



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

THE PRACTICUM AFTER EHEA

A case study

- Alemany i Costa, Josepa

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Economics and Business Department

Ramon Trias Fargas 25, 08005 Barcelona, Spain.

fina.alemany@upf.edu

- Perramon Tornil, Xavier

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Information and Communication Technologies Department

Roc Boronat 138, 08018 Barcelona, Spain

xavier.perramon@upf.edu

- Panadès Estruch, Laura

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Law Department

Ramon Trias Fargas 25, 08005 Barcelona, Spain.

laura.panades@upf.edu

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2





THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

1. ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH:

This paper presents a project by our university intending to assure a Practicum's quality in the context of methodological changes derived from the EHEA's implementation.

Before the EHEA, our university used to have a wide range of different Practicums that varied for each degree programme. We present the methodology used to compile the data, based on personal interviews with Practicum supervisors from each degree programme before and after EHEA's implementation.

The main conclusion is that four initial models have converged into two. The longer-term trend suggests that there will be only one: a completely structured Practicum with careful monitoring of quality at every stage.

2. KEYWORDS:

Practicum models, EHEA, quality assurance

3. FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE:

More than one area: Arts and Humanities, Health Sciences, Social and Legal Sciences, Engineering and Architecture.

4. SUBJECT AREA: Specify the subject area you propose for your paper:

- Evaluation and Institutional Quality
- Cooperation In and For Knowledge

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

5. PRESENTATION CATEGORY: Oral Presentation

6. DEVELOPMENT:

a) Objectives

The main goal is to design a new Practicum suitable for the wide range of degrees at Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) after the deployment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

We define *Practicum* as external practices in any kind of welcoming institution in a wide sense, whether firms, companies, public administrations, NGOs or any other. The benefits of the Practicum in the learning process have been described in different models (Jaques, Gibbs and Rust, 1993), and in particular in Kolb's (1984) "experiential learning". The Practicum theoretical framework has been elaborated by many authors; for a comprehensive list of works we refer the reader to the compilation articles by Zabalza (2011) and Cid et al. (2011).

Furthermore, we derive three additional objectives from the main one. Firstly, with special regards to quality assurance, by means of engaging in the new wave of EHEA's implementation to maintain and even improve the monitoring of the process and results by setting quality assurance protocols. Secondly, EHEA implies the creation of new degrees and the deep reform of others. That results in a generalization of Practicum studies that implies that the number of students taking work placements increases dramatically. As a consequence, every single stage of



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

the Practicum process needs to be readapted to such a new context. Thirdly, we intend to define which Practicum model is the one most suitable in generalizing work placement.

As a consequence of the above mentioned objective, we will review the situation of the Practicum after the EHEA has been completely deployed. So, we can compare the state of the art before and after the EHEA and analyse the evolution of the Practicum.

b) Description of your work

To respond to this challenge, in one hand, we thoroughly analysed the question at our university by performing deep field work. We started this study in 2009, and in this paper we present the methodology used to compile the data, based on personal interviews with Practicum supervisors from each degree programme before EHEA's implementation. In the other hand, we examine the situation derived from the evolution of the Practicum after the EHEA's implementations and finalising the deployment. At the beginning of 2012 it is not fully developed, partially because in the majority of the degrees we are in the third year and the Practicum will be developed the following year, then they do not have implemented the possible changes; and because the EHEA's implementation has been done the creation of news degrees. In this case the Practicum course is in process to be developed. In this paper we examine the current situation, the evolution, draw conclusions and make recommendations.

The majority of faculties in the UPF are related to Social Sciences Area except the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Engineering School - Polytechnic School - and the



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

Health Sciences Faculty. Some of these faculties did not have a tradition of taking Practicum courses for undergraduate students.

The Faculties in the UPF are: Law, ICT – Polytechnic School, Economics and Business Sciences, Communication, Translation and Interpretation, Humanities, Political and Social Sciences and Health and Life Sciences. In Figure 1, the Faculties of the UPF are depicted.

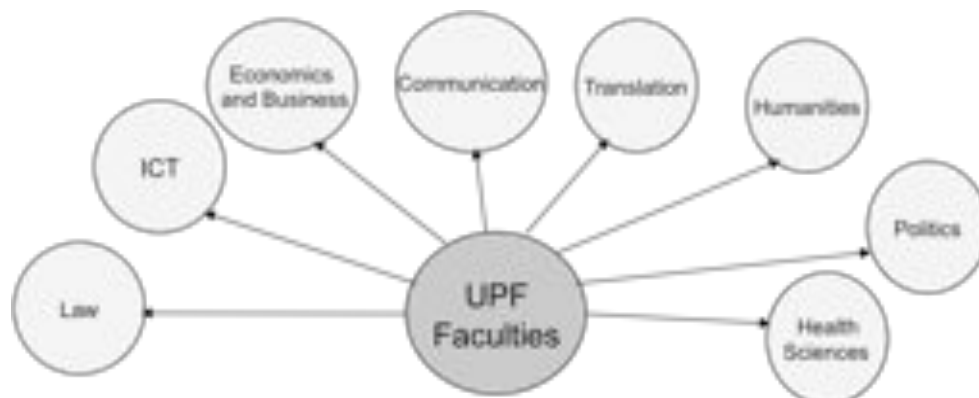


Figure 1: UPF Faculties

In order to follow our project, we decide to prepare an interview for every Practicum coordinator of each Faculty before and after the EHEA.



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

We designed a questionnaire structured in four stages considering separately the three participants involved in the Practicum, i.e. student, university (Practicum coordinator) and welcoming institution (see Figure 2). The stage one was about the academic organization prior to the placement. The second stage is about the preliminary situation, right before the incorporation of the student into the welcoming institution he/she is assigned in. The third stage includes the performance of the Practicum itself: from the first until the last day of the placement. The fourth and final stage is based on the accumulated and final evaluation and assessment of the competences acquired in the Practicum.

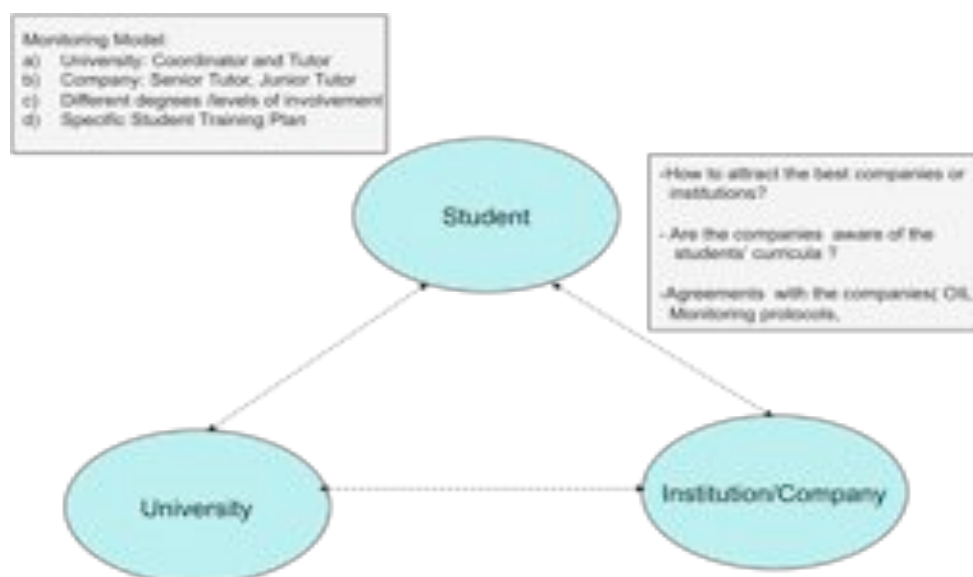


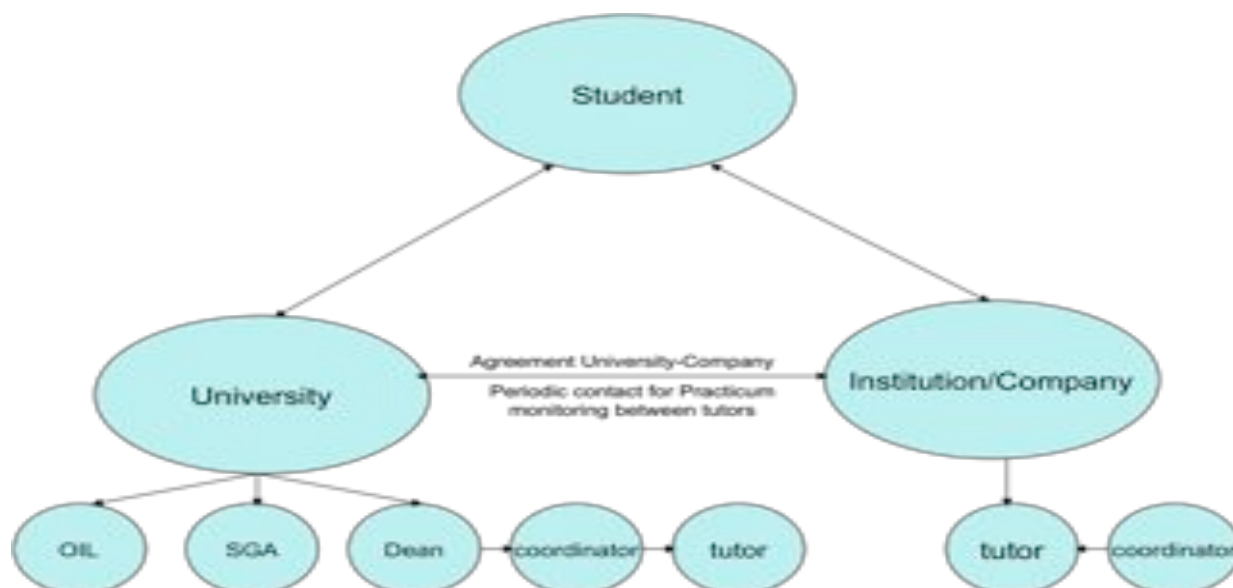
Figure 2: Participants in the Practicum



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

We interviewed the top supervisors of each of the twelve studies at our university, in order to know the state of the question at our university. Some of our Faculties have more than one study, for example, the economics and Business Faculty had two studies in 2009, that is Economics and Business and Management Administration, in where there were only one supervisor or coordinator. We should add that there did not have any differences between both studies in the point of view of the Practicum. Then we present this the result of the interview as a Faculty answers.

Our field work is divided in two stages: prior to the EHEA and after its implementation. So we could get to know the differences that such a European integration process implies in terms of the design of the Practicum.



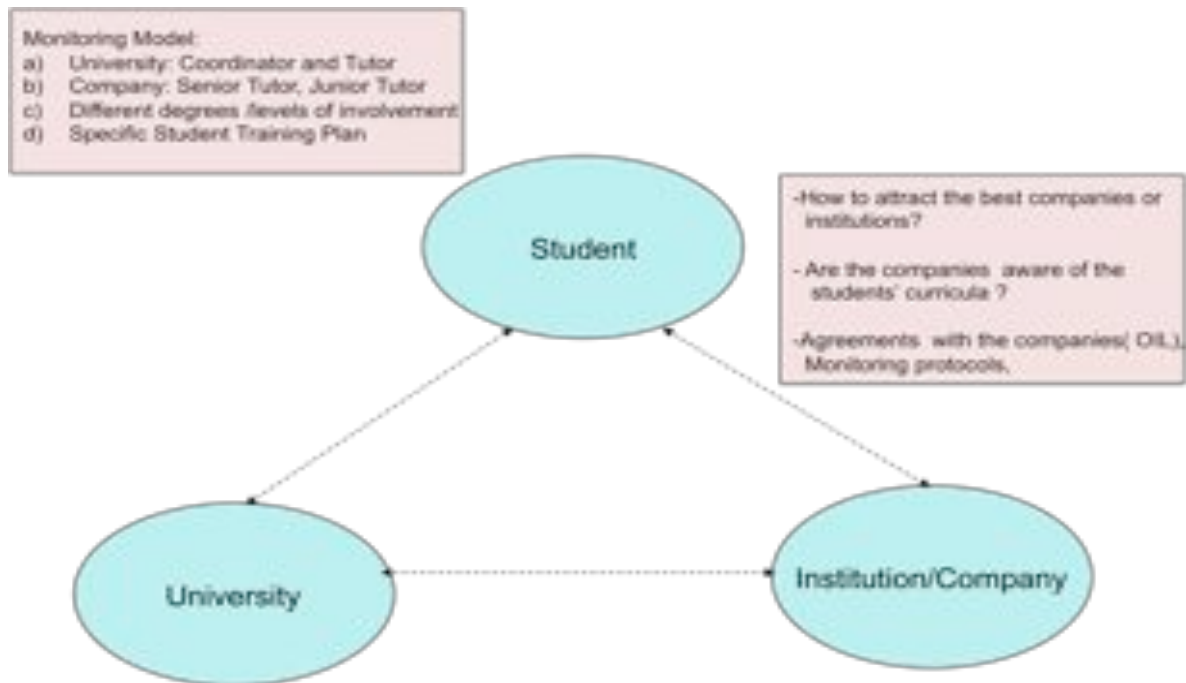
ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY



Before the EHEA.

First, we interviewed each supervisor for, at least, two hours, in which we got to obtain in depth data about its management, right from the beginning and until the end. Once the interview was over, we collected all the data obtained and we wrote a draft report which was sent to the interviewee for a double checking. By doing so, we made sure that the data we were dealing with

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

was absolutely correct. With all the data available, we designed a table that summarizes the whole set of results.

As a result of the interviews' process, we discovered how each one of the degrees deals with the Practicum. We could observe the following features. Firstly, there is a wide diversity among the design of Practicum programs. Normally, every Practicum is designed as a response to the way in which a supervisor, the Dean or even the Board of Directors of the Faculty sees the Practicum. The diversity was dramatically wide. On the one hand, in some cases, it was considered an essential part of a comprehensive education, so every single student was taking it; sometimes, from the first academic course and then once per year. On the other hand, there were some other Faculties that did not consider it at all, so they did not even have a Practicum design: it was simply nonexistent.

One remarkable example was the Faculty of Humanities, which had Practicum for students enrolled in master studies but not for undergraduate students. On the other side in the Health Sciences Studies the Practicum started at the first year and continued every subsequent year. This was the only Health Science Faculty in Spain where the practices started at the first academic year. In ICT studies, the Practicum was a usual subject to be taken. The most paradigmatic situation was done in the Economics and Business Faculty, in which the Practicum was offered for a maximum of 30 students (15% of the total students approximately) and required a final studies project. The student had to spend six months in an external institution was awarded only 3 credits, because the focus of the Practicum was on the final project of the studies; and this project had to be related to the activity carried out during the practices. The final project had an academic load of 12 credits, and had to be finalised in 6 months. This Practicum Program

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

developed by the Faculty of Economics and Business has been innovative in two aspects. First, incorporating the final project in the Social Studies and second, giving a strong relationship between the Practicum and the final project in this type of studies. In addition, the Practicum period was exclusively devoted to the external practices and could not be shared with other academic activities.

In Table 1 we show the huge variety among the different degrees in all aspects of the Practicum.

	Type	Credits	Recommended year	Length	Number of students	Continuous evaluation	Final evaluation	Remarks
Economics and Business	Optional	3	2 nd cycle	6 months (full time)	5 -8	No	Report and grading by the company	Optional to elaborate an MSc thesis (12 credits)
Biology	Optional	15 ECTS	5 th Optional Year	6 months (full time)	60	No	Research work (50%) Tutor Report (30%) Poster Synthesis (20%)	Objective: Introduction to Research. Previously 3 months of an Introduction Course
Management	Optional or Free Choice	Up to 9	2 nd or 3 rd year	Minimum 255 hours	140	No	Report by the company and Dossier	The Student chooses the company from the DB



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

Political Sciences	Compulsory	4,8 ECTS	4 th year or the previous summer	120-200 hours	100%	No	Report by the institution and Dossier	Companies and Spanish or International Institutions.
Audiovisual Communication	Optional	10 ECTS	4 th Year	250 hours	80-90 (95%)	NO	Dossier by the student	Volatile sector demand causes unstable supply
Law	Compulsory	14,5	4 th Year or the previous summer	Dependin g on the itinerary	100%	No	External: student information Internal: Teacher grades	Wide variety of specialized itineraries, inside and outside of our university
Humanities								No Practicum. To be defined in the new degree
Computer Science	Optional	9	After 50% of the total credits passed	180 or 200 hours		No	Short Student Dossier and grade by the company	The student is in charge of the company selection process
Journalism	Compulsory	10 ECTS	Last term of the studies	1 term	65	No	Student Dossier + Report by the company	Grants of the EFE Agency are equivalent to practices abroad
Advertising and Public Relations	Compulsory	14 ECTS	4 th Year, Previous or following summer	250 hours	70-80	No	Student Dossier + Report by the company	High level of job placements (20%) in the same company
Labour Relations	Compulsory	14 ECTS	4 th Year	Between 120 hours to 6 months	100%	No	Student Dossier and a voluntary oral presentation	Possibility to recognise the current work as a Practicum
Translation and Interpretation	Optional	4,5	4 th Year	100 hours	30 (30%)	No	Student Dossier (60%) Company Report (40%)	Compatibility with the studies (morning or afternoon shift)

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

Table1. Summary of the interview results

The work load ranges from 3 credits (old credit system) in the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences to 15 ECTS (EHEA system) in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences; or as a final example, the number of students goes from a minimum of 5 or 8 students for each academic year (optional subject) in the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences to 100% of the students (compulsory subject) in the Faculty of Law.

As a result, we could identify wide variability of characteristics of the Practicum for each degree, which is a reflection of the different needs perceived by the Board of Directors of each Faculty, at that time.

After the EHEA.

To compare the situation before and after the implementation of the EHEA, we prepare a new interview to be answered by the Practicum coordinators of each Faculty at UPF. In The first point that we had to take in account is the fact that, in some cases the coordinator has been changed, and the new one is not still in charge of it and, in some other cases, the new Practicum had not been completely designed yet.

In the other hand, the implementation of the EHEA changed the number of studies in each Faculty, usually increasing the degrees in comparison to the previous “licenciatura and diplomatura” studies. The current studies are:



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

We designed Google Docs interview for each degree and we sent the interview to the coordinators. We received 16 answers of the interview.

In three degrees there they are still preparing the Practicum at this moment, and there are the following: Audiovisual System Engineering degree and Biomedical Engineering degree of the Polytechnic School, and Applied Languages of the Department of Translation and Interpretation.

The Double Degree: Economics/Business Administration - Law from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics and Business there in not a Practicum in the curricula. This is the last degree in our university, started in year 2011-12, but they have a clear point of view: there is not a practicum in these studies, neither now nor in the future.

A very special point of view has the Human Biology degree. In this case there is not a Practicum as a subject in the curricula, but there is orientation course previous to the Final Project in order to monitor and train the student to the professional life. This means that the subject has to give knowledge and professional guidance about the postgraduate studies and professional environments, as well to provide useful competences for the postgraduate level and professional integration, for example, to prepare de curriculum vitae or how to manage an interview, but this not imply that the student has to do a Practicum in a specific institutions, research groups or others. In any case this course is not part of the Final Project of these studies.

What happens with the others degrees? Here we have a summary of the answers of the following degrees:

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2





THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

- a. Faculty of Communication: Advertising and Public Relations degree, Journalism degree and Audiovisual Communication degree.
- b. Faculty of Translation and Interpretation: Translation and Interpretation degree
- c. Faculty of Economics and Business: Economics degree, Business Management and Administration degree, International Business Economics degree and Business Science – Management degree
- d. Faculty of Humanities: Humanities degree
- e. Polytechnic School: Telematics Engineering degree and Computer Sciences degree.
- f. Faculty of Law: Criminology and Public Prevention Policies degree, Law degree, Labor Relation degree and, Law and Business Management and Administration or Economics degree
- g. Faculty of Political Sciences: Political and Social Sciences degree.
- h. Faculty of Life and Health Sciences: no

The results of the interview:

Features of the Practicum.

According to the results of our study, the 63% of the students of the degrees the Practicum is an optional subject and in 6 degrees (38 %) are compulsory and nearly the 90 % will be done in the fourth academic year, some of the degrees the practicum can be done between the third and



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

fourth academic year.

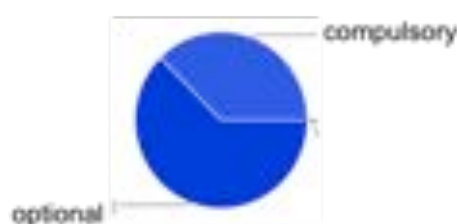


Figure n. Typology of the Practicum

Referring to the number of ECTS credits, there is a wide range of figures that goes from 6 ECTS in Human Biology to more than 20 ECTS in the Polytechnic School, but the majority goes from 10 to 15 ECTS.

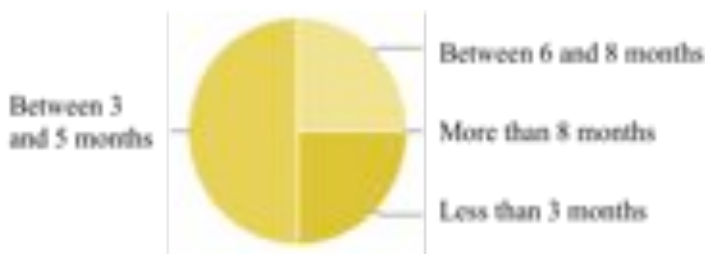
A total number of 1.230 students are the prevision to be done the Practicum for the following academic year.

As the Figure 2 shows in 6 degrees (38%) the Practicum is compulsory, then all of the students have to done it, in 1 degree the expectation rate is more of the 80 % of the students should done it, in 3 degrees (19%) the expectation is between the 50 to 80 % of the total students. In 5 degrees (31%) the expectation is between 20 to 50% and finally only 1 degree expected to be less than the 20% of the students.

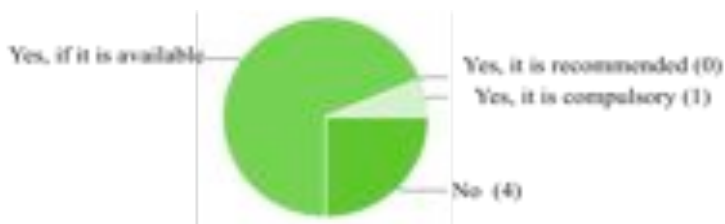
The length expectation of the Practicum, in 8 degrees, is between 3 and 5 months, 4 between 6 and 8 months and for 4 degrees less than 3 months. In any case more than 89 months



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY



One of our degrees, International Business Economics is compulsory to go abroad to make a Practicum and in 11 degrees, that is 69%, it would be acceptable if it is available to be done abroad, but in 4 degrees, (25%) it is not either available and nor recommended and in any case it is a recommendation.



In 6 degrees the Practicum is compulsory then 100% of the students of these degrees have to be done it, and in 6 other degrees the expectation is between the 20 to the 80 % of the students. In summary, the expectation is the Practicum has to be done in more than a half of the students in the UPF.

Remuneration.

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

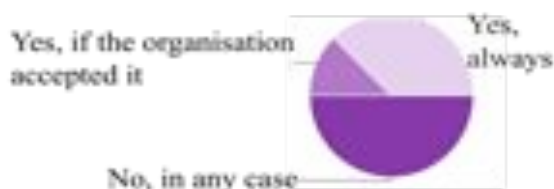
7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

In 6 degrees the Practicum has to be paid by the institution or company to the student, but in 8 degrees the decision is the opposite, never to be paid, the other two degrees depends if the company or institution has previously decided it.



Evaluation

A final work is one of the ways to evaluate the Practicum for 8 degrees (50% of the respondents). Seven degrees (44% of the respondents) said that continuous evaluation is the way they choose. Final evaluation was chosen for 5 degrees (31 % of the respondents), a Tribunal's evaluation was chosen for 5 degrees (31 %) and the same proportion was chosen for "others" (7 degrees). Tutor's evaluation, Final Report, Student's portfolio, Company's Tutor Report and External Tutor's Questionnaire are the meaning of "Others" according to the answers. In the majority of the cases they use more than one way to evaluate the students.

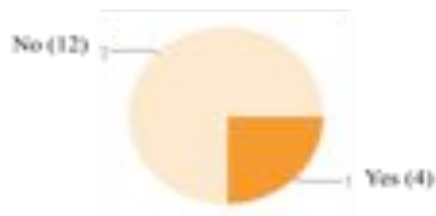
Relation with Final Project and Research Programs

It is interesting to be taken in account that in two degrees of the Polytechnic School, Telematics Engineering and Computer Sciences in one side, and Human Biology from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences and Labor Relations from the Faculty of Law in the other side, the Practicum has to be connected with the final Project of the Studies.

In these four degrees, the evaluation has to be separately as two independents subjects, but it can be a relationship between the practices done with the research work of the final Project of the Studies. In another case they propose to deliver the final Project and to be defended in a poster format.



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY



In four degrees the Practicum can be connected with research groups or programs of the Department. In this cases the way to be evaluated are the same: Final Project, Final Project and Poster and Final Project taken into account the methodology used, the contents of the work and the bibliography used.

Monitoring protocol.

Relating to the monitoring protocol may they use, the answers were the following: in 9 degrees (56% of the respondents) said that they monitoring the practices only once during the process. In 4 degrees (25%) one time every month; one degree (6%) once every one–two weeks and one degree said never. One of the coordinators answered “others”.

Seven of the degrees (44 %) do not use Information Computer Technologies (ICT) in the monitoring process. The same number, seven degrees use the Moodle platform for this purpose. Two degrees will plan to use Skype.

The respondent who said that they do not use ICT in this process, 3 of them will be interested in following the monitoring process with ICT.



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY



Changes after and before EHEA

Labor Relations should offer in addition to the compulsory practices voluntary practices, and then the student should do 6 months practices in total. Some degrees follow the same structure as the previous studies, before the EHEA, like Advertising and Public Relations. Others try to clarify the process using intensively the internet uses as Aula Global and Moodle platform.

In relation to the academic tutor, the changes done because the implementation of the EHEA are the following. Firstly, the assignment of the tutors, there is a change for 3 only degrees, another does not know and the rest there is not any change. Secondly, in relation to the number of students for each tutor, in two degrees there is a change, in two degrees they do not know and the rest there is not any changes. Thirdly, in relation to the work to do by the tutor, there is changes for 2 degrees, do not know for 3 degrees and no changes for 11 degrees.

Additional comments.

One of the coordinators said that the Practicum has to be paid in all the cases and it has to be a future tendency.

Too much burochratic work



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

c) Results and/or conclusions

Before the implementation of EHEA, we could identify four performance models in Practicum studies according to the intensity of the monitoring. First, there were some studies that did not have a Practicum design at all. Second, some degrees in which there was a limited supply of vacancies. They preferred to limit it in order to be able to control it intensively. Furthermore, the limited resources made it impossible to extend it to a larger number of students. Thirdly, in some other degrees, a very high percentage of students (close to 90%) were taking work placements.

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

Unfortunately, the resources were limited as well, so the quality of the monitoring was really low, in some cases. Fourthly, in some studies, the Practicum was an essential part of the comprehensive training of the students. Consequentially, its selection, monitoring and analysis of results were done tightly and thoroughly.

The main conclusion is that the four initial models have converged into just two. The model with the tightest monitoring is consolidated. And the other three models have converged in just one: a model that includes many more students, but not all of them, with tighter monitoring. However, the longer-term trend suggests that there will be only one: a completely structured Practicum with careful monitoring of quality at every stage.

Finally, from the results we obtained in this work we suggest that the future of the Practicum will be based on the development of interuniversity networks related to the external practices.

7. REFERENCES

- CID, A., PÉREZ, A. Y SARMIENTO, J. A. (2011). Tutoring activity in Practicum. Review of the literature. [La tutoría en el Practicum. Revisión de la literatura]. *Revista de Educación*, 354, 127–154.
- JAQUES, D., GIBBS, G. Y RUST, C. (1993). *Designing and Evaluating Courses*. New South Wales: Educational Methods Unit, Oxford Brooke University.
- KOLB, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- ZABALZA, M. A. (2011). Practicum in Higher Education: State of the art. [El Practicum en la formación universitaria: estado de la cuestión]. *Revista de Educación*, 354, 21–43.



THE UNIVERSITY: AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIETY

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

7TH CIDUI

ISBN 978-84-695-4073-2

