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FOREWORD

- The COSPA (Coordinating Office for Student Work Placement Abroad) set up a working group to compile a paper on international work placement policy. At the first meeting of the group, we reached the conclusion that this would result in a policy document that would not be suitable for individual institutes of higher education. After all, policymaking is a relatively autonomous process that varies considerably, according to the specific nature of the education provided by the institute in question. This also applies to policy on work placements, including those followed abroad. The work placement policy pursued by a theological faculty, for example, will be completely different from that of an institute for hotel management.

We also believe that a policy plan has more chance of disappearing into a file than being put into practice. The latter requires a concrete plan of activities linked to a clearly specified budget, in which initial and additional costs – both internal and external – are itemized.

The working group therefore took as its starting point *the ideal situation*, in which there is already a policy plan in which international work placements have their place, and an activity plan for international placements, and - what is even more crucial – where international placements actually take place. This brochure provides a number of guidelines for institutes, to help them achieve that ideal situation. This is a process which will take a different form at each institute, and which is dependent on a number of factors, including the educational aims and the internal organization of the institute concerned. You will therefore find no solutions or detailed instructions in this brochure, since these too will depend on the educational goals and internal organization of each individual institute.

It is our opinion that the quality of international work placements should be guaranteed by the educational institution. It would be more accurate to entitle this paper "*Quality assurance in international work placements*". After all, quality assurance covers not only the organizational and educational aspects of the work placement but also the student-trainee's legal position.

In this brochure, as in the report “Quality in internationalization”, published by the Association for Dutch Universities of Higher Professional Education (HBO-Raad) and Nuffic (The Hague, 1995), a number of guidelines are provided, based on experience, for quality assurance in international work placements within institutes of higher education. The Introduction outlines a policy framework. After that a number of indicators are provided for the three main phases in the implementation of international work placements (preparation, supervision and evaluation) from the viewpoint of the three parties involved: the student, the educational institution and the organization offering the work placement.

We hope that this paper will provide a number of helpful guidelines for improving quality assurance in international work placements.

On behalf of the working group on Quality Assurance in International Work Placements

Olga Marschal,
chair

Note: For the sake of convenience, ‘he’ is used to denote both ‘he’ and ‘she’.

I. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines for quality assurance in international work placements in higher education are the result of two developments: increasing attention to quality assurance in internationalization in general, and a growing need for work placements of a high quality. Both of these developments will be examined more closely below, after which the value of international work placements will be considered.

Internationalization has been a major priority in Dutch higher education for more than ten years. The most important activity in the field has been the increasing international mobility of students. In the early years, interest in internationalization was restricted to a relatively small, but very enthusiastic group, who acquired extensive knowledge and experience in the area. As more and more teachers and students became involved in internationalization, there was a growing need to assure the quality of their activities.

In recent years a variety of initiatives have been taken in the field of quality assurance in internationalisation, both in the Netherlands and abroad. An example of a Dutch initiative is the brochure "Quality in internationalization", which was drawn up by a working group from the HIB (*International Relations Forum for Hogescholen*) and published in 1995 in Dutch and English by the Association for Dutch Universities of Higher Professional Education (HBO-Raad) and Nuffic. This brochure provides a concrete structure for quality assurance in internationalization. Internationalization is one of the components of regular quality assurance in self-evaluations and visitations at all institutes of higher education.

Internationally, the International Quality Review Process project is an especially important initiative. It was set up in 1996 by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) in cooperation with the Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) programme¹. Within the framework of this project a self-evaluation instrument has been developed for institutes and peer reviews are carried out. Although improvement and refinement are still possible, internationalization has become a permanent feature of education and of quality assurance.

In addition to the increasing attention to quality assurance in internationalization in general, the importance of work placements is also becoming more widely recognized. Work placements have been a fixed component of courses offered by institutes of higher professional education for many years, but universities are also coming to realize that a work placement can be a useful and fully-fledged part of a course of study. An illustration of this is the recent survey conducted by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) of work placements in university courses, based on visitation reports. The survey was a reflection of the renewed interest in the links between education and the labour market. Now that grants are increasingly based on performance, and study programmes must meet criteria of

¹ IMHE Programme, OECD-CERI (homepage: <http://www.oecd.org/els/edu/els-imhe>., fax: 33-1-42240211)

feasibility, it is even more important for work placements to be well-organized and firmly embedded in the curriculum.

The publication of these guidelines by the COSPA working group at this particular time bears witness to an excellent sense of timing. They clearly respond to a demand generated by the developments outlined above.

At the meeting organized by COSPA in January 1998 to discuss the draft version of this publication, inspector for higher education J.C. van Bruggen gave a stimulating presentation on the value of international work placements. The core of his argument was that an international placement must be seen as a means to an end. That end has a dual character. It constitutes, on the one hand, the specific educational objectives of the course concerned and, on the other hand, more general aims relating to internationalization. An international work placement must justifiably be the most efficient and effective means of achieving these objectives.

This is the foundation of quality assurance in international work placements. The practical recommendations in this publication relating to the preparation, supervision and evaluation of international work placements can be of genuine value only if there is a clear link between international placement as an instrument, the specific academic objectives of the course and general internationalization aims. This demands that the academic objectives of the placement are described in detail, and that a plausible argument must be provided for why these objectives can best be achieved by means of an international work placement, rather than in another way which might require a smaller investment in terms of time and money (such as inviting guests from abroad or applying Information and Communications Technology (ICT)). Such arguments must be provided in every plan for an international work placement. In contrast to other forms of internationalization, an international placement constitutes an intensive and individual form of immersion in a different environment. The added value of such an intensive experience, in comparison with other more superficial forms of introduction to the international dimensions of education or work must be continually justified.

This also means that the added value of internationalization, often described in such general terms, must be converted into operational objectives for the work placement. Students can assess their results at the end of the placement in the light of specific aims, such as 'experience in an international working environment' or 'improved knowledge of languages'. It is not enough for them to report only on the academic impact of the work. They should also describe how the working environment and work processes differ, and how people interact – all of which are strongly determined by culture. These reports can, for example, be made orally or in writing in the language used during the work placement.

This method of working also has the advantage that there is continual feedback from the practical situation to the policy aims of internationalization, enabling the latter to be amended where necessary. This will, in turn, have a positive effect on the operationalization of the concrete objectives specified in the placement plan.

The drawing up of a good plan for an international work placement therefore requires a considerable effort, more than in the case of a regular placement. This might be reflected in the awarding of more credits.

International work placements are not the answer to the question “what does the course do in terms of internationalization?”. This is the wrong question. The correct question is: “what does the course offer in terms of internationalization”; and the answer should then be: “international work placements enable our students to develop specific skills which they would not have been able to acquire in any other way”.

With this as a starting point, this brochure offers a number of detailed recommendations, which placement coordinators and students can use in preparing, implementing, supervising, assessing and evaluating an international work placement.

Lidune Bremer,
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II. PREPARING AN INTERNATIONAL WORK PLACEMENT

There are various ways of finding a work placement. The institute can take the responsibility on itself or leave it up to the student, or a placement broker[m] can be called in. *Once a work placement has been approved, the institute has final responsibility.*

II.1. Points for attention for the institution

Before an educational institution decides to send a student on a work placement outside the Netherlands a number of matters must be carefully prepared. The following questions will be considered in order:

1. What is the importance of the international work placement?
2. How is the placement structured (conjuncture, duration, etc.)?
3. In what countries and/or continents does the institute wish to allow students to go on work placements?
4. What requirements are to be set for the country, the organization and other related factors?
5. What timeframe must be adhered to?
6. What are the financial consequences of these choices?
7. How can possible problems relating to reception in the host country, accommodation, supervision and payment be anticipated in advance and possibly prevented?
8. What steps can be taken to anticipate possible unexpected emergencies (natural disasters, war, sexual harassment)?
9. What are the procedures for agreements and boundary conditions?

Re 1: The importance of the international work placement

Work placements should in the first instance be seen as an educational experience, as part of the regular course of study. The aim is for the student to acquire knowledge and insight into ways in which his subject can be applied in practice. In short, the slogan “a work placement is study on location” applies just as much to international as to domestic placements, if not more. Both forms of work placement must meet the same quality requirements.

The risk inherent in international work placements is that a great deal of time is spent on organizing the placement itself and all kinds of practical matters, while too little attention is given to the actual content. If international work placements are offered, they must fit in with the curriculum provided within the institute. For example, the regular course of study should devote attention to differences in cultures and in organizational cultures.

The starting point for the institute is that work placements are organized on the basis of the curriculum for the course concerned. If an international work placement is a logical extension to the study, its added value lies in its international character. This added value has to be formulated in concrete terms (intercultural communication, learning a foreign language, etc.) by means of verifiable components.

These components must be included in the assessment of the work placement. It is therefore advisable to make the work placement assignment more limited than would be the case for a placement of similar duration in the Netherlands.

Re 2: The structure of the work placement

The institute will first have to consider at what point in the course of study the work placement should occur. Students should not be sent on a work placement too early in their study, because they will not then have acquired sufficient 'baggage' to carry out the placement successfully. On the other hand it is important to consider carefully whether a work placement should be planned at the end of the course, to avoid the danger of the student graduating too late, or not at all.

A second question is how long the work placement should last. The working group recommends a minimum of three months. If it is shorter, the student will not take enough in; he will just be acclimatized and it will be time to leave again.

Where there are several periods of work placement, it is important that sufficient time is planned in between to allow the experience to sink in and to give the student the opportunity to process the last period psychologically before moving on to the next.

Re 3: Choice of countries/continents

When choosing locations where students can go on work placements, the starting point should always be a clear link with the course or profession concerned.

The choice of continents and/or countries should be based on a number of concrete aspects, such as employment opportunities, new developments in a certain area of expertise, a link to foreign-language teaching, the occurrence of events of global significance, or historical ties. Factors like these can all be good reasons to arrange work placements in a certain country, but there must also always be a logical link between the subject of study and the placement. It is the study that must determine whether certain continents or countries are suitable for a work placement, and where the focus of attention should lie geographically. If students are spread throughout the world, a number of practical matters become more problematic, such as acquisition, on-the-spot supervision, building up a network and reaching concrete agreements with various governmental and non-governmental bodies. Investing in advance in a thorough study, not only of the country concerned but also of the specific sector, is crucial to the professional structuring of international work placements.

Re 4: Conditions relating to the country, the organization and other factors

Countries can be required to meet a number of requirements. As a minimum, the level of political and social stability, and the security situation should be taken into account. It is advisable to seek the advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this respect. In addition, the nature of the study can naturally impose

limitations on the choice of countries. The academic supervisors should be responsible for specifying which countries are eligible.

It is important to choose the right partners within the professional field concerned. The employing organization must have a strong affinity with the ultimate aims of the course of study. 'Every man to his trade' is a suitable premise on which to make choices. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that everything sounds fascinating, but formulate criteria which the organization has to meet. Consultation with sector organizations or other representative bodies can also provide much valuable information.

A number of aspects are of major importance in the acquisition of employing organizations, such as the structure of the supervision, whether they work on the basis of school contracts or have their own contracts, what components can be built into the placement programme (e.g. introductory placements, research placements, management placements), whether there is a link to alumni policy, etc.

Should a student decide to go on a work placement against the advice of his institute, it is advisable to have him sign a statement that he does so at his own risk.

Re 5: Timeframe

The timeframe depends on who organizes the work placement (the institute or the student) and the choice of country (e.g. whether visas, vaccinations, etc. are necessary). It is important to start preparing an international work placement well in advance. Initial preparations should start at least a year before. If the institute itself is taking the initiative, the stages described below should in principle be followed in sequence.

After this procedure has been completed once in full, certain stages can of course be combined or omitted, and the periods concerned can be shortened. If a visit is made to each student-trainee during the work placement, for example, a subsequent candidate can also be introduced (by presenting his CV) and new agreements signed. Once there is a certain amount of continuity in the regions selected, new projects can be started and current projects stopped.

The same stages apply to students organizing their own work placements. They will also require at least a year to prepare. This paper does not, however, provide a timeframe for placements organized by students, because they will be different in each individual case.

<i>11-12 months in advance:</i> selection of country/region, clear definition on basis of labour market, professional profile, opportunities for expansion etc.

<i>10-11 months in advance:</i> Acquisition, either by visiting potential employing organizations or, if the financial situation of the institute does not permit this, by making a selection 'at a distance'. Involving future supervisors by initiating an application procedure for work placement mentors/country managers (possibly together with a course for placement teachers)

8-9 months in advance: Final choice of international work placement regions, with a fixed strategy for a minimum of three years. Possible employing organizations should be indicated within the region.

6-7 months in advance: Students should state their preferences concerning the content of their work placement and in which countries they would prefer the placement to take place. They should submit their proposals in writing, giving their reasons and enclosing CVs in English or in the language of the country of their choice. On the basis of these written applications, the students will be interviewed at their own institute. Depending on the results of the interviews, the students will be assigned work placements at the organizations concerned. They will be introduced to the organizations and the contract formalities will be completed.

4-5 months in advance: If it is necessary for an application procedure to be completed at the organization in the country where the placement is to be located, it should be conducted during this period. If there is no need for such a procedure (this will often be the case if there are close ties between the institute and the employing organization), preparatory sessions can be organized during this period, to ensure that the student is fully prepared for his forthcoming experience and that all practical matters have been arranged (visas, vaccinations, etc.).

3 months in advance: By this time, all the parties involved should have agreed on the content of the work placement programme and have signed the relevant agreements.

The start of the work placement period

Re 6: Financial aspects

The educational institution should realize that the supervision of international work placements results in higher costs. This must be taken into account when deciding whether to permit and/or organize work placements abroad. The costs of supervision must be covered by the institution or the quality of the work placement will be placed in jeopardy. Students will also be faced with higher costs and should take steps in good time to seek possible alternative sources of funds. Concentrating students in a certain region is advantageous for the institution, because it will make it easier to meet the costs of providing student-trainees in the region with a suitable level of supervision.

Re 7: Establishing contacts and insuring against risks

Generally speaking the educational institution must provide good supervision and backup, for example through alumni or a local partner institute. Possible risks should be covered by a suitable insurance. Liability for incidents at the place of work must be agreed in advance. Here again, the institution must consider what risks the student may be permitted to take. If a student is prepared to take a risk himself,

this must be laid down in writing. In addition to professional liability insurance, other forms of insurance must also be arranged, such as supplementary health insurance, luggage and accident insurance, etc.

Many insurance companies offer a special package for students.² This can be adapted to suit your own experience and preferences, but *ensure that everything falls within the national law*.

The student must be fully informed on all these matters and must receive instructions on how to deal with problems at the placement location or elsewhere. He should be given the names and addresses of contacts both abroad (at the Dutch Embassy, the employing organization) and in the Netherlands (the placement coordinator, counsellor). In some cases it is recommended that students are advised to contact the Dutch Embassy in the country concerned.

Re 8: Emergencies

Institutes should have an emergency plan which provides instructions on what to do in the case of emergencies. An example of this is the Nuffic brochure "*Prepared for the worst*"³. The most important thing is that there is always someone who can take the necessary action and that it is clear who is responsible for what. Student-trainees must also know the names of these people.

Re 9: Agreements and boundary conditions

Work placement agreements should be signed as early as possible by all three parties – the employing organization, the student and the educational institution. Both agreements between the institution and the employing organization and between the student and the organization must be laid down in writing. Take care that the agreements cover not only the educational aspects of the placement but also the legal position of the student. It should be realized that there is no legal definition of a trainee-student, not even within the EU. Organizations offering work placements often do not know themselves what status trainee-students have within their own structure. In some matters (such as health insurance), they may have the status of students, while in others (e.g. taxation) they are seen as employees.

See the EAIE model⁴ for a checklist of matters that should be covered in such agreements. The model does not force the parties to establish the legal position of trainee-students, but the use of a standard

² For example, Lippmann Group B.V. and AON Consulting Nederland

³ The Hague, September 2002 - available at the Nuffic website : <http://www.nuffic.nl> (publication to download as Pdf) and from the Nuffic department Communication (+31-70-4260207)

⁴ The EAIE model was developed by the European Association for International Education. This standard agreement for international work placements contains five articles laying down the terms and conditions of the collaboration between the three parties (student, educational institution and employing organization).

form in a number of European countries can at least help to ensure that their rights are widely accepted, if not legally recognized.

In addition it is advisable to arrange certain practical matters, such as accommodation and opportunities for social contact in a memorandum of understanding.

II.2 Points for attention relating to the student

After the educational institution has formulated its policy on international work placements, made a choice based on thorough analyses, created the necessary posts to provide supervision and generated a positive and dynamic strategy for international work placements, it is time to inform students of the options available to them and to prepare them for a work placement. This responsibility must be entrusted to a single section or department within the institution so that both the students and the employing organizations know where to address any questions or comments.

Timeframe

Recommended timeframe (assuming that the student already has sufficient command of the language he will be using during the placement):

A year in advance: General information provided by the placement coordinator, outlining the placement policy of the institution, the employing organization and any other parties involved. The purpose of this session is to make the student aware at an early stage of the problems involved and to convince him of the need for the work placement to be coordinated by the institution. Individual agreements between the student and potential employing organizations should always be concluded through the department responsible at the institution. Contact between the student and the employing organization outside the department should be discouraged since it may be in conflict with the institution's deliberately structured placement policy.

6-7 months in advance: The student should obtain information on options for international work placements. One possibility is that the institution organizes a 'work placement market' at which all countries, sectors and possibly employing organizations are represented. 'Screen imaging' style presentations should be avoided since this will not sufficiently portray the culture of the country and/or the employing organization. After the student has had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the various options offered by the institute, he can make a choice and notify the work placement office. He should give his reasons for making a particular choice, including why he prefers a particular country and type of organization, and outline the content of the proposed placement.

5-6 months in advance: All candidates are invited to an interview, at which they will be asked about their reasons for wanting to go on a work placement, what academic objectives they hope to achieve and their knowledge of the language required. The suitability of each candidate will then be assessed on the basis of standard procedures and, after consultation with the student concerned, he will be assigned

a work placement. One candidate can be selected per organization, particularly if one candidate is clearly the most suitable. If several candidates are suitable, the final decision can be left to the employing organization, which may hold a further round of interviews. After all interviews have been held, and the supervisors/country managers concerned have given their opinions, the student can be offered a place.

3-5 months in advance: The students' CVs, together with a personal letter from the student and from the institute, are sent to the potential employing organization. The organization will then arrange an interview to determine the student's suitability for the placement. This will usually be conducted by telephone, but it might be possible in some cases to arrange a personal meeting. The student should receive the results of the interview within a week. All agreements and other paperwork should be concluded through the work placement office.

2 months in advance: The student should prepare himself for the work placement. The following options are possible, depending on the organization:

- work placement instruction under the leadership of a placement coordinator and/or country manager;
- preparation of research project together with supervising school mentor;
- group sessions with intercultural team within the institution;

It should be noted that these activities can of course start earlier or later, depending on the annual workload of the staff in the various departments concerned and the availability of students.

II.3 Preparation for a different language and culture

It goes without saying that, in addition to preparing for the educational aspects of a work placement, students also need social and cultural preparation for a stay abroad. The basis of this preparation lies first and foremost with those who are responsible for selecting and supervising the student. In addition, the student should of course also prepare himself thoroughly. Instruction in the language of the country concerned should be geared towards the context of the work placement, so that the academic objectives can be achieved. Attention should therefore be given to both specific jargon and to the requirements of daily contact with other people. An intercultural communication module should be devised for students from all disciplines.

A brief summary of possible forms of intercultural preparation for the various parties involved is given below.

1: Preparing teachers and supervisors

It is recommended that teachers and supervisors:

- first experience a period abroad themselves, to give them a greater insight into everyday life in another culture;

- are given specific intercultural training to enable them to better prepare students for the specific codes of conduct and customs of the host country (e.g. through the 'Institute for Training in Intercultural Management' or 'Contact der Continenten').

Re 2: Preparing students

The success of a stay abroad depends very much on the preparation. This is why it is strongly recommended that preparations begin as early as possible.

After the selection procedure has been completed, the student could take the following action:

- ensure that he has sufficient command of the language of the host country (listening and speaking);
- attend lectures in intercultural communication;
- attend information meetings at his own institute;
- familiarize himself with the history and culture of the host country (e.g. via books and films);
- seek contact with students from the host country studying at his institute;
- read reports from students who have been abroad;
- if possible, make a short visit to the host country to obtain an insight into life there.

See the annex for a checklist of practical matters that the student should/could arrange.

Re 3: Tasks to be carried out by teachers and supervisors to prepare students

- conduct surveys among incoming and outgoing students for the purpose of evaluation;
- collect reports on work placements from returning students;
- organize information meetings. The staff should ensure that detailed information is provided at these meetings, which should be held at least a year before the student goes on work placement. In addition to the educational aspect of the information, it might be useful to ask a student who has already completed a placement to come and speak about his experiences and answer questions. Another possibility would be to invite a foreign student to speak.. The meetings could also show films, videos or slides. A good information brochure, drawn up in collaboration with students who have already been abroad, could be a useful information instrument.

III. QUALITY ASSURANCE DURING INTERNATIONAL WORK PLACEMENTS: SUPERVISION

The basic principle of efficient supervision of international work placements is that the points for attention should be the same as those for a placement in the Netherlands. This may, however, be hampered by the fact that the supervisor is not on the spot, and by the difficulty of trying to maintain the contact between the institution and the student and between the institution and the employment organization. With the student being abroad, visits by teachers to the employment organization will be the exception rather than the rule and contact will mostly be by telephone or in writing. Although e-mail and the Internet have considerably widened the scope for communications, the distance still exists and there is generally no possibility for student, teacher and employing organization supervisor to meet before or during the placement, or at the evaluation stage.

It is important to make clear agreements in advance, not only on the assignment for the placement, but also on the nature and structure of the supervision. By placing the emphasis of supervision more on the employing organization, the student will feel less 'lost' and there will be a reduced chance of the placement being a failure.

To safeguard the quality of the supervision – and implicitly of the entire placement – attention should be paid to the following aspects (the points for attention should in principle be the same as for a placement in the Netherlands):

- a clearly described written assignment should be drawn up before the work placement starts so that all the parties involved (student, academic supervisor teacher and employing organization supervisor) are clear about the aims of the placement. If the assignment changes for any reason, this document should be amended accordingly;
- a work placement agreement must be drawn up, specifying the placement assignment, the supervision structure, the evaluation procedure and formal/legal provisions. Agreements on the supervision of the student during the placement must be worked out for each assignment in detail and committed to paper by the academic supervisor and the employing organization supervisor;
- the supervisors (at the institution and the employing organization) should be selected as early as possible;
- clear agreements must be reached concerning communication. As a minimum, the student must inform the institution of his address and his initial impressions within a week of arrival. After that, there should be regular contact between the institution and the organization. The responsibility for this contact lies with the institution.

Paying sufficient attention to the quality of the work placement maximizes the chances of it having positive spin-off effects for all three parties.

It is important that criteria are drawn up that supervisors have to meet. For the academic supervisor, these can include the following:

- knowledge of the country and language;

- knowledge of the subject of the work placement;
- familiarity with the tasks of a work placement supervisor and the content of the study;
- experience of work placement supervision;
- available to provide supervision.

It is recommended that the academic supervisor and the student agree at what times and in what form progress reports should be submitted. Forms can be devised for this, which the student can fill in and send to the academic supervisor. On the basis of the information contained in the forms, the supervisor can contact the student and/or the employment organization supervisor. Interim reports can also be sent by e-mail.

The following criteria could be drawn up for work placement supervisors in the employing organizations:

- familiarity with the tasks of a work placement supervisor;
- familiarity with the content of the study;
- experience of work placement supervision;
- available to provide supervision.

The employment organization supervisor and the student should discuss the student's progress regularly (once every one or two weeks). These discussions give the supervisor and the student the opportunity to monitor progress and to make any necessary adjustments. The substance of the discussions could be recorded on 'progress forms'.

If an interim visit is not possible, it is advisable to agree on a time at which the academic supervisor, the student and the employment organization supervisor should all contact one another, either by telephone, fax or e-mail. If the academic supervisor does have the opportunity to visit the work placement location, the objectives of the visit must be clear to all parties involved.

IV. THE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL WORK PLACEMENTS

The full evaluation of international work placements comprises three components: the work placement itself, the placement process as a whole and the work placement report. The work placement and the process as a whole must be evaluated by all three parties involved, i.e. the student, the educational institution and the employing organization. The work placement report is evaluated by the teachers concerned and the employing organization.

The evaluation is always drawn up in written form, with an oral explanation to solve any problems in interpretation, particularly those caused by cultural differences. The academic supervisor should be familiar with the assessment system applied in the host country. *The subjects to be covered in the three components of the evaluation must be specified at the preparatory stage of the work placement.*

IV.1 Evaluation of the work placement itself

The educational experience gained by the student should be evaluated by all three parties. An evaluation should be conducted approximately halfway through the placement period and again at the end. The findings should be recorded on an evaluation form. For the interim evaluation, it is sufficient to give each aspect a score. The form for the final evaluation must offer the opportunity to give short comments. The evaluation should cover aspects relating to the field of study, social and intercultural matters and communication in the host language. Criteria should be drawn up for each of these aspects.

Aspects relating to the field of study include quality, planning and working methods, insight into the work, reporting and the extent to which the student-trainee adopted a professional attitude. The social aspects within the organization include motivation, initiative and independence, flexibility, creativity, criticism and self-criticism, contact with colleagues, social skills in relation to business contacts, communication with the academic supervisor and the employment organization supervisor, and insight into the norms and values relating to the work.

Knowledge of intercultural aspects refers to integration in the culture of the organization and of the country/region. Communication in the host language refers to the student's ability to read, listen, speak and write in the language of the host country. Considering the essential importance of communication in the host language, the evaluation of this aspect by the institution should be carried out by two assessors, a teacher in the field concerned and a language teacher.

IV.2 Evaluation of the entire work placement process

For this evaluation, which is carried out at the end of the work placement period, it is best to devise a questionnaire to be filled in by all three parties, in the same way as the evaluation form for the placement itself. This evaluation covers a number of aspects on which all three parties must give their opinions:

supervision (by the employing organization and/or by the institution), the relevance of the work placement assignment for the student and for the employing organization, the facilities available at the placement location, the status of the student in the employing organization, the extent to which agreements with the employing organization, the institution and the student-trainee were complied with, and suggestions for a new work placement assignment.

In addition, the evaluation will have to consider a number of issues that do not involve all the parties: the student should give his opinion of the information provided (on the employing organization, the work placement assignment, the formalities, etc.), the language training and the cultural preparation. The teacher will address the issue of communication with the employing organisation.

IV.3 Assessment of the work placement report

It is recommended that the work placement report be assessed by both the educational institution and the employing organization. It should be assessed in terms of content, use of language, form and structure. Considering the essential importance of communication in the host language, the assessment by the institution should be carried out by two assessors, a teacher in the field concerned and a language teacher.

Suggestions: a presentation on the placement may encourage other students who are still uncertain about going on an international work placement. A booklet offering an overview of previous work placement assignments could fulfil the same function.

ANNEX

Suggestions for a checklist for students – practical matters:

(NB: this list is not exhaustive!)

Financial matters/Grant and other funding/Insurance

- make sound financial arrangements, seek other funding to supplement a possible grant;
- inform the grant authority (IBG) in Groningen (not living at home, no annual season ticket for public transport);
- authorise someone to sign on your behalf at the IBG;
- arrange insurance. Look into special student packages offered by Lippmann Groep B.V., AON Consulting Nederland., etc.

Accommodation

- look into the accommodation situation in the host country. Who will arrange it?
- Contact residents or landlords/ladies as early as possible for information on rooms/houses, house regulations, fellow residents, the locality, the distance from the employing organization, etc., and to notify them of date and time of arrival;
- obtain information on climate and ensure you have adequate clothing and footwear.

Health

- obtain information from the local health authority on any compulsory preventive health measures;
- if you suffer from CORONAVIRUS, diabetes or epilepsy, you should obtain a statement from your family doctor describing the medicines you require, and in what compositions and dosages. Depending on the climate, it may be possible to take medicine with you from the Netherlands, but it is important to take account of how long they can be stored;
- ask whether the employing organization has its own doctor or medical centre.

Other matters/suggestions

- organize a farewell party and take a photograph album of your friends and family. This will help to combat homesickness;
- organize a ‘Dutch’ meal for your fellow residents after you arrive to break the ice. Nothing brings people together so quickly as a shared meal and a drink;
- suggest that you take turns to cook and show interest in the eating habits of the host country;
- if you think it is necessary, ask for a ‘buddy’ to introduce you to the locality and to the culture;
- find out what is done and not done in the host country;
- ask if there are any student social clubs;
- join a sports club;
- if you are religious, ask where you can go to practice your faith;
- read the local newspapers;
- write to your family and friends. That way you will get mail back!
- if you have any problems, do not hesitate to contact the local supervisor immediately.