

Situation description on practical placements in Malta*

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A practical placement, which can also be referred to as ‘work experience programme’ or ‘internship’, may serve as preparation for professional employment. It is an excellent way for the student to gain experience and skills in the chosen field they want to explore. Students are given the opportunity to apply what they have learnt; gain skills that are required for that position; and explore that position to see if their career plans are right for them.

A number of courses organised by the University of Malta, ranging across different faculties, require students to satisfy practical placements as part of their study duties. Two such practical placements are the teaching practice in the B. ED (Hons.) and the PGCE course, and the clinical practice in the medical courses. These practical placements are supervised and provide a strong link between the theory and practical application. The trainees are expected to be informed by their theoretical learning in their practical placements and to seriously engage themselves in the work they are doing. Study-units involving practical placements are often assessed over a period of time.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) also designs programmes providing students with the opportunity to engage in a significant amount of vocational practice for a minimum amount of hours per week. This practical experience will back up theoretical knowledge gained at the institute and will help students form a clear idea of the nature of the trade or vocation they intend to follow.

In the above two cases, the student placements are generally University (or higher education institution) driven (UDSP). A supervisor / tutor from the university follows and mentors the student for the duration of the internship and student duties / requirements are defined by the university. Over the years, cooperation between the university and the enterprise leads to the creation of a structure where the enterprise does not only contribute to the students’ training, but also identifies those students that have the potential to become future employees.

There are also a number of local agencies, like Future Focus Ltd., which offer arrangements for foreign students in the vocational trait, all over Europe, to conduct professional work placements and study visits in Malta. This internship can be conducted during the student’s academic year, or after completion of studies. During the period of internship, the student receives supervised practical training in the chosen field. Internships need to be very closely related to the student’s academic and career goals and must follow the rules of the organisation that is hosting them.

In this latter case, both the student and the enterprise can be the driver and initiator of the scheme. The enterprise organises internship activities and approaches students through link agencies (EDSP). Students can choose to contact such agencies themselves and ask for opportunities of placements with local enterprises (SDSP).

Moreover, Maltese students are also given the opportunity to partake in internship programmes taking place beyond the Maltese shores. Some of these placements programmes are funded through EU grants or by private enterprises, and offer the chance for students to gain new know-how and create new opportunities. Such a scheme is often followed during the time that students are following a course, and the higher education institution initiates this activity.

In practical placements, students are expected to actively contribute in the work experience programme they are engaged in. They should be able to bring knowledge gained from past work placements and educational background and demonstrate serious commitment and responsibility to the host company / institution.

*This report is no way exhaustive and or representative of any official documents / figures.

References

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Future Focus Ltd. 2009. The internship programme.

[http://www.futurefocus.com.mt/A4%20leaflet%20\(4\).pdf](http://www.futurefocus.com.mt/A4%20leaflet%20(4).pdf)