and quality assurance indicators’.

The objective of this Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper describes, and seeks stakeholders’ views about:

- (a) European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships and its applicability range for the project (section 1);
- (b) Approaches to conceptualize the TOPAS internship such as Practice-based education (PBE), Evidence-based practice (EBP) (section 2);
- (c) Bologna system (section 3);
- (d) Approaches to quality assurance (section 4);



and

(e) Quality Internships & Apprenticeships Assessment (QIA-A) as a basis for TOPAS QA (section 5).

We also seek views on additional internship QA issues to address in this project.

Invitation to comment

The Consortium invites comments on the proposals in this Discussion Paper, particularly on the questions set out below. Comments are most helpful if they:

- (a) comment on the question as stated;
- (b) indicate the specific paragraph(s) to which they relate;
- (c) contain a clear rationale;
- (d) identify any wording in the proposals that is difficult to translate; and
- (e) include any alternative the Consortium should consider.

How to comment

Comments should be submitted using one of the following methods:

Electronically - Comments can be sent electronically via the Moodle platform.

By email - Comments can be emailed to: newinternshiptopas@gmail.com with enclosed file in PDF-format which clearly identifies respondents.



Section 1 - European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships

1.1. The DDP clearly states that the new model for internship for TOPAS should be based on European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships.

‘new models for internships will be proposed where a network of agriculture and farm firms will cooperate to put them into practice – having students as primary users. Additionally, from day one of the project, the consortium will call on internship and apprenticeship providers and public decision makers to adopt a system of certification and to ensure the recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired through internships and apprenticeships based on the **EQCIP**’.

...

The model will be developed and presented in the form of a white paper (M6). It will define support structure and focus, suitable and needed resources for virtual and physical coaching, and key knowledge, attitude and skills that students need to achieve through the internships. *DDP, p. 30*

In 2010, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) came out with the European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships, a document that lays basic principles for internships and apprenticeships to become a valuable and quality experience for young people. It has been developed in consultation with the European Trade Union Confederation, YFJ’s member organisations and other NGOs. It is currently supported by 14 Members of the European Parliament, as well as companies and organisations who sign as a commitment to strive to implement such quality standards in their workplace.



Internships and apprenticeships have become an almost obligatory rite of passage for many young people trying to find their way into the labour market. Unfortunately, they often **lack educational value**, they **are unpaid**, and **the rights** of young interns and apprentices **are not respected** - the result? Young people are exploited as cheap labour force!

The European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, focusing on three main aspects:

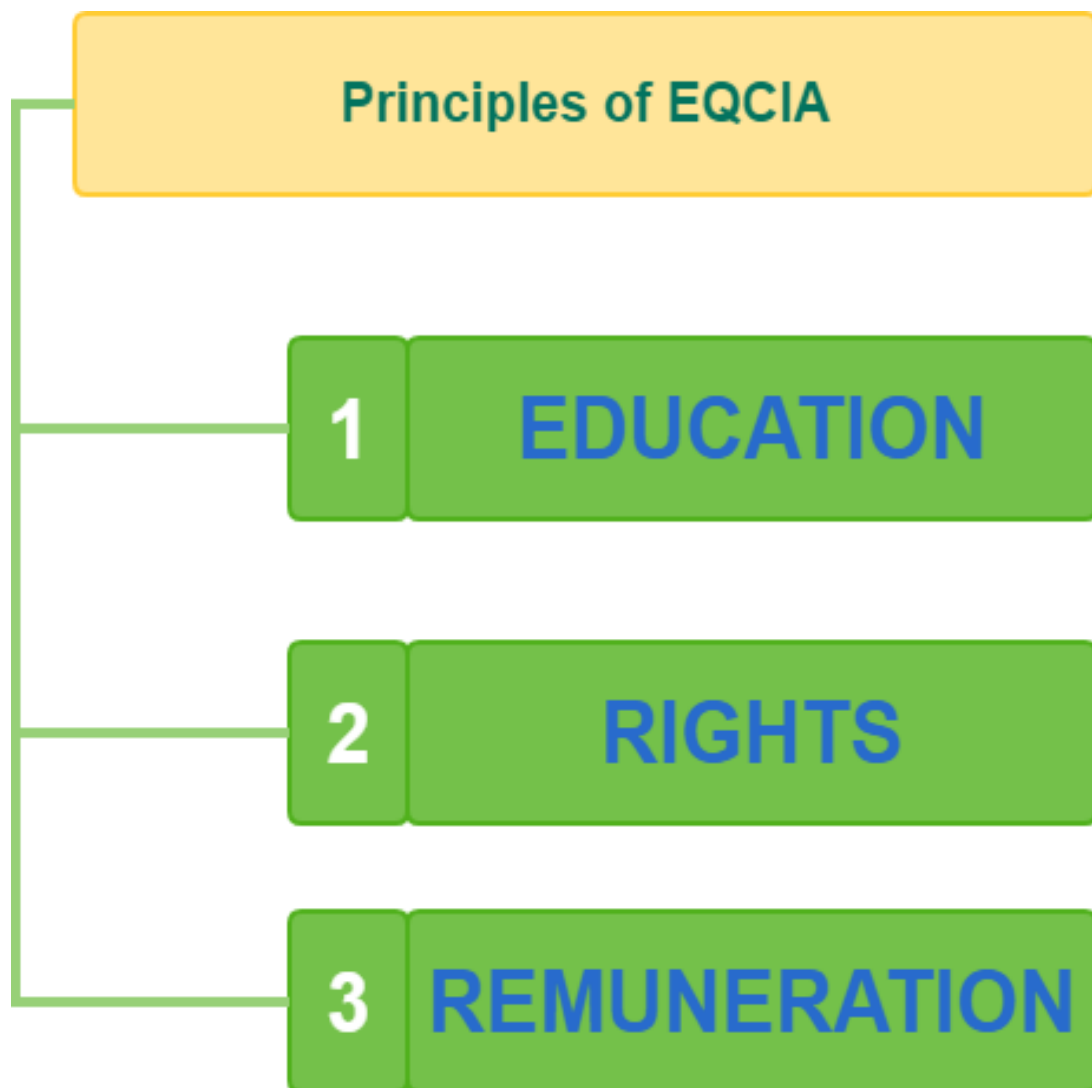


Figure 1: *Principles of European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships*



1.2. EQCIA defines apprenticeships as follows:

DEFENITION

Charter defines **APPRENTICESHIPS** as work oriented trainings that are part of *vocational education* and *training* and that are *solely school-based programmes* or *combined school and work-based programmes*, both carried out in the formal education system bringing credit points.

EQCIA defines internships as follows:

DEFENITION

Charter defines **INTERNSHIPS** as either:

- a) part of higher education that brings credit points where interns have a student status, access to services like student loans, student housing, health insurance, scholarships etc.
 - b) taking place outside formal education (also after graduation) that do not bring credit points for the diploma. Some of these internships do not have a legal status or may even be considered illegal.
 - c) and any other form of similar work experience that is offered to young people as a work based learning opportunity.
-

We propose following definition, which though based on EQCIA definition but clearly conveys the purpose of internship as work-based learning.

Internships are **work-based learning opportunities**, either taking place as part of formal education (with interns having a student status) or outside of formal education (also after graduation), during which a person **spends a period of time in an enterprise** or organization to **acquire specific learning outcomes and competencies** required by the labour market.



1.3 We are convinced that internships and apprenticeships should be primarily a learning experience and believe that:

1.3.1 Internships/apprenticeships should never lead to job replacement;

1.3.2 Well organised internships/apprenticeships help young people acquire practical experience and add practical skills to the knowledge and qualifications that have been previously acquired through either formal or non formal education;

1.3.3 Internships/apprenticeships help to orientate oneself professionally and also widen one's perspectives of different sectors;

1.3.4 Internships/apprenticeships provide recognised working experience that develops the skills of young people and elevates their professional capacity;

1.3.5 Internships/apprenticeships should be carried out under guidance of a competent supervisor and have access to robust evaluative and complaints channels to monitor progress and quality of the internship/apprenticeship experience;

1.3.6 Interns/apprentices should be informed at the beginning of their internship/apprenticeship experience of their social and labour rights, workers representatives, their responsibilities to the organisation, any health and safety risks posed to them through the position or at the work place and are provided the relevant social protection accordingly;



1.4. We believe that internships (as part of higher education) and apprenticeships should meet the following criteria:

1.4.1 *existence of a written and legally binding contract between the educational institution, intern/apprentice and hosting organisation*

outlining the main principles of the internship/apprenticeship, including how many **credit points** this will contribute to the diploma of the intern/apprentice; a description of **learning objectives and tasks** should be attached to the contract;

1.4.2 length and tasks of the internship/apprenticeship correspond to specified **learning objectives** that are shared with the student at the beginning of his/her internship/apprenticeship;

1.4.3 guidance throughout the internship/apprenticeship period **by a supervisor(s)** trained specifically for the role;

1.4.4 the right of the intern/apprentice to **receive reimbursement** of costs incurred during the internship/apprenticeship or **right to receive food, housing, and public transportation tickets instead**;

1.4.5 decent remuneration for work carried out additional to the requirements outlined in the internship/apprenticeship contract, including compensation for overtime;

1.4.6 clear evaluation criteria of the internship/apprenticeship period.

Questions for respondents

Question 1

Paragraph 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4 describes the rationale for and principles of EQCIA.

Do you agree that the development of new TOPAS internship model should be based on those three principles laid out in EQCIA IN FULL? Why or why not? Include any alternative the Consortium should consider.



Question 2

Paragraph 1.2 describes definitions of internship.

Do you agree with this rationale and definition? Why or why not? Do you think there are other elements that should be included in definitions? Include any alternative the Consortium should consider.



Section 2 - Conceptualization of TOPAS internship

DDP of the project postulates that it is being built on concept of practice-based education (PBE).

Bringing practice-based education (PBE) to the classroom is a novelty in agricultural studies if not in the HE system in general in the three partner countries. By using this approach, course teams create curricula by translating visions and goals for their cohorts in consideration of the context, inherent characteristics of the discipline/profession and the interests of students and other key stakeholders. DDP, p. 28

Practice-based education (PBE) is a broad term, referring to tertiary education that prepares graduates for their practice occupations, and the work, roles, identities and worlds they will inhabit in these occupations. In practice as in theory, PBE operates **at curriculum level** and through particular teaching and learning strategies. A PBE curriculum is one that frames goals, strategies and assessment around engagement with and preparation for practice; **it values both learning for and learning in practice and occupational contexts**. (Sheehan D., Higgs J. (2013)

‘PBE is, by definition, **entwined with practice, being the purpose, context and medium for such education**. PBE occurs via a range of mediums including classroom, simulated, flexible, distance and independent learning. As well as forming the foundation of professional education curricula incorporating some or all of these potential strategies, PBE involves the key dimension of learning in the workplace, which can occur through a range of conceptual and operational approaches (e.g. workplace learning) both within and beyond curricula. For instance, the term “work-based learning” can refer to learning that occurs through work outside of educational programs and formal institutions’.(Higgs et al 2013)



It is widely being acknowledged that work-based learning (WBL) strategies are a vital part in the ongoing and future development of the existing workforce. WBL is an integral part of PBE.

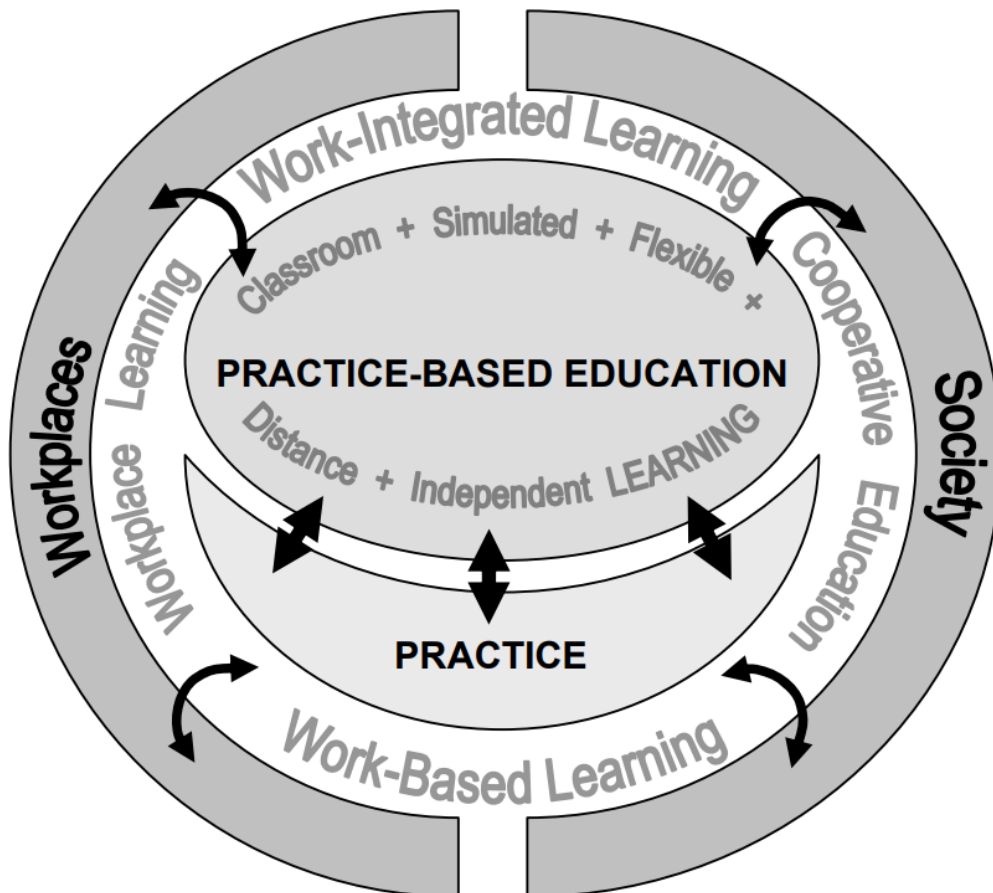
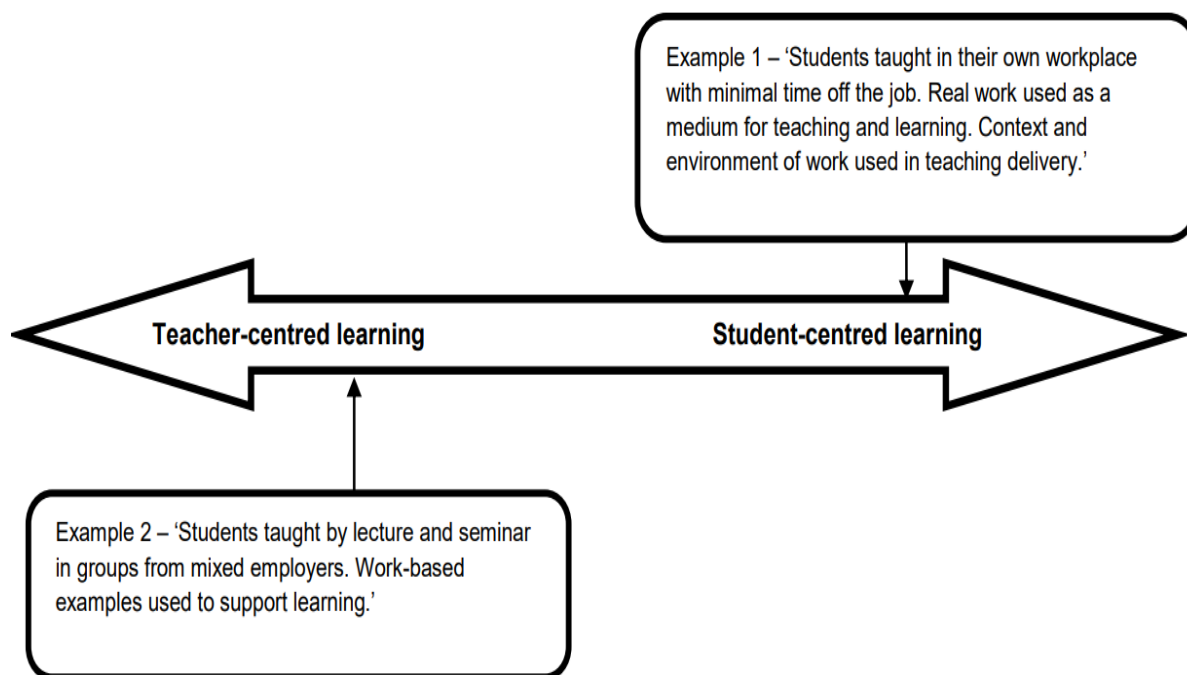


Figure 2: Key terms in professional education (Higgs et al 2013, p. 4)

‘**Work-based learning** is the term being used to describe a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organizations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces.’ Boud, D. and Solomon, N. (2001) (here from Lemanski T., Mewis R. and Overton T. (2011), p. 5)

Figure 3 shows the continuum of ways in which WBL can be delivered:



of agricultural extension as an integral component of a larger, cohesive system that brings theory, research and practice together in one enterprise. (Sewell et al 2017, p. 330).

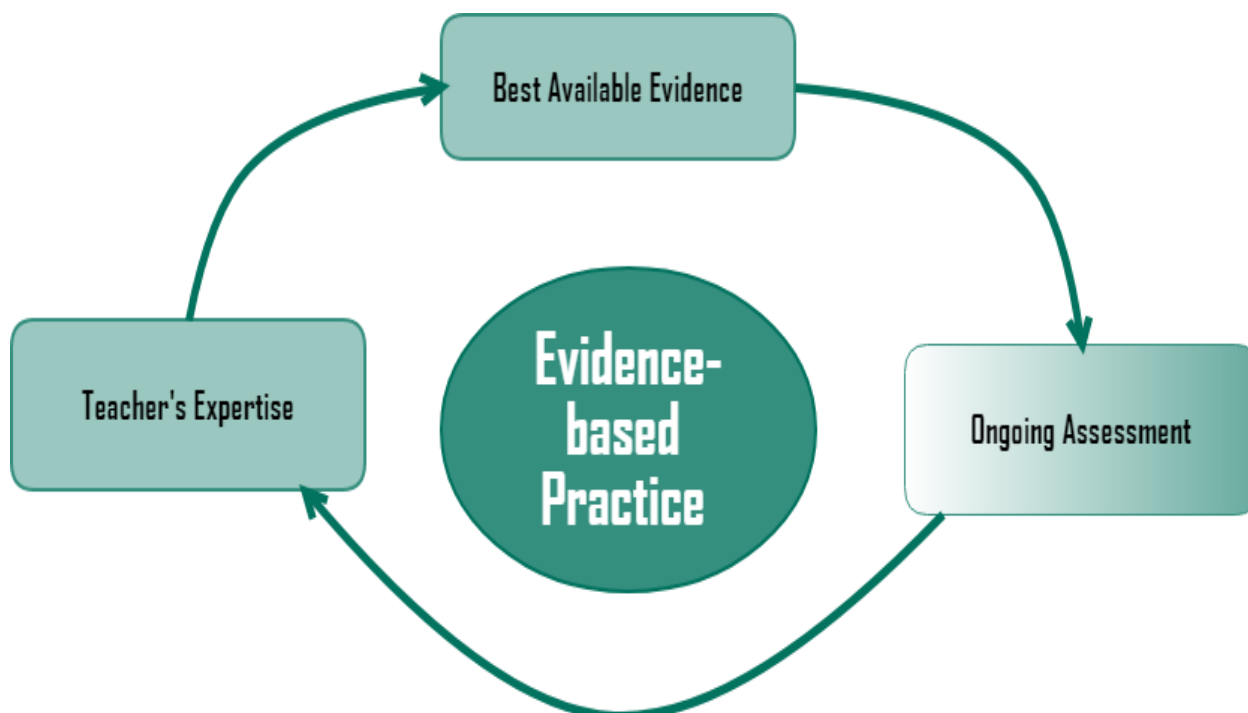


Figure 4: *EBP applied to education*

Reproduced from Mitchell P. (2015), p. 12

‘Evidence-based practice is not ‘cook book’ teaching or policing, nor should it be about prescribing what goes on from a position of unchallenged authority. It is about **integrating professional expertise with the best external evidence from research to improve the quality of practice**’ (Sharples 2013, p.7).

There are of course dissenting voices criticizing the EBP for not being suitable for education realm.

‘Teaching is frequently offered the example of medical practice as the gold standard for evidence informed practice. Randomised control trials produce a shared ‘truth’ that all can then act on. If only. The reality is much closer to teaching than we might realise. An RCT might tell you the treatment that the majority of patients respond well to, it will not tell you if the person in front of you



is likely to be in that majority or will need a different approach. That is where professional judgment comes in. It's all about knowing enough about the subtleties of the research findings and the comparisons of different studies then having the confidence to make your professional judgment accordingly. As in medicine so in teaching' (McFarlane, A. 2015).

Research to Practice

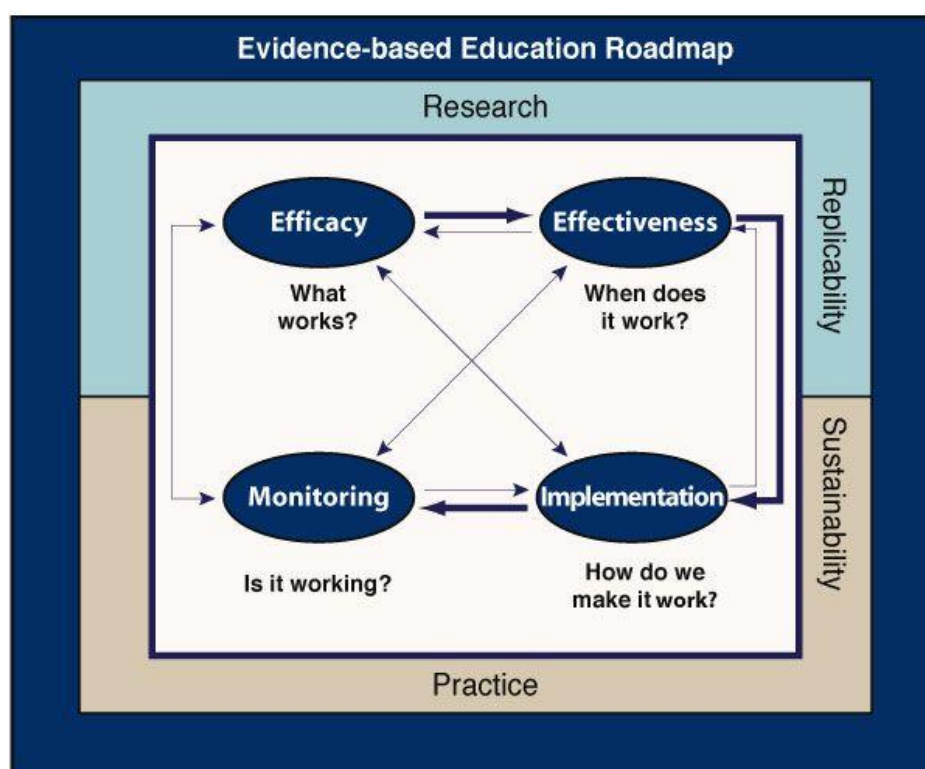


Figure 5. *Evidence-based Education Roadmap* (source – Google images).

In contrast, critics often make much of the causal nature of EBP, since for many of them this is reason to reject EBP altogether. Biesta is a case in point. For him and many others, education is a moral and social practice and therefore noncausal. According to Biesta (2010):

The most important argument against the idea that education is a causal process lies in the fact that **education is not a process of physical interaction but a process of symbolic or symbolically mediated interaction.** (p. 34)



Evidence-based practice is a decision-making process that grounds the selection, implementation, and evaluation of instructional practice in sound evidence (Spencer et al., 2012).

Question 3

Section 2 describes PBE and EBP and their interconnections.

Do you agree that the development of new TOPAS internship model should be based on PBE or incorporate both PBE and EBP (for example for animal sciences students there it's best suitable)? Why or why not? Include any alternative the Consortium should consider.



Section 3 - The Bologna Process

One of the deliverable (D 1.2) of the project is ‘Learning outcome and competence based harmonization of selected agrarian management courses in line with Bologna’. So, the Bologna Process has been put in the centre of TOPAS internship, and the later should be based on the former.

The Bologna Process, launched with the Bologna Declaration, of 1999, is one of the main voluntary processes at European level, as it is nowadays implemented in 48 states, which define the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)¹.

There are three main aspects we believe that are worth to be incorporated in TOPAS model of internship: 1) definitions of learning outcomes and competences, 2) ECTS and 3) work placements or internships assessment in Bologna process.

Learning outcomes and competences.

Learning outcomes are verifiable statements of what learners who have obtained a particular qualification, or completed a programme or its components, are expected to know, understand and be able to do.

As such they emphasise the link between teaching, learning and assessment. Learning outcomes statements are typically characterised by the use of active verbs expressing knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, etc.²

In Europe a variety of terms relating to “**learning outcomes**” and “**competences**” is used with different shades of meaning and in somewhat different frames of reference. In all cases however they are related to **WHAT THE LEARNER WILL KNOW, UNDERSTAND AND BE ABLE TO DO AT THE**

¹ The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) <http://archive-2010-2015.ehea.info/>

² Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (2005) A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area http://www.ecahe.eu/w/images/7/76/A_Framework_for_Qualifications_for_the_European_Higher_Education_Area.pdf, p. 35



END OF A LEARNING EXPERIENCE. Their widespread use is part of the shift in paradigm that places the learner at the centre of the higher education experience. This shift is the foundation of the European Higher Education Area, the Bologna Process and ECTS³.

In the Qualifications Framework for the EHEA (Bologna Framework) learning outcomes (including competences) are seen as the overall results of learning. The Framework is based on the “Dublin Descriptors”, developed by the Joint Quality Initiative. These descriptors consist of generic statements of typical expectations or competence levels of achievement and abilities associated with the Bologna cycles. The word competence is used in this case in a broad sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills.

The European Qualification Framework for LLL instead distinguishes knowledge, skills and competence. It uses the following definition: “**competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.** In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, **competence** is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy”. In this case the term competence is understood in a more limited way, **as the capacity to transfer knowledge into practice.**

Tuning (Educational Structures in Europe) makes a clear distinction between learning outcomes and competences in order to distinguish the different roles of the most relevant players in the learning process: the academic staff and students/learners. For Tuning **competences represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities and attitudes and are distinguished between subject specific and generic ones.** Fostering competences is the object of a process of learning and of an educational programme. According to Tuning,

³ ECTS Users’ Guide http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf, p. 14



learning outcomes express the level of competence attained by the learner.

Learning outcomes are formulated by academic staff, preferably on the basis of input from internal and external stakeholders⁴.

The ECTS.

European and national qualification frameworks are based on agreed level descriptors, with learning outcomes and credits related to such levels. The Bologna Framework has agreed cycle descriptors with learning outcomes and credit ranges. The Bologna cycle descriptors are known as the ‘Dublin Descriptors’. That’s there the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) comes in play. ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and **units of learning as well as student mobility.** (ECTS Users’ Guide, p. 11)

The first two Bologna cycles are associated with the following ECTS credit ranges:

- First cycle qualifications typically include 180-240 ECTS credits.
- Second cycle qualifications typically include 90-120 ECTS credits,

with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits at the level of the 2nd cycle.

The allocation of credits to single educational components is performed as part of curriculum design with reference to national qualifications frameworks, level descriptors and qualifications descriptors. Generally it is the responsibility of higher education institutions and academic staff, but in some cases may be decided by external bodies.

Work placements or internships assessment in Bologna process.

If **work placements** or **internships** are required to complete the programme (or a component) **they are part of students’ learning outcomes and workload and necessitate an allocation of credit.** In such case, **the number of credits**

⁴ <http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/>



allocated to the work placement should be included within the overall number of credits for the particular academic year⁵.

Regarding the **use of learning outcomes and credits for work placements**, the following is considered **GOOD PRACTICE⁶**:

- ❖ **The Learning Agreement** regarding the work placement (signed by the institution, the learner and the employer) should **specify the learning outcomes to be achieved**;
- ❖ Work placements should have **clear procedures for assessing learning outcomes and awarding credit**;
- ❖ **The roles** of higher education institutions, learners and employers in the process of formulating as well as assessing these learning outcomes **should be clear**;
- ❖ The teaching staff in higher education institutions may **require training regarding supervision and management of work placements**;
- ❖ If required for the programme, **the work placements should be integrated in the curriculum**.

As with any other educational component, the teaching staff should define the learning outcomes to be achieved through work placements when designing the curriculum. These **learning outcomes should be accompanied by the appropriate assessment methods and criteria**. It is important that **the assessment methods be compatible with the nature of work placements** (e.g. observation and evaluation by a tutor or production of a report by the student). As with any other educational component, **credits for work placements are only awarded when the learning outcomes have been achieved and assessed**.

⁵ ECTS Users' Guide http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf, p. 19

⁶ *ibid*, p. 19



Question 4

Section 4 describes the main aspects of the Bologna system various combinations of which are worth contemplating for TOPAS new model of internship.

Do you agree that the development of new TOPAS internship model should be based IN FULL on the Bologna system? Why or why not? What are the national limitation you are aware of which could hinder full implementation, if any? Include any alternative the Consortium should consider.



Section 4 - Approaches to the quality assurance⁷

The concept of quality became a well-established topic and the concept of quality assurance (QA) and quality enhancement (QE) are widely used in the higher education institutions (HEIs). The noticeable concern across the world about quality reflects the importance of QA issues.

As the analysis of research papers showed quality is not a unitary concept, many authors have defined it through a variety of approaches (Van Kemenade et al., 2008; Newton, 2002, 2000; Harvey and Green, 1993). A widely cited piece of literature, Green (1994), pointed out five approaches to the definition of quality, and this section presents a critique of them.



Figure 6. Approaches to the Definition of Quality
Source: (Green (1994), Elassy (2015)).

⁷ Disclaimer: This section almost entirely relay on one research, namely Elassy (2015).



Quality as the conformance to standards. The quality of a product is measured in terms of its conformance to the specifications, to see if it meets the standards set (Green, 1994, p. 13). In the HE sector, the concept of “standards” means the level of conditions that must be met by institutions or programmes to be accredited by an accreditation agency. This indicates that if quality is the answer to the question “is it good?”, then standards give the answer to the question “is it good enough?” (Elassy N., 2015). Quality is about process, and standards are about outcomes, so the job of QA is to check that the educational process will ensure high standards.

Quality as fitness for purpose. The definition of quality as “fitness for purpose” was adopted by most policymakers in the HE sector, as it argued that quality had no meaning except in relation to the purpose of the product or service. This approaches focussed on “a threshold judgment”, which referred to the minimum requirements to fit standards; so, if the purposes are met by an institution, this means it has quality, which arguably was not always the case (Elassy N., 2015).

Quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals. According to Green, “quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals” was one version of the “fitness for purpose” model that focussed on evaluation, as quality in this approach concentrated on evaluating quality in the HEIs. This considered a high-quality institution, as one that had a clear mission and knew how to meet its goals (Green, 1994, p. 15).

Quality as meeting customers’ stated needs. This definition deals with the customers’ needs and highlights the importance of knowing who the customers are, what their needs are and how to satisfy them. In this sense, quality is critical to the functioning of the market, as customers are thought to require reliable information about the product that they purchasing (Elassy N., 2015, p. 252). Yet, there are a



number of complications in defining quality as meeting customers' needs, one of which is whether the “student” is the customer, the product or both? Also, the main critics of this approach asked whether students were in a position to determine what their needs were (Green, 1994, p. 16).

The traditional concept of quality. This approach considers quality as the provision of a product or service that is distinctive and confers special status on the owner or user. In HE, it might equate with most people's perception of Oxford or Cambridge Universities, in terms of the special student experience that these institutions provide, and the graduate and research output. Nevertheless, this concept is not useful when it comes to evaluate quality in HE as a whole (Green, 1994, p. 13). Excellence, in the sense of exceptional quality, came to be seen, not as the answer to the question “is it good?”, but as the answer to the question “is it better than the others?” With that, it becomes all too easy to assume that quality manifests itself essentially as a ranking on a linear scale (Brink, 2010, p. 140).

The meaning of QA

The origin of the concept of QA is not found in the educational sector rather it was imported from the business sector into the HE in the 1980s and, because QA occupies a central place in the HE policy (El-Khawas, 2013), it is defined in many studies.

Cheng (2003) suggested three different paradigms of QA in education, namely: “Internal”, “Interface” and “Future” quality waves (figure 7).

The “Internal QA” focussed on improving the internal environment and processes, so the effectiveness of learning and teaching can be ensured to achieve the planned goals.

The “Interface QA” is ensuring that education services satisfy the needs of stakeholders and is accountable to the public.

The “Future QA” stresses ensuring the relevance of aims, content, practice



and outcomes of education to the future of new generations.

If these three waves are connected with the approaches of defining quality that were discussed earlier, it can be seen that the first wave reflects the first approach, which is “quality as the conformance to standards” and the third approach “quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals” (Green, 1994), as the conception of education quality in the first paradigm sees education as effectiveness in achieving planned goals and, indeed, those two approaches focus on the need of having a list of specific goals.

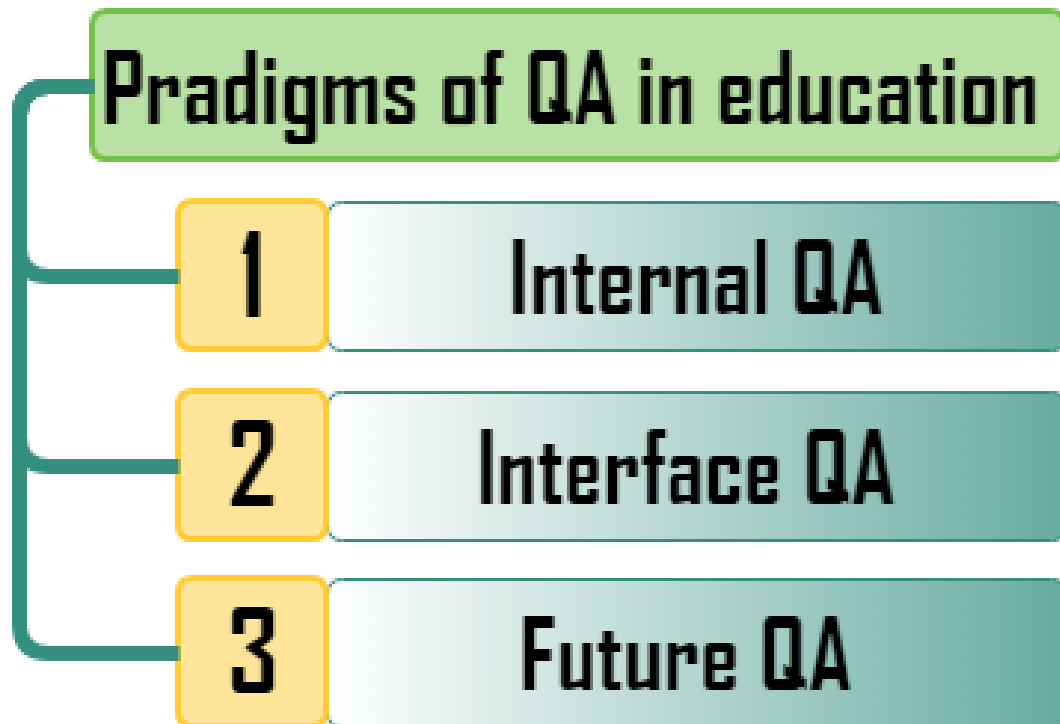


Figure 7 - *Three different paradigms of QA in education or quality waves
(created by authors after Cheng 2003)*

However, the “Interface” paradigm is close to the fourth approach (satisfaction) advanced by Green (1994). The relationship is seen throughout the conception of education quality as satisfaction of stakeholders with the education services, as stated by Cheng (2003, p. 203).

In another piece of literature, Biggs (2001) divided QA into two concepts, which are “retrospective” QA and “prospective” QA. The first approach focuses



more on an accountability theme than on an enhancement one, whereas the prospective QA concerns itself with improvement themes.

The retrospective QA looks back to what has already been done and makes a summative judgement against external standards, and the agenda here is managerial rather than academic, as it is not functionally concerned with the quality of teaching and learning, but with quantifying indicators of good teaching and good management, with a resultant cost-benefit decision. The concept of “retrospective” QA implies that quality can be measured easily by using a check list of external standards.

The prospective QA is concerned with assuring that teaching and learning does now, and in the future, will continue to fit the purpose of an institution. This definition mentioned that the aim was to ensure that the teaching and learning was “fit the purpose”, which is in agreement with one of Green’s approaches to defining quality.

Education deals with students’ attitudes, values and minds instead of with goods, as it is the case in industry; in that process, students themselves receive and perceive teaching in different ways. Therefore understanding quality in education should be consistent with the understanding of the educational process itself.

Question 5

Section 4 provides a review and discusses different definitions of the concepts of quality, quality assurance (QA) in higher education.

Which paradigms of QA should be emphasised for the QA mechanism of TOPAS internship? Why or why not? Include any alternative the Consortium should consider.

Section 5 - Quality Internships & Apprenticeships Assessment (QIA-A) developed by CSR Europe, Microsoft, Impronta Etica and the European Youth Forum (YFJ)

We believe that the development of indicators for evaluating internship should be based on the nature of the relations that arise in this process. According to this approach, three lines can be distinguished which we arbitrarily mark for convenience as purple line, yellow line and green line (figure 8).

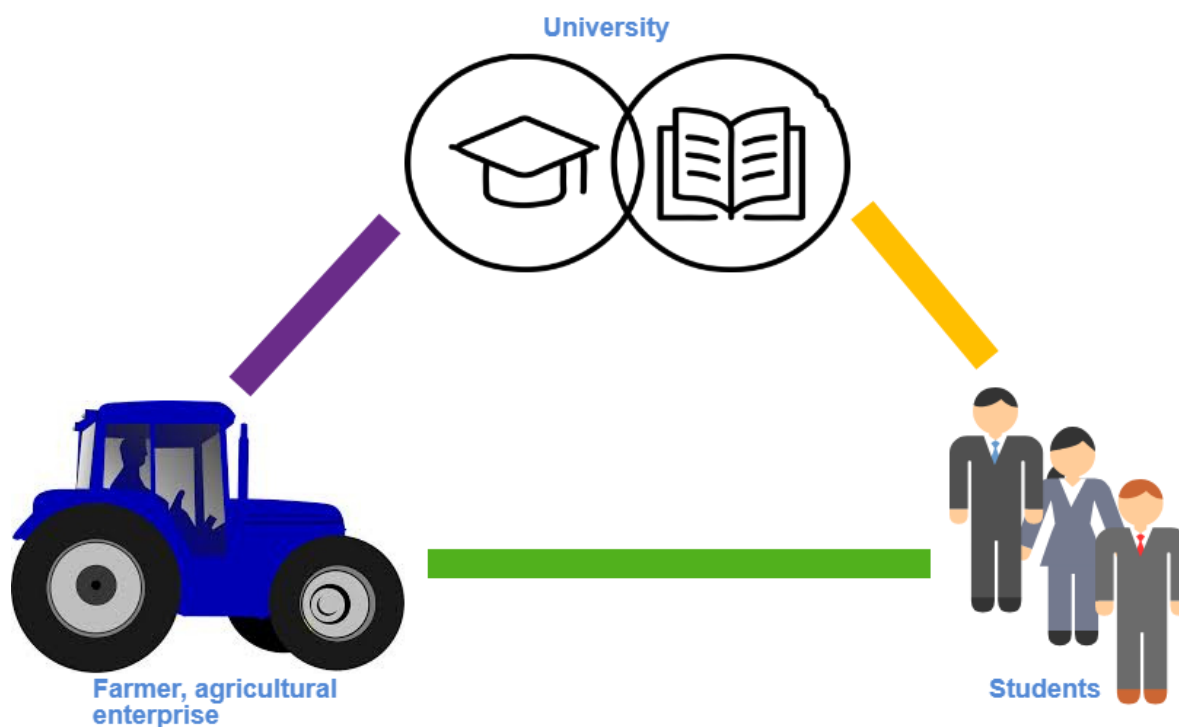


Figure 8 – Relationships lines for QA indicators (created by authors)

We believe that indicators developed the Quality Internships & Apprenticeships Assessment (QIA-A) perfectly suited for purple and green lines and partly covering the yellow line.

The following lines of text are those laid down in original document⁸.

⁸ Towards Quality Internships & Apprenticeships Introducing the Quality Internships & Apprenticeships Assessment (QIA-A) tool, retrieved from <http://pyle.si/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/03/Quality-Internships-Apprenticeships-Assessment-QIA-A-tool-report-2014.pdf>



In response to growing expectations from society and policy makers for companies to ensure the quality of their internships and apprenticeships schemes, CSR Europe, Microsoft, Impronta Etica and the European Youth Forum (YFJ) developed the Quality Internships & Apprenticeships Assessment (QIA-A) tool, a practical benchmark assessment tool that allows any given company to:

- Identify whether it has the necessary processes in place to assure the quality and effectiveness of its internship/apprenticeship schemes
- Compare its results with other companies, to identify best practices and areas for improvement

QIA-A aims to help companies understand and improve the quality of their internship/apprenticeship schemes, by benchmarking them against peers and the requirements of the European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships (“the Charter”).

The QIA-A tool consists of two parts:

1. **A questionnaire** which translates the requirements of the Charter into practical ‘yes’/‘no’ questions.
2. **A scoring mechanism** that allows the different companies taking part in the assessment to be compared with one another and evaluated against the requirements of the Charter

Questionnaire

The framework of the questionnaire (see **table 1**) consists of four layers:

1. On the most general level, it identifies four key areas that are relevant for the quality of an internship or apprenticeship from a company perspective. These are:

A governance, **B** recruitment, **C** quality of learning and **D** labour conditions.

2. Subsequently, each of these four areas is broken down into a number



of key indicators that together provide a balanced picture of the overall quality of an internship or apprenticeship. A core set of 10 indicators ('core indicators') applies to all types of internships/apprenticeships (within and outside of education), while 6 'additional indicators' are considered specifically relevant for internships outside of education.

3. In a next step, each of these indicators is assessed by one or more practical and process-related 'yes'/'no' questions, which correspond to the requirements outlined in the Charter.

4. Finally, where a question still offers room for interpretation, additional criteria are provided, to help the respondent decide whether a question should be answered with 'yes' or 'no'.

Scoring methodology

The scoring methodology rests on the assumption that each key indicator can be attributed the same weight in ensuring that the internship/apprenticeship brings relevant learning outcomes and is conducted in a qualitative working environment.

- Each indicator can receive a total maximum score of '1';
- Together this adds up to a total maximum score of '10' for the core indicators and '6' for the additional indicators;
- Each indicator is broken down in one or more questions.

For each question, a score '0' is awarded for each 'no' and a score between '0,25' and '1' to each 'yes', depending on the number of questions under that indicator.



Table 1: Outline of questionnaire, including core indicators in part 1 and additional indicators in part 2

Part 1. CORE INDICATORS			
Area	Key indicators	Question to assess whether the company has a specific process in place	Additional Criteria
GOVERNANCE	1. Multi-stakeholder approach	A Does your company partner/engage with at least one of the following stakeholders to develop the content/framework of the internships/apprenticeships offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Educational institutes ✓ Training providers or employment agencies ✓ Social partners ✓ Employer representative bodies (trade association, Chamber of Commerce) 	At least engaging with the stakeholder(s) for the recruitment of candidates
	2. Policy/guidelines	B Does your company have a policy/set of guidelines to inform the way internships/apprenticeships are organized (either at HQ or office level)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Written (set of) document(s) or online tool(s) ✓ Containing clarifications/instructions to streamline the procedure for an internship/ apprenticeship (and/or anything related to it) across the organization



RECRUITMENT	3. Transparency of information in recruitment	<p>C Are the following elements clearly communicated during the recruitment process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Job description ✓ Length of the internship/apprenticeship ✓ Details about remuneration/reimbursement of costs 	<p>✓ The future intern/apprentice has easy access to this information (e.g. information provided on the recruitment website, during an interview, in documents/emails sent to the person)</p> <p>✓ The information is provided before the person formally agrees to do the internship/ apprenticeship, whether or not this is concluded by signing a written type of agreement</p> <p>✓ • All three points mentioned in the question are covered</p>
QUALITY OF LEARNING	4. Qualified supervisor	<p>D Is the intern/apprentice provided with a company supervisor(s) during his/her internship/apprenticeship?</p>	Dedicated person that supervises the intern/apprentice on the actual (content) work he/she is doing
		<p>E Does your company prepare a supervisor for his/her role as supervisor (e.g. specific training)?</p>	<p>✓ Any type of support specifically tailored to working with interns/ apprentices (training, handbook, regular working group, briefing sessions, detailed briefing email)</p> <p>✓ System to ensure every supervisor receives this support/preparation</p>
		<p>F Is there a limit to the amount of interns/apprentices that can be assigned to one supervisor?</p>	Looking at the practice, there is a rule (established or unspoken) to limit the number of interns/apprentices that can be assigned to one supervisor
		<p>G Is there a lower limit to the number of years of experience a supervisor must have?</p>	Looking at the practice, there is a rule (established or unspoken) to assign interns/apprentices only to supervisors that have a minimum number of years of relevant working experience. This can also be linked to a certain position (e.g. line manager, team leader, ...)



	5. Regular interaction with supervisor	H Are there regular meetings (minimum one per month) between the intern/apprentice and the supervisor(s)?	A meeting is interpreted as a moment where the intern/ apprentice has the opportunity to discuss the work he/she is doing with the supervisor (e.g. daily interaction, weekly meeting)
	6. Complaints channel	I Does the intern/apprentice have access to a complaints channel in case of any issues occurring during the internship?	<p>✓ A complaints channel is a dedicated person/tool the person can revert to in case of problems (e.g. dedicated contact point in HR, anonymous hotline, ...), other than the supervisor</p> <p>✓ The person is clearly informed about the existence of such a channel at the beginning of the internship</p>
	7. Process to ensure personal development	J Is the intern/apprentice provided with learning objectives at the beginning of the internship?	<p>✓ Clearly defined list of technical/personal competencies the intern/apprentice is expected to acquire during the internship/ apprenticeship</p> <p>✓ Clear communication of those objectives to the intern/apprentice</p> <p>✓ Definition of learning objectives happens before/at the beginning of the internship/apprenticeship</p>
		K Does your company offer at least one intermediate appraisal meeting with the intern/apprentice to monitor progress against the learning objectives?	Dedicated meeting (other than regular meeting/time of contact between the person and the supervisor)
		L At the end of the internship/apprenticeship, does your company offer performance evaluation, including e.g. strengths and areas for improvement?	Dedicated meeting/procedure to evaluate the internship/ apprenticeship towards the end of the period (preferably assessing performance against learning objectives and to provide feedback on the person's personal competencies)



LABOUR CONDITIONS	8. Written & legal agreement	M Does your company offer a written and legally binding contract, stipulating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of the internship/apprenticeship Details about remuneration/compensation Description of tasks 	✓ Any type of written agreement (e.g. offer letter, project plan, adaptation of a normal employee contract, ...) that is signed by both the company and the intern/apprentice, and that is not in conflict with national labour law ✓ • All three points mentioned in the question are covered
	9. Fair compensation	N Does your company offer additional compensation for work performed outside of standard working hours, e.g. overtime?	✓ There is a system in place to track overtime ✓ Interns/apprentices receive additional compensation according to the overtime they have performed
		O Are interns/apprentices reimbursed or otherwise compensated for costs incurred during the internship/apprenticeship?	✓ Interns/apprentices receive reimbursement of any type of expense they have to incur because of work-related activities (e.g. travel expenses, business lunches/dinners, attendance of paid events, ...) ✓ For internships/ apprenticeships part of education, interns/apprentices receive reimbursement for additional living ✓ expenses incurred because of the internship/apprenticeship (e.g. costs related to work-home travel as opposed to normal transport expenses when the person is following courses; if necessary, housing) or a fixed amount that realistically can cover for this
	10. Transparent communication regarding relevant rights / duties	P Is the intern/apprentice informed at the beginning of the internship/apprenticeship of his/her relevant rights and duties, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Safety risks Social and labour rights Responsibilities towards the organisation 	All three points mentioned in the question are covered



Part 2. ADDITIONAL INDICATORS			
Area	Key indicators	Question to assess whether the company has a specific process in place	Additional Criteria
RECRUITMENT	1. Public advertisement	A Is the position publicly advertised?	‘Publicly advertised’ denotes that the key information about the position can be found on a channel that is accessible by the general public (e.g. the company’s jobsite, a recruitment portal, ...)
	2. Reasonable quantity of interns/apprentices	B Is there a defined limit to the number of interns your company employs at the same time?	The limit can change over time (according to internal capacity), but should be a specific cap (e.g. maximum 10% of FTE).
	3. Enabling a job transition	C Does your company provide the intern the opportunity to discuss the option of being hired as a permanent employee?	Either the person is informed during the recruitment whether an opportunity for permanent employment can be offered after the internship/apprenticeship, or this has clearly been discussed before the end of the internship/apprenticeship
		D In case the intern is not hired upon completion of the internship, does your company support him/her in any way in the transition to finding permanent work?	Any activity that can help the person move forward professionally is accepted (e.g. provide the stakeholder that sent the person with feedback/advise for the orientation of the person; letter of recommendation; support in CV-writing; ...)
QUALITY OF LEARNING	4. Reasonable length	E Does the length of the internship fall within the scope of 2-6 months?	No need for additional criteria
LABOUR CONDITIONS	5. Fair remuneration	F Are interns entitled to remuneration?	‘Remuneration’ denotes a fixed, monthly income
		G Is the remuneration in line with the national legislation?	No need for additional criteria
		H Does the remuneration exceed the EU poverty line of 60% median income or national minimum wage?	The EU poverty line of 60% median income for each country is taken from the most recent Eurostat number



	6. Access to social security systems	I	Is the intern included in the following social security systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health security • Unemployment • Pension systems 	All three points mentioned in the question are covered
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Question 6

Section 5 describes the main aspects of QIA-A developed by CSR Europe, Microsoft, Impronta Etica and the European Youth Forum (YFJ).

Do you agree that the assessment mechanism and QA indicators of new TOPAS internship model should be based on QIA-A developed by CSR Europe, Microsoft, Impronta Etica and the European Youth Forum (YFJ)? Why or why not? Include any alternative the Consortium should consider.



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