

Student Placements – Situation in Cyprus

The first issue to be addressed has to do with the obligation to do a Practical Placement in an enterprise or another organization, the duration of this placement and the type of the host organization in which, the placement should take place. All these items depend on the type of studies and the sending institution i.e. if the sending organization is a state university, a private university or other higher education institutions such as colleges providing diplomas and not university degrees.

In any case, there is no national legislation in Cyprus addressing student placements yet.

Compulsory placements: Graduates from technical studies (architecture, engineering) must have a practical training for one year before being able to work and sign documents as architects or engineers and this is covered by legislation (the statutes) of the professional body of architects and engineers. Also, Practical Placements are compulsory for university students in Cyprus who are in the education studies, as teaching training is an integral part of their studies syllabus. Students are placed in elementary or pre elementary schools in Cyprus to teach for a semester. They do not receive any compensation for their teaching but they do have their teaching period recognized with ECTS credits as part of their course syllabus.

Erasmus student placements, are part of the Erasmus program and they cover placements of students from Cyprus to European enterprises, or other organizations. These can be characterized as a combination of University driven and student driven SP scheme since the monitoring is done by the University but the student has the freedom to locate the host organization in Europe by her/himself. The present curriculum currently offered by the Departments of the University of Cyprus does not provide for any industrial training or vocational practice during the studies, a providence which can be considered a must for Cypriot students.

The 3-month summer period has been chosen as the most suitable for the realization of student placements since during this time the students have no lessons or exams. Each department of the University of Cyprus selects its students who will take part in placements by criteria set out by the department itself after the students submit a "Form of Interest" on which the host organizations are shown. The Sending and Host organizations and the beneficiary are bound by the Training Agreement i.e. the work program of the beneficiary predefined and agreed between the three parties before the beginning of each placement. The Training Agreement for placements is equivalent to the Learning agreement for studies and is an important document for the monitoring of each placement.

Each beneficiary signs a contract with the University of Cyprus in order to receive grant. The University of Cyprus upon request will issue the EUROPASS certificate in coordination with the host institutions for the beneficiary who completes a 3 month placement abroad.

Students from the Foreign Languages departments and the Engineering School usually express interest to take part in the student placements.

Students from the Languages Departments will be placed in countries where the languages they are taught are spoken, i.e. students of the English Studies Department will be placed in English speaking countries, students of the French Studies Department will be placed in French speaking countries and students of the Turkish Studies will be placed in Turkey.

Students from the Engineering Department find it very useful to have practical experiences on the engineering matters they are taught and this is the reason that the Departments of the Engineering School motivate their students to take part in the Erasmus Student Placements.

Summer Placements: The Universities Careers Offices are responsible for promoting the Programme of Summer Placements both among employers and students. Promotional activity includes flyers, leaflets, a webpage and personal contacts.

The implementation period is June to August with a minimum and maximum duration of 4 to 10 weeks respectively. Students are paid with a symbolic amount, which depends on the employer. The employer is also responsible for contacting the insurance company for including the students in the Employer's Liability Policy during their presence to the company.

Students apply at the Careers Office which forwards the applications to the employers for the final decision. Decision criteria include the GPA and the overall picture of the students (extra curriculum activities etc).

At the end of the programme all parties evaluate their experience with each other and the programme, with structured questionnaires. A certificate is issued for students signed both from the University and the Employer.