

## Situation description on practical placements in GERMANY

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Practical placement (PP) in higher education in Germany is **regulated on regional (Bundesland / state) level in regional laws for universities** (“Landeshochschulgesetz”). Basic competences exist on national level, too (“Hochschulrahmengesetz”), but there are no requirements or regulations focussed on PP on national level. Those laws differ across the regions, but most of them mention PP as possible integrated part of the study course.

At German universities PP has not been compulsory in the majority of cases, they have been only requested or desirable, but this has changed with the Bachelor-Master-system. **Nowadays PP are in general compulsory in a Bachelor study course and have always been at Technische Universität, universities with engineering study courses and universities of applied sciences.** Whether a PP is compulsory or not, the PP period and its content is decided individually by study course. The general case is a PP period between 8 weeks (minimum standard according to the German Bachelor regimentation) and 6 months (non compulsory PP and compulsory “practice semesters” at universities of applied sciences). At universities of applied sciences in the Master programme is one project semester during which the Master thesis has to be worked out. This is often done in enterprises as well and then supervised by a professor. This proceeding is current in universities for Bachelor and Master thesis as well, especially in case of business and industry relevant subjects. In general, students do more than one internship during their studies. Universities of Technology tried to keep the compulsory of a pp in thre curricula to make sure that the graduates improve their employability by this.

**Explicit provisions for learning objectives** are a link to the studied discipline, which is controlled via a placements description beforehand or afterwards. Regimentations for study courses could specify this link according to their wishes (working areas covered, job profile, enterprise profile etc.).

**Evaluation methodology** differs across university types and study courses. At universities of applied sciences, a report has to be handed in and a presentation/defence on the PP experience and content has to be held to at least two professors. In university Bachelor courses, a certificate from the enterprise can be enough to accept the PP in the curriculum. According to the study course regimentation, a fix number ECTS points is distributed for a PP (e.g. 8 ECTS points for 8 weeks in a Bachelor course, 30 ECTS for 1 practice semester at universities of applied sciences). If the PP is done on a voluntary basis, there is no official evaluation of course.

**The German PP scheme is student driven** as the students are the main actora regarding all actions taken in PP context. They have to search for placements independently, has to apply, has to care for the timing and coordination with his theoretical studies and has to prove the results required by his university. In the university case, the PP contract is signed between student and enterprise; for universities of applied sciences it is a three-party-contract (university, student, enterprise).

**Universities can provide help** in searching for placement offers or preparing the PP period (with job walls, company contact departments, career centres, seminars, job fairs, contacts for funding, quality check / recommendations, networking etc.) and try to do so according to their financial and HR possibilities.

**Enterprise support in Germany is very heterogeneous**, varying across sectors and regions. Except in the arts and design sector, students in PP are paid between 400 and 1.500 Euro per month. Student recompenses are standardised according to different criteria like Bachelor, Master, Diplom degree, the kind of higher education institution and the number of semesters studied. Additionally there can be an allowance for apartment rents according to the distance to the home city. The general internship contract defines the salary and the duties of the student, similar to a regular contract of employment. In general, enterprises do have a technical advisor who is responsible for the one or some interns. The advisor could have the same university background as the intern, but at least should work in the same sector/unit as the intern does. This “duty” on the enterprise side is respected in the case of the three-party-contract, in other PP it could happen that there is no real control of this issue.

Students must have a student health insurance throughout their study, which is also valid during any training period. They are covered by the legally provided insurance of the company for all employees. A third party liability provision is not necessary for students as they are under a supervisor’s instruction. The results of the internship are in many cases documented in the diploma supplement as an added value. Some mobility projects hand out the “**Europass mobility**”.

**Mediation bodies are offered on a good will / financial possibility basis:** small centres at universities help students during the whole process. On a regional level 10 such centres exist in Germany plus individual services with similar tasks offered independently by universities. They are service centres which do not have any legal obligation to find a pp for a student, but which provide individual gratis help.

Best practice examples for such mediation bodies are the Leonardo Office Thuringia and the KOOR/BEST office in Karlsruhe. They have consultation hours for personal consulting, check application letters in foreign languages together with the students, try to stay in contact during the PP period and afterwards. Thus they provide guidance through the whole PP process and collect experience for future students.

A **difficulty** is the quality control of placements, especially in enterprises which are not known by the university or the mediation body. Another problem is the official recognition of placement learning content by universities.