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WBL4JOB – Apprenticeship Policy and Implementation Toolkit (APIT)

Module 2 – Organization of Work-based- Learning (WBL)



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Introduction

This module is divided into 2 parts:

- In the first part, we will study the general principles of work-based learning and the context in which it takes place.
- Then, in the second part, we propose a process to build a work-based learning course in a higher education institution. We propose a seven-step process designed and carried out thanks to the mobilization of various actors.

1. The framework of a WBL course

Introduction

Work-based learning, also known as **dual training** or **apprenticeship**, is a system of training that combines theoretical instruction at a training centre (school, university, etc.) with professional practice in a company.

It is a system of training which integrates **work experience** where the person concerned, the alternating student, trains periodically in a company and in an educational institution.

See our WBL definition.

The student can thus learn and acquire in parallel theoretical knowledge and acquire a professional qualification. He can therefore integrate more easily into the life and culture of the company (practical phase) while continuing his or her studies in a training institution to obtain a diploma, bachelor's or master's degree, etc. (theoretical phase). The practical and theoretical phases alternate during the study cycle.

a) Necessary obligations that need to be respected

The WBL is based on an agreement between:

- The work-study student,
- The educational institution (school, university),
- The employer (private or public company);



It is a training system which must be based on a tripartite legal contract reconciling the activities in the company, the theoretical training, and which defines the commitments to be respected by each of the parties.

- The employer commit to provide a job for an employee and to organize his or her training. It is a necessary and fundamental part of the implementation of the alternation between the company and the training provider.
- The training institution commits to provide training in line with the requirements of the company's business.
- The work-study student commits to follow the training course, pass his/her exams to obtain the diploma and provide work or service expected by the company.

b) The tutor: the central actor

Whatever the periodicity of the work-based learning, the parties to the contract must put in place a particular organization. Indeed, the parties involved must be able to communicate easily with each other. To facilitate compliance with commitments, a tutor must necessarily be appointed, in his apprenticeship master within the company. He/she must be chosen by the employer for his/her professionalism (experience, diplomas, etc.).

The tutor plays an essential role:

- Towards training, because he will constitute a link between the different parties, in particular with the university representative (theoretical phase).
- Towards the company, because he will accompany the student during his integration in the company, he will control the good progress of the professional training (practical phase). He or she must always be available and attentive to problems.

c) More intensive pedagogical follow-up

In order to ensure that the employer is able to guarantee the attendance and participation of the student/employee at the courses, a system for monitoring attendance (attendance certificate) is essential. Meetings at the workplace and on the training site between the tutor and a training manager must be organized in order to monitor the progress of the work-study student during his or her work-study period, both for the practical and theoretical phases. This follow-up should be formalized by drawing up a work-based training plan prior to the work-study period, and then by professional assessment reports and visit reports. Similarly, university evaluation records must be sent to the tutor. The use of a digital platform can simplify the burden of these tasks.

d) The alternating student: student or employee?

The student/alternate, who is regularly enrolled, is following a training course at an educational institution and could therefore be considered as a person with a simple student status. However, as they also carry out a regular (long-term) professional activity within a host company, labour legislation (as in many countries) is entitled to require the existence of an employment contract, which gives them the status of an employee.

This employee status is to be preferred as it can be used as a criterion to distinguish:

- trainees/students with university student status, who are occasionally in companies as part of external activities (internships) as part of their course of study.
- paid 'work experience/apprentices' who are engaged in a regular professional activity under the authority of a company manager and for which labour legislation applies. This employment contract may be of a particular type because it must at least include the compulsory time spent in training to enable the work-study student to prepare for his or her diploma. It is this contract that will ensure compliance with the rules laid down by labour law, particularly with regard to working hours, when defining the alternating work schedules. It should also provide the framework for training arrangements both in the company and at the training centre.

e) The periodicity of WBL

The frequency in which students are at university or in the company varies greatly from one training course to another and depends on the sector of activity. It is necessary for the training institution to adapt its training and the rhythm of the alternation to the needs of the companies in the sector concerned.

- In the medical field, medical students have the fastest frequency: in the morning they are in the hospital, in the afternoon they attend lectures at the lecture theatre.
- Some engineering courses alternate between work and study for up to several months when working on projects.

In terms of the organization of the WBL course, all rhythms are possible. Among the most commonly used by companies and higher education institutions are:

- 3 days of training in the company and 2 days at university,
- 1 week in the company and 1 week at university,
- 1 week out of three at university,
- 2 months in the company and 2 months at university,
- 6 months in the company and 6 months at university.

Planning a short periodicity can have disadvantages. Indeed, the pace can be disruptive to the employer or the student. It is possible that the tasks are not clearly defined, given the time spent by the alternating student. This type of periodicity requires additional rigour on the part of the employer in monitoring tasks. On the other hand, when the periodicity is too long, the work-study student will not be able to compare the theory learned at university with real practice in the company. Moreover, they will have less

opportunity to transform their knowledge into know-how (practical competences). The adaptation of training periodicity to variations in the company’s activity is a guarantee of success of WBL.

f) How to prepare the students? What are the specificities in WBL?

The diplomas prepared in the framework of apprenticeship are identical to those prepared in the ‘standard’ school system: same level of qualification, same programme. In the standard school systems, work experience can be acquired in the form of internships to be carried out during the year, but cannot really replace apprenticeship, where periods of teaching in training institutions alternate with periods of work in companies. To take account of these differences and of the training acquired in the workplace by the trainee, the hours taught in apprenticeship may differ and be slightly lower. It is also the responsibility of the training manager, during the development meetings, to take into consideration the expectations of companies through the comments of tutors and professional organizations in order to continuously adapt the courses. The courses need to give students the skills that make it up to changes in the profession, technology and regulations.

In addition to the classic control and evaluation of knowledge, a special place must be given to the evaluation of the apprentice in the workplace. Often this is done by the creation of an additional teaching unit or a specific supplement to the diploma.

g) Specific recruitment

The idea of dividing one’s time between acquiring a base of theoretical knowledge and an effective professional activity in a company may seem attractive to young people, but WBL training requires a certain number of qualities and character traits that must be detected at the time of recruitment.

Organizational skills

While higher education already requires a good dose of rigour and organization, work experience requires a sense of priorities, an ability to prioritize tasks and a capacity to optimize your most scarce resource: time. By constantly alternating their professional obligations and classroom commitments, work-study students gradually develop their sense of organization and find the balance that enables them to successfully complete their professional project.

Have a Sense of Community

During their period of work experience in the company, work-study students are often required to work in groups. They must therefore have a sense of teamwork in order to put their efforts to the benefit of their team. They must be open-minded, listen to their colleagues, make suggestions and be willing to learn from experienced colleagues in order to become operational quickly. A sense of teamwork is also necessary during the course, as there is a lot of work to be done in pairs or in groups throughout the course.

Be Motivated and Disciplined

The work-study student is a fully-fledged employee who also attends class. It is a demanding rhythm that requires a certain amount of motivation over time, to which must be added the discipline to honour all their commitments, both in the classroom and in the host company.

Be Multitask and Cross-Functional

A good trainee must multitask, as he or she may be required to carry out tasks other than those assigned at the beginning of the training period. Employers, especially in small organizations, particularly appreciate talent that can work in several departments and at the same time make up for any understaffing.

Demonstrate Autonomy

Although they are supervised by a company tutor, work-study students must be independent. They are a source of new ideas and bring a fresh perspective to the host organization. Autonomy should not prevent the work-study student from asking questions or requesting help. During the recruitment phase, it is essential to involve the professional community in the selection of applications. This sharing also facilitates access to apprenticeship for young people whose applications have attracted the attention of employers.

h) Summary: the advantages and disadvantages of WBL

The benefits of work-based learning are acknowledged by most professionals in all sectors of activity, whether they are recruiters or former students.

The advantages of work-based learning

Work based learning facilitates professional integration

The work-study student will inevitably benefit from more concrete professional experience than a student who has completed initial training. Their skills will often be sharper and their concerns more in line with the reality of the business world. Thanks to regular contact with professionals, the work-study student is better able to develop his or her skills and to prove himself or herself by carrying out many tasks that another employee could have carried out. The work-study student's increase in autonomy (and confidence) is often remarkable and linked to the professional skills they develop day by day. Recruiters will always be more inclined to choose a candidate who has opted for a WBL diploma. It is not uncommon to see a work-study student being recruited by his or her host company once the course is over. In any case, it remains a great way of enriching one's professional network and making valuable contacts that may prove very useful later on.

The Diversity of Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is suitable for all qualifications and almost all diplomas, from high school to Master's degree. No level of study is left behind. Even business and engineering schools have gradually adopted this training formula. Work based training is not reserved for short courses and/or manual work.

Pay for Studying

Academic diplomas often have a significant cost for students or their parents. Work based training allows to overcome this financial constraint. Indeed, one of the major advantages of work-based learning is that it allows students to finance their studies as well as their daily expenses (rent, shopping, travel, leisure activities) thanks to a salary, the amount of which depends on the level of study and age of the student.

The disadvantages of alternations

Although an effective way of finding a job, work-based learning does have some disadvantages, which should be taken into consideration before embarking on this type of course:

Fast paced training or overly busy training?

The candidate will have to be able to alternate between theoretical courses, company constraints and homework, which sometimes represents a considerable workload.

Difficulties in finding a host company that accepts the work-based learning scheme

Recruiting a candidate for work-based learning involves a cost for the company, in terms of time and money, which explains the difficulties widely encountered by candidates for this type of training, although aid and tax incentives may be provided by public bodies.

Additional costs

As the candidate has to travel to two different places, costs have to be taken into account, especially if the company and the training centre are quite far apart.

2. Implementing work-based learning: a 7-process approach

This part serves as a guide for a training institution that is considering developing a work-based learning programme. It includes a number of recommendations related to the particularities and specificities of such training. To ensure overall consistency, the approach is broken down into processes to be carried out and thus meet the requirements expected during a quality audit. These processes are not carried out in the chronological order described. They involve different actors in the training institution who may work separately but in compliance with the obligation to consult each other. The responsibility for each process may involve one or more actors:

- Management of the institution,
- Training manager or head of the department,

- Director of Studies,
- Administrative assistant or secretary (school),
- Head of International Relations,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- training consultant,
- Logistics Manager,
- Financial Officer,
- Business representative.

Process 1

Informing learners and companies about the courses offered, the recruitment periods and phases and the results already achieved

Process 1 main actors:

- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of Studies,
- Administrative assistant or secretary (school),
- Head of International Relations,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- training consultant.

a) The training institution provides the most comprehensive information possible

- Prerequisites
- The study programme, (teaching units, subjects,...)
- The objectives stated in skills and competences (creation of competence blocks)
- The duration of the training (development of a multi-year schedule and an alternation calendar)
- Methods used and evaluation methods (examination regulations)
- Access procedures and deadlines (application file)
- Tariffs,
- The contacts

b) The training institution prepares and disseminates indicators on the level of performance and achievement of the training provision.

- Performance indicators:

- Number of applications
- Number of apprentices admitted
- Ratio of the number of apprentices graduating to the number of apprentices
- Satisfaction rate of apprentices,
- Drop-out rates and causes,
- Return rate of surveys,
- Interruption rate during the service,
- Breakdown rate of work-based learning contracts,
- Employment integration rates.

c) The institution that provides training leading to a diploma, a certification or a professional qualification, must provide information on how to obtain them.

Information should be provided on the description:

- Possibilities to validate one or more blocks of competences,
- Equivalence's available with other diplomas,
- Possible bridges,
- Follow-up of the course and opportunities.

Process 2

Identify precisely the objectives of the proposed training and adapt it to the apprentices.

Process 2 main actors

- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of Studies,
- Head of International Relations,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- Training consultant or Business representative.

a) The training institution analyses the learner's needs in conjunction with the company and/or the relevant funding body.

This analysis is carried out before the recruitment and contracting process.

The learner's needs are synthesized on different types of media.

- Analysis grids,
- Preliminary diagnostics,
- Admission files,



- Interview reports...

b) The training institution defines operational and assessable objectives for the service.

These objectives should be translated into professional competences and/or skills to be acquired and/or qualifications to be achieved.

c) The training institution establishes the contents and the methods of the implementation of the training service by adapting them to the objectives defined and to the beneficiaries.

In order to take into account the needs and constraints of apprentices with a parallel professional activity, the institution must adapt the training through:

- Pathways,
- Sequences,
- Evaluation grids and procedures,
- Cross-referenced tables of the training content and the competency framework.
- Technical and pedagogical support methods: face-to-face, distance or blended learning (synchronous or asynchronous).

Blended learning: A combination of e-learning and face-to-face training.

Synchronous or asynchronous: In synchronous training exchanges with other learners or with tutors take place in real time, by chat, by web conference or by videoconference. Synchronous training also allows learners to share and interact with applications at the same time as the tutor gives them access to the shared document. In asynchronous training, exchanges with other learners or with tutors take place via communication modes which do not require a simultaneous connection. These may be discussion forums or the exchange of e-mails.

d) The training institution establishes the procedures for assessing prior learning at the start of the diploma.

The evaluation can be limited to taking into account the diplomas, certificates or titles required, or the experience acquired. If a diagnosis at the entry is necessary, it will take the form of different tools:

- Interview,
- Quizzes, MCQs,
- Exercises, tests,
- Setting the scene,
- Tools for measuring gaps in terms of skills to be acquired or validated.

Evaluation procedures: A process for identifying what is acquired in terms of skills and knowledge and what needs to be learned.

Process 3

To welcome, support, monitor and evaluate apprentices during their work/study period

Process 3 main actors

- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of studies, o Administrative assistant or secretary (school),
- Head of International Relations,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- Training consultant o Business representative.

a) The host institution details the reception and training conditions

Different types of documents meet this need:

- The rules of procedure,
- The welcome booklet,
- Convocations,
- The names of the pedagogical and administrative referents,
- The organization chart,
- All sorts of peripheral aspects of the training (accommodation, catering, transport, remuneration, etc.),
- Access arrangements for people with disabilities.
- These documents can be sent to learners by email or post. They may also be available on the website or displayed in the premises and beneficiaries should be informed of them.

b) The institution organizes and adapts the training to the profile of the learners, accompanies them and ensures a follow-up.

A number of tasks are incumbent on the institution:

- To support people, including those with disabilities, wishing to take up or change careers through apprenticeships, by developing their knowledge and skills and facilitating their integration into employment, in line with their career plans. To accomplish this mission, the apprentice training centre appoints a referent responsible for the integration of people with disabilities,
- Support and accompany apprenticeship applicants in their search for an employer,
- Ensuring consistency between the training provided within them and that provided within the company, in particular by organizing cooperation between trainers and apprenticeship masters,
- Informing apprentices, from the start of their training, of their rights and duties as apprentices and as employees and of the rules applicable to health and safety in the workplace;

- To enable apprentices who have stopped their contract to continue their training for a set period of time while helping them to find a new employer,
- Encourage the national and international mobility of apprentices by appointing dedicated staff, which may include a mobility officer mobilizing local resources at national level and European Union programmes at international level, and by mentioning the mobility period in the content of the training course, where appropriate,
- To monitor and support apprentices when the training is delivered wholly or partly by distance learning,
- To assess the skills acquired by apprentices, including through continuous assessment,
- Accompanying apprentices who have interrupted their training and those who have not obtained a diploma or professional title at the end of their training towards the people and organizations likely to help them define a project for continuing their training.

c) The institution evaluates the achievement of the students

All the tools for evaluating learning during and at the end of the courses should be described:

- The nature of the examinations envisaged; written, oral, final examination, frequency of continuous assessment...
- Self-assessment tools,
- Interim reviews, reports, success rates,
- Skills booklets,
- Evidence of the award of the diploma and certification.

d) The institution describes and implements formalized measures to encourage the commitment of learners and to prevent them from leaving the diploma.

These measures include:

- To prevent or resolve social and material difficulties that may jeopardize the progress of the apprenticeship contract;
- To redirect apprentices who have interrupted their training or who have not obtained their certification to organizations that can help them define a project to continue their training;
- Actively assisting apprentices in finding another company if necessary.

The formalization takes place through:

- Contacts/visits with the company, within the company,
- The organization of meetings with trainers, tutors/learners,
- Keeping a liaison booklet or logbook for each learner.

e) Planning students work

For work-based learning, the education institution with the company, anticipates with the learner the tasks that will be entrusted to him/her in the short, medium and long term, and ensures the coordination and progressiveness of the learning carried out in the training centre and in the company.

Tools for liaison between the company, the apprentice and the institution are:

- A follow-up or liaison booklet for each learner,
- Any type of evidence demonstrating the dialogue between the 3 actors,
- Schedules,
- Reports of interviews or company visits,
- Dematerialized dashboards.

f) The education institution offers socio-professional support.

It communicates:

- Financial aid schemes,
- Lists of social workers,
- The support systems for learners in the centre (catering, hostel, boarding school).

g) The institution shall inform apprentices of their rights and duties as learners and employees, as well as the rules applicable to health and safety in the workplace.

The education institution communicates:

- The rules and procedure,
- Labour regulations: labour code, collective agreements, branch agreements...
- Notices to the employment contract,
- Minutes of the collective information meetings...

Process 4

Adapting the teaching, technical, real estate and management resources to the training courses implemented

Process 4 main actors

- Management of the institution,
- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of Studies,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- Logistics Manager,
- Financial Officer.

a) The institution ensures that the human, technical and material resources are adequate for carrying out the training in an appropriate environment

The following elements must be present:

- Lease or rental contracts specifying the suitability of the premises for the reception of the public,
- The classrooms, the technical facilities and specialized rooms (languages, IT, etc.), the school and administrative offices, the individual or project work areas, the documentation centre, the relaxation, catering and sanitary areas, etc.
- Appropriate equipment: video projector, flip charts, computers, specific equipment, teaching sites, language rooms, technical platforms, Learning Management System, remote connection aids, document area, teaching platform,
- The CVs of the members of the internal and external teaching team (university teachers, speakers from the professional world, lecturers, etc.). Each country should check the conditions imposed by national regulations for the reception of the public.

b) The school mobilizes and coordinates the various internal and/or external stakeholders (educational, administrative, logistical, commercial, etc.)

It must organize the coordination of the functions necessary for training and to do this it must have:

- The functional organization chart with the fields of intervention (educational, technical, commercial, social),
- The list of stakeholders/contributors,
- Employment contracts,
- Service contracts,
- Job descriptions,
- The list of pedagogical, administrative and disability referents.

c) The institution provides apprentices with educational resources

Different types of learning resources should exist, be regularly updated, and accessible to learners. Several categories of resources can be identified:

- Course materials/explanation of skills that need to be developed
- Videos,
- Practical information sheets,
- Tools for exploring the world of work and professional projections,
- The list of documentary resources related to the fields targeted by the course available to the institution,

- The typology of educational resources (internet, specialized magazine subscriptions, resource centre),
- How beneficiaries can access resources,
- The modalities activated to facilitate the use and appropriation of the resources by the beneficiaries (face-to-face, remote, shared space),
- Monitoring and updating of educational resources.

d) The institution has staff dedicated to administrative management, support for national and international mobility, a disability advisor and a development council.

In addition to the teaching tasks, various functions must be performed by:

- A training manager or head of the department,
- A Director of Studies,
- An administrative assistant or secretary,
- An international relations officer,
- A person in charge of work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- Etc...

The list is not exhaustive and these functions, which are the subject of job descriptions, must (at least for the most part) be performed by members of the teaching team. Finally, a body made up of people from the socio-economic environment, representatives of the branch of activity, managers, trainers and apprentice representatives, known as the **advanced training council**, must meet regularly:

- To ensure that the training course runs smoothly and that its mission is achieved,
- Look for ways to constantly improve
- To recommend new orientations to maintain the permanent adaptation of the training to the requirements of the profession in continuous evolution.

Process 5

Recruiting and developing the training and qualification of staff responsible for implementing training

Process 5 main actors

- Management of the institution,
- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of Studies,



- Financial Officer,
- Business representative.

a) The institution has a teaching team responsible for carrying out the training

The staff dedicated to ensuring the supervision of the training (mainly the head of training, the director of studies, etc.) must, in agreement with the University management, identify the teaching staff requirements. They analyse the skills needs and recruitment procedures, taking into account the training programme and its specificities.

- These lecturers may be internal (from the University’s teaching staff) or external (from the socio-professional environment whose professional activity is related to the requirements of the course).
- These contributors are recruited on a long-term contract and are permanently involved in the training and the institution or intervene on an ad hoc basis and carry out temporary work with an employment or service contract (invoicing of fees). It is then necessary that the call for applications (according to the needs identified) is as broad as possible and officially published.

The staff dedicated to supervising the training defines a selection committee that evaluates the skills of the various trainer candidates. It audits the candidates and examines:

- Curricula vitae of the candidate trainers,
- The diplomas, initial and continuing training courses followed by the candidates,
- Their professional experiences through professional interviews.

The staff dedicated to training supervision establishes a process for welcoming and integrating these new teachers (in accordance with the University’s rules).

b) The institution maintains and develops the skills of its employees, adapted to the training it provides.

The institution shall draw up a training plan for the development of skills, multidisciplinary and teamwork for all its staff, taking into account the specific features of the training, the requirements of the WBL course and legal and technological developments in the sector.

Process 6

To place the training institution in its professional environment and mobilize partners



Process 6 main actors

- Management of the institution,
- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of Studies,
- Head of International Relations,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- Training consultant to Business representative.

a) The institution carries out a global watch on the field of vocational training and makes use of the lessons learned

- The institution provides economic and legal monitoring of the proposed training sector:
- The institution monitors changes in skills, professions and jobs in its sectors of activity and makes use of the lessons learned.
- The institution monitors pedagogical and technological innovations that enable it to develop its services and makes use of the lessons learned. The actions cover:
 - Participation in conferences, symposiums, trade fairs
 - Membership of a professional network (trade union, federation, forums), Subscriptions to professional journals.
 - The organization of the dissemination of the elements resulting from the monitoring to the trainers so that the developments observed are integrated into the content of the training courses offered.

b) The institution mobilizes expertise

The institution is implementing processes:

- For the search for skills, expertise and partnerships,
- For the constitution of a network in the field of developed training.

The institution plays an important role at the events organized by the actors of the professional environment for which it provides the training. It sets up a team of training advisors, a real sales force whose mission is to prospect for companies likely to hire work-study students. The practices are those identified in commercial techniques: phoning, mailing, face-to-face visits, social networks, etc., with the creation of a prospect file which will be a real asset for the sustainability of the training.

c) The institution builds a network of economic partnerships

The institution must be involved and invest in the professional environment to create and mobilize a network of socio-economic partners with the aim of co-constructing the training engineering and promoting to companies. It is also responsible for developing, through its networks, actions that facilitate the professional integration of graduates or their further study in order to ensure that they continue to acquire knowledge and skills. These actions bring to the institution:

- An improvement in its image,
- A true recognition of its environment,
- A key partner for employers looking for employees, qualifications and skills.

Process 7

Collecting and taking into account feedback and complaints from stakeholders on the services provided

Process 7 main actors

- Management of the institution,
- Training manager or head of the department,
- Director of Studies,
- Responsible for work-study programmes and relations with the professional world,
- business representative.

a) The institution collects the assessments of the parties involved: apprentices, funders, teaching teams and the companies concerned.

A system for collecting feedback from the various stakeholders should be carried out with appropriate frequency, including follow-up mechanisms and allowing for free expression (respecting anonymity). To do this, there are various tools available:

- Satisfaction survey,
- Questionnaire,
- Interview reports,
- Evaluation at various moments...,

A process for analysing and processing the assessments must be defined; the use of digital technology is recommended to gain in speed and confidentiality. In the same context, it is necessary to consider the modalities for dealing with hazards occurring during training, difficulties and complaints (crisis management).

b) The institution implements measures for continuous improvement based on the analysis of assessments and complaints.

A continuous improvement approach is necessary and is fully in line with the search for solutions to the dysfunctions identified through the assessments and complaints.

- Identification of causes of malfunction,
- Reflection,
- Development of an action plan,
- Implementation of specific actions,
- Information for stakeholders.

