
CASE STUDY¹

Accreditation of work placement companies for in-company training

Exemplar: The Netherlands

VET Pathway: Upper Secondary Vocational Education - Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (MBO)

Overview

The Vocational Education and Training Act of the Netherlands obliges secondary vocational education students to pursue a practical component of their education/training with a work placement company, which is accredited through the SBB (Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven). The SSB includes representatives from eight 'sector chambers', each having equal VET and social partners

The case study describes the conditions set by the SSB for company accreditation and the competences required of workplace trainers. These include the competence to assess learner achievement. The case study identifies good practice in terms of the systematic involvement of social partners in the accreditation and quality assurance of companies providing work placement learning and assessment.

Context and background

Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (MBO) is regulated by the Vocational Education Act (WEB, Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs; 1996 with later amendments). Both the school based and dual/apprenticeships pathways fall under the same regime in terms of regulations surrounding VET companies and quality procedures. The Vocational Education and Training Act obliges secondary vocational education students to pursue the practical component of their education / training (professional practical training) with an accredited work placement company.

The SBB (Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven) is the Dutch Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market. SBB was restructured in 2015 and has a new format. The organisation is made up of 25 representatives, from eight 'sector chambers'; VET and social partners are equally represented in each sector chamber. SBB grants accreditations to companies, which fulfil certain conditions.

SBB brings together the vocational education / training market and the labour market. The organisation is validated at the national level by the Ministry of Education /Ministry of Economic Affairs and is responsible for:

- Working on qualifications and examinations
- Accrediting and coaching companies that offer the work placements
- Gathering and analysing labour market information
- Delivering well-qualified professionals
- Ensuring that study programs are responding to the needs of the labour market.
- Working on cross regional and cross-sector VET themes

Description

Company accreditations are granted by SBB for a period of 4 years. Only companies and organisations in the Netherlands and abroad that meet the conditions in these regulations and that have been accredited by SBB are authorised to operate as work placement companies. In the 4th year, an SBB supervisor will visit the

¹ Sources:

SBB conditions for accreditation: <https://www.s-bb.nl/en/companies/certification/conditions-certification>;

SBB regulations for accreditation of work placement companies: <https://www.s-bb.nl/en/file/593/download?token=FEg5q6SS>.

company to check if the accreditation will be approved for another 4-year period. An accredited work placement company must fulfil the following conditions:

1. Provide a proper learning environment and activities that relate to the work processes of the profession for which the student is being trained. A relevant learning environment in a socially safe situation is available for every student.
2. Train the workplace trainer in the requirements of the course and enable him/her to coach and manage the student on the work-floor. Make time, space and resources available to the workplace trainer so that he/she can carry out his task. Provide adequate, expert coaching tailored to the student's needs. The work placement company assigns and facilitates an expert workplace trainer based on the criteria listed in the profile for workplace trainers (described below).
3. Willingness to cooperate with the educational institutes and SBB and provide the appropriate, necessary information.
4. Agree to the publication of business details in the public register of accredited work placement companies.

The conditions for the learning environment and the coaching may depend on the specific qualification for which accreditation is granted (e.g. an additional diploma or training for workplace trainers).

SBB can have foreign partner organisations and assess foreign companies to determine their suitability as work placement companies. These partner organisations must have a good system for the accreditation of work placement companies and SBB must be able to show that this system complies with legal accreditation requirements. Accreditation is subject to the condition that the learning environment demonstrably meets the legal requirements for safety.

SBB has developed a model **profile for workplace trainers**:

The workplace trainer works at a work placement company that has been certified by SBB. He provides workplace training for the student (intern). He is the point of contact for the intern and helps him become familiar with the daily work activities. The workplace trainer trains the intern and organises his learning activities. He creates a learning environment which is as helpful as possible. The intern is assigned to a work area with as many (daily) work situations as possible that he will also encounter in the profession for which he is being trained. The workplace trainer's job is to coach and to train. He spends time with the intern and directs (or corrects) him when necessary. The workplace trainers impart professional knowledge and encourage the intern to take responsibility for his own learning process and his performance as an employee. He motivates the intern and gears the coaching to his needs. The workplace trainer also monitors the concrete progress of the intern's learning process. A sense of responsibility, organisational skills and a desire to work with people are indispensable for a workplace trainer. The workplace trainer communicates with the intern and with the work placement supervisor (the intern's supervisor from the program/school) and the SBB training advisor. The SBB training advisor advises the workplace trainer about his role during the work placement period. The training advisor is also a sounding board for the workplace trainer for issues related to his role. The training advisor also assists the workplace trainer with the promotion of workplace training and the work placement policy at his company.

Summary of core tasks and work processes:

1. Organises the practical learning process of the participant
 - 1.1 Conducts the selection interview with the participant
 - 1.2 Creates an induction program

- 1.3 Determines the starting situation and the learning needs of the participant
 - 1.4 Determines the learning activities in consultation with the participant
 - 1.5 Creates a work experience plan
 - 1.6 Maintains communication with the work placement supervisor and the training advisor
2. Trains the participant through practical experience
 - 2.1 Trains the participant in the workplace
 - 2.2 Monitors and directs the learning process of the participant
 - 2.3 Conducts coaching or progress interviews with the participant
 - 2.4 Monitors the progress in the learning process of the participant
 - 2.5 Evaluates the workplace training period

The workplace trainer should have the following competences:

Directing

- Attunes his training method to the job competence and learning style of the participant
- Keeps an eye on whether the participant is performing as agreed and provides clear instructions if (it starts looking like) the participant is not meeting expectations

Coaching

- Encourages and coaches the participant
- Gives the participant clear, constructive feedback
- Motivates the participant by providing a certain amount of social-emotional support

Deciding and Initiating Action

- Decides whether the participant is making progress in his learning progress
- Determines the areas in which there is room for improvement for the participant

Following Instructions and Procedures

- Uses test tools in accordance with the applicable procedures to assess the progress of the participant, so the participant receives an objective, valid assessment

Learning

- Evaluates the workplace training period to detect points for improvement and to improve these points

Meeting 'Customer' Expectations

- Asks the participant what he wants to learn during the workplace training and plans the training accordingly

Planning and Organising

- Clearly explains during a discussion what the learning goals are
- Plans learning activities for the participant
- Follows the progress of the learning process
- Decides when he needs to intervene in the learning process

Cooperating and Consulting

- Shows interest in the participant by listening, asking questions and observing the participant
- Discusses his observations with the participant, possibly after consulting other people
- Encourages the participant to provide input on what to do during the remainder of his learning process
- Listens to advice from the work placement supervisor and training advisor and explains what he does with the advice

Applying Expertise

- Explains how things work, shows how to do it or gives the participant room to think about professional matters

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- Uses his expertise to assess the participant
 - Looks at information from the training institute, the participant's wishes and the possibilities within the work placement company to assess how the learning goals can be reached
 - Observes the participant on the basis of the assessment criteria and assigns a valuation to these observations.

Impact / Effectiveness

The best practices found in this case study could be summarised as follows:

- Separation of quality assurance from assessment
- Involvement of stakeholders (social partners) in the accreditation of companies providing workplace training and assessment.
- Thorough quality assurance of work placement companies