T@SK

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Towards increased awareness, responsibility and shared quality in social work

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WP 2.4

The internship procedures in Social Work

Short report on the state of the art of the EU project partner countries (Italy, Portugal and Spain)

Track of changes

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Introduction

Dynamic Workflow & Preparatory Meeting

The theme of the internship has been repeatedly discussed among the T@sk Project partners.

The definition of the new *Guidelines* regarding the improvement of the internship procedures for the Albanian Social Service university courses, is the result of an incremental and collective work of all the partners of the project. In particular, a crucial phase in the creation process was the evaluation and comparison of the experiences of the EU partners themselves, completed during preparatory meeting in Lisbon (October 2019).

This short report on the state of the art of the EU project partner countries (Italy, Spain and Portugal) is the outcome of a common effort carried out in several steps:

> *Step 1:* from January 28th to February 1st, 2019 - Training Session in Elbasan

> Speeches held by each partner; debates; round table; presentation of the respective traineeship models; definition of the "supervision model"; presentation of the first draft of the internship guidelines.

> *Step 2:* March 27th, 2019 - Meeting in Florence

> Preparation of the form, therefore sent to the partners for the collection of the data related to the current internship practices.

> *Step 3:* from September 19th to September 30th, 2020

> Sending the questionnaires and subsequent collection, analysis and reflection on the data.

> *Step 4:* from 7th October to 8th October 2019 - Internship Procedures Meeting in Lisbon.

> The morning of the 7th October was dedicated to insights and clarifications with the Albanian partners on the state of the art; on 7th afternoon and 8th in the morning there was a detailed presentation of the internships at the universities of Lisbon, Madrid and Florence to analyse the internship systems and to identify the points necessary for writing the guidelines.

> *Step 5:* from November 2019 to January 2020

> P7 OAS (lead partner of the WP 2.4) with the support of the University of Florence is continuing the work dedicated to the first draft of the guidelines with reference to the indications of the European partners.

The questionnaires of the EU partners as well as the questionnaires of the Albanian partners have been collected and analysed in order to define the state of the art of the internships in the European partner universities and to identify the necessary points for writing the guidelines.

The questionnaires were investigating four aspects of the internships in the field of Social Work:

- the legislative framework;

- the preparation;

- the development;

- the impact and evaluation.

Definition of the internship

The **internship** has a central role in the curricular education of future social workers. It is amongst one of the main qualifying steps for the educational process of the students. The internship is a guided learning experience in the reality of social services that allows the observation and the

experimentation of professional social practices. It also offers a qualified understanding of the scientific knowledge in the field of Social Work and the related professional practice. During the activities of the supervised internship, students acquire the technical skills and the necessary deontological approach to operate in the complex environment of the Social Services; to deliver high standard professional activities; to develop the soft skills necessary to successfully operate in professional teams within complex organizations. All the above facilitates ensure the student's integration in the labour market.

The internship reflects the three phases of each learning process in the field of Social Work. This process is later transformed into professional practices.

- **Understanding:** the phase of understanding deals with the application of social theory into Social Work practices. A theory-based approach is the starting point in designing the social programs and professional practices of the Social Workers.

- **Integration** is the further step that enables Social Workers to operate within the complexity of social organizations. Incremental levels of integration allow to successfully implement the Social Workers activities through: team-building; respect of the institutional framework and acknowledgment of the relationship amongst the partners.

- **Transmission** occurs when all the partners involved in the activities of the internship accept to reflect on the ongoing professional activities and to discuss the linkages between social theory and Social Workers' practices in a multifaceted social context.

The internship reflects the pedagogical process of mutual sharing between teaching and learning experiences. This process aims to create a scientific dialogue among students, university teachers and social workers and can be represented as a triad (See Figure 1.) resting on collective work practices.
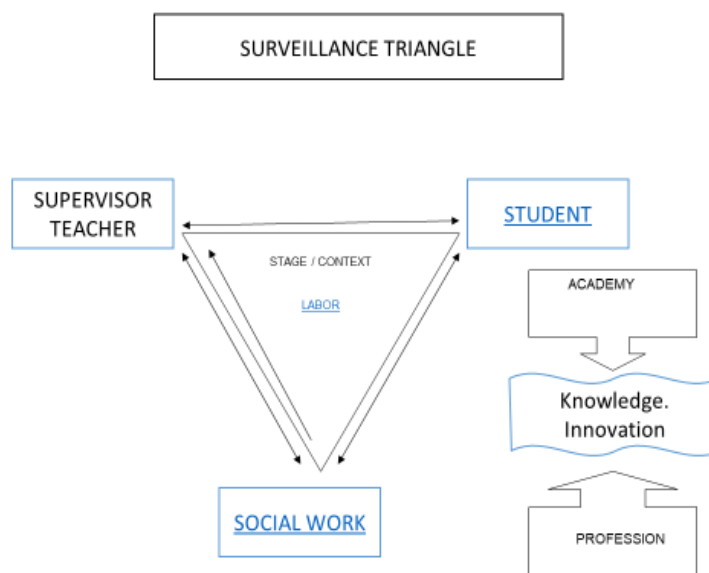

Figure 1.

Source: Ferreira 2019

The process is materialized through the systematic meetings among social worker, intern and teacher of the teaching discipline.

It is clear now how reductive it is to limit reflection and the definition of *observation* on single and

separate dimensions, losing sight of the procedural dimension and the strong interactivity between its components. The practice is not reduced to a simple knowledge of social reality but is closely linked to the processes of social change (hopefully) in their more positive sense.

The internship enables students to match their own choices and to experience the use and transformation in practice of theoretical, methodological and relational skills with the necessary ethical implications. It allows students to analyse the social processes and phenomena, to relate with the complex situations of marginality and to improve the capacity of comprehending the individuals, their life stories and their contexts.

Students begin to build their professional identity when they meet up with consolidated and already experienced professionals.

The internship activates the process of individual learning in the professional role by combining theoretical and methodological content with practice. The objectives shall be focused on:

- the knowledge of the normative and political framework and the organization of social services;

- the comprehension of the characteristics of the territory and the network system;

- the understanding of situations that represent social fragility;

- the gradual acquisition of technical-operational skills to develop the aid process.

Four areas of learning can be identified:

1. To acquire the ability to work according the professional ethics (in accordance with the principles and foundations of the profession);

2. To acquire the capacity to operate within an organised system (which requires knowledge of the service and the reference territory);

3. To acquire gradual capacity to develop aid processes;

4. To experience the method of Social Diagnosis. Assessment as an ongoing process, which is participatory, seeks to understand the service user and his/her situation and sets a basis for planning how improvement can be achieved (Coulshed and Orme 2012).

These four points are supplemented by the acquisition of skills in the management and in the appropriate use of the ICT. Indeed, in many fields of knowledge and work, social work including, ICT proves to be a key tool for learning but also for the working process, representing one of the essential added values of the same T@sk project.

The internship activity is carried out by public, private and third sector institutions from the national regions or from abroad (countries with recognized programs of collaboration between universities). It is realized by the guide of the social worker supervisor and the internship teacher, through study activities, experimentation and intervention documentation. The experience is also supported by moments of reflection in the classroom.

The professional internship is the intersection field between three different systems that participate in various ways in its definition and implementation: university, the hosting public or private institutions and the professional community.

The internship is a resource for every involved system. A close relationship with the host institutions and a precise planning of the contents ensure an adequate context to carry out a quality internship.

1. Legislative framework

1.1 The international framework

The international framework can count from decades on authoritative references. We briefly mention the ones best known:

2018 - *Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles*, adopted at the General Assembly of IASSW on 5th July 2018 in Dublin, Ireland.

(https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/)

(https://www.iassw-aiets.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Global-Social-Work-Statement-of-Ethical-Principles-IASSW-27-April-2018-1.pdf)

2004 - *Global standards for the education and training of the social work profession*, adopted at the IASSW and IFSW General Assemblies in Adelaide, Australia in 2004.

On 18 March 2019 the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) have initiated a joint process of reviewing and updating the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training.

(https://www.iassw-aiets.org/global-standards-for-social-work-education)

(https://www.iassw-aiets.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Global-standards-for-the-education-and-training-of-the-social-work-profession.pdf)

1999 - *Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education*, convened in Bologna on 19 June

(http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.pdf)

1990 - *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49

(https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx)

1967 - *Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, adopted by the United Nations Member States. The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979

(https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/WHRD/WomenRightsAreHR.pdf)

1948 - The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948

(https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/)

1.2 The State of the Art

Each university has a compulsory period of internship. The **ISCTE- IUL University** (Lisbon) refers to the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education, namely the External Evaluation Commission, that has established a minimum standard of hours that SW degree should foresee for the internship activities. The National Agency evaluates internship structure during the process of evaluation of the degree, particularly regarding the number of hours and the student hosting institutions.

Even the **UCM** (Madrid) refers to a National Agency for the bachelor's degree. Two types of practices are foreseen: the one included in the curricula, and the one outside the curricula but recognized by the National Agency. In social work, the practice placement is included in the curricula as a compulsory course, with a different number of hours and ECTS according to each university master's degree. The most relevant reference appears in Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29th October which organizes university studies. The hosting institutions can be public, private or NGO. These need to have a social worker on the board that acts as practice placement supervisor of the institution. They should have a contract with the institution. The voluntaries cannot act as practitioners in the field. The practice placement vice-dean from the Faculty of Social Work is in relation with some vice-chancellor at the university level.

University of Florence refers to the Law 16 March 2007 of the Ministry of University "*Determining the classes of university degrees*". The law has established that curriculum of the Social Service degree must include at least 18 credits for internship and internship guidance, favouring supervision by social workers. The Ministerial Decree 270/2004 introduces for the Master's in Social Work (Classe di Laurea Magistrale LM87) the obligation to include 10 ECTS for *"the acquisition of the qualifying competences through activities of internship in public, private or non-profit organizations where are operating the professional social worker"*.

2. Preparation

2.1 University regulation on curricular internships: year of study in which preferably to insert the activity and number of credits recommended.

Each university has a regulation for the internship and each degree in SW has established the own arrangement where are defined the formal requirements.

ICTE-IUL has a very articulated form for the evaluation of the hosting institutions which goal is to identify the quality criteria of the curricular Internship. It differentiates the hosting institutions according to the satisfaction of the below criteria from 1 to 10, considering as a minimum requirement the first three criteria. The hosting institution that contemplates the 10 items is recognized for excellence in practical training in Social Work.

1. The Institution has a Social Work team established for more than 5 years ago;

2. The Internship Supervisor is trained in Social Work;

3. The Internship Supervisor has professional experience in the institution for more than 3 years;

4. The Internship Supervisor accepts the role of supervisor as well as the principles and values of the training in Social Work provided by ISCTE – IUL;

5. The internship site ensures the experience of professional practice: "Design", "Intervention", and "Assessment", in a perspective of participation;

6. The Internship place enables the training of skills at the following levels: personal, organizational, planning/programming and evaluation of social programs/projects;

7. The internship place enables the trainee to participate in the network of partner entities and the network intervention;

8. The Internship potentiates the exercise of research in Social Work through the reflective practice about a intervention social problem;

9. The Internship presents potentialities in the field of the creation of new areas of work of the Social Worker in an innovative, participative and entrepreneurial perspective;

10. The place of internship has the capacity for professional integration.

For bachelor's degree there are foreseen 900 hours of internship articulated in three years: 150 hours during the first year, 450 hours during the second year and 300 hours during the third year. For the master's degree there are 100 hours during the second year. University of Florence and the UCM have a similar organization.

UCM has a catalogue of institutions offering external internships for students. The platform does not only constitute a temporary instrument, i.e. exclusive of the academic year. It is also a collaborative tool among institutions, containing important documents and agreements of the internship. Organisations, according to their availability, each academic year are offering a certain number of placements that may vary from one year to another. The internship of the master's degree must include in the verification report important aspects such as the duration of the training and general operations. This report also specifies the procedures of the internship in order to guarantee a high-quality training. The procedure for the management of Social Work placements through the platform *Gestión de Prácticas Externas* (Gipe UCM) (https://gipe.ucm.es/) has begun in the academic year 2016-17. Since then, all the internship agreements are processed through the platform. In the academic year 2017-18, a significant progress was made using the platform in the process of managing internship and students' selection. The rest of the management and educational tasks (practice monitoring, evaluation, etc.) are implemented in the academic year 2018-19. During the month of September, the vice-dean is completing the internship offers on the Gipe UCM platform, and then is announcing the day the offers will be posted. The internship offers are published for a certain period of time on the platform, so that students can thoroughly consider and make their choices. In Spain the Social Work BA degree has a four-year education programme (240 ECTS). However, each university has an individual approach in this regard. UCM having a high number of students, has located the internships in the fourth year of the programme (both semesters). The workload of 42 ECTS has been articulated in 400 hours of practice (from October to April) and 45 hours of educational supervision at university. Considering that in Spain master's degree usually lasts only one year (even if the law allows up to 2 years, the majority of master's degrees are only one year long because of the bachelor's degree which lasts four years), the internship is foreseen during the first year for 12 ECTS, that also includes supervision and some seminars.

University of Florence has a database where the host institution should be recorded on the official register of the university before the start of the internship. This aspect allows to be always up to date with the information about the number of the trainees, employees, or companies engaged in a training project. University is constantly looking for new institutions to join the platform, in order to guarantee a wide offer for students. Each internship experience is shared as a common project between university supervisor, host supervisor and the student. A simple quantitative evaluation of the experience is required by the three figures at the end of the internship. Until now the platform is used only for statistical purposes and quality evaluation by the university, and not by the host organization. University of Florence has a requirement of 240 hours (12 ECTS) in the second year of the SW degree, and of 420 hours (12 ECTS) in the third year of the study program. For the master's degree, University of Florence has foreseen 350 hours during the second year distinguishing the internship "stricto sensu" (at least 7 ECTS) and professionalising laboratories.

2.2 Definition or updating of academic protocol model for the enrolment of Internships' host institutions.

Each university has a protocol model for the Internship to be established with the host institution.

ISCTE – IUL has a protocol established between the organizations and the university, but each degree sets up its own internship regulation. The regulations include the following topics: structure of the internship; learning objectives and competences; procedures; supervisor, student and teacher tasks; the internship evaluation process.

At the **UCM**, the Faculty of Social Work, through the practice placement vice-dean is organising, managing and administering the practicum with regard to places for external internships as well as the allocation of educational supervision groups. A common feature for ISCTE – IUL; UCM and University of Florence is that no student can develop external internships if there is no formal agreement between university and host organisation. The agreement must be signed by the legal representatives of these institutions.

2.3 Internships' objects, tasks and aims formulation; preparation of students, acknowledgment of students' interests.

All universities are defining the internships' objects, tasks and aims in compliance with the study plan and professional profile established. These are displayed in an online draft on which are subscribed the students, traineeship supervisors, professors or other persons in charge.

For **ISCTE – IUL** a general meaning of the internship represents the result of the study plan and the professional profile that is established by the institution. In a narrow sense, internship is a model of alternation between the theoretical curricular units and the practical training, seeking that this training operationalizes the contents learned.

UCM recognises that the internship is a learning methodology emphasizing the practical application of theory and conceptual knowledge acquired during training in various subjects that make up social work studies. It offers to the students the opportunity to integrate and assimilate knowledge and theory within practical experience, through specific and real situations, in order to construct the foundations of their own professional identity. It strengthens students' identification with the profession's objectives, values and ethics. It promotes the integration of theory and practice and the development of professional competencies. Student should gain understanding of professional practices in terms of methods, ethical guidelines and political frameworks.

At the **University of Florence** internship's object, tasks and aims have been defined by professors with expertise in social work, considering the theoretical references in relationship with the experience. For the master's degree the internship constitutes a moment of systematic reflection on the processes of definition and implementation of social policies, on the professional practices of the social service, and on the organizations involved in the social intervention. The internship project is shared with the host institution, the social work supervisor, the reference professor for that specific topic, the teacher of social research methodology, and the teacher of social service methodology.

Each university attempts to assign the students in their field of interest to the extent possible.

It is interesting to underline the organization of the internship in each university and to emphasize their peculiarities. **ISCTE- IUL** starts the internship experience from the first year in a curricular unit designated as "Domains" and "Fields Laboratory" that constitutes a first approach to the professional field, either through visits to the organizations or through reflection on the profession and its different dimensions. In the second and the third year are carried out a high number of hours on field placement and also is carried out the supervision of the internship in each year.

The master's degree has two different profiles for the internship: a) master student with a social work background; b) master student without a social work background. For the first is explored the kind of

intervention methodology or the subject which student would like to go in-depth as a potential dissertation topic. Starting from this perspective, the university is looking for a suitable institution or project for the student. The aim is to deepen a particular issue and to develop an articulated thinking about professional practices, political frameworks and ethical issues. For the second profile, university is exploring the student's interests in terms of intervention field, trying to find a suitable institution or project. The central aim is to provide the student with the opportunity to get in touch with social work professional practices and gain understanding of professional practices in terms of methods, ethical guidelines and political frameworks. University has a professor in charge with the preparation of the internship processes.

At both institutions, **UCM** and **University of Florence,** it is compulsory to have a determined number of ECTS and to pass some specific professional subjects in order to begin the traineeship.

At **University of Florence** students are starting the internship during the second year and the coordinator of the Degree Internship Office is in charge with their preparation. The first part of the second year internship (70 hours, 2 credits) is carried in the classroom. It consists in 5 meetings that aim to bring a first approach to the profession. Students are interviewing social workers with a long experience as internship supervisors and strong expertise in different areas. The remainder 140 hours (4 ECTS) are performed within the host institutions. The internship of the third year (420 hours, 12 ECTS) takes place on field. For the preparation of internships are scheduled periodic meetings with the students to monitor the individual university careers, to verify previous experiences, to clarify doubts and uncertainties, to solicit a reflection and clarification of personal goals and training needs also in relation to the topic of the thesis, as well as to present the forms and objectives of the traineeship experiences.

The **UCM** is foreseeing the internship only in the fourth year of the Social Work undergraduate degree. To achieve the internship objectives, this is carried out in two complementary and coordinated stages: in a social institution or social welfare organization known as practice centers, and at the Faculty of Social Work where are provided workplace facilities for an efficient practical experience. In both stages, the learning process is presenting a common and planned content. For master's degree there are two vice-rectorates dedicated to facilitating the student's internship experience (employment, entrepreneurship, and institutional relations). In addition, the faculty has a vice-dean in charge of internships. The internship, recognized as another course, has responsible professors, internal and external tutors.

2.4 Information management and scholarship dissemination

Each university has an internship office that manages relations with the host organizations, also through the university website.

ISCTE – IUL provides general information on the website, but more specific information is shared in the "Fénix" system, which is used for curriculum management, similar to "Moodle". **UCM** and **University of Florence** are using different platforms such as "Moodle" *(Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment)* or "GIPE" as free open source software packages designed to help educators not only to share information, but also to interact.

3. Development

3.1 The Code of Ethics shared and signed by trainees and trainers

For each university the ethical dimension plays an important role during internship experience. This aspect is also encountered during different university courses. In addition, supervisors of the social care institutions are also explaining the ethics of the institutions, rules and obligations of a social worker, with reference to the ethic code of that institution. One of the main responsibilities of the interns is to act ethically and manage all the information according to the code of ethics of the social worker adopted by the country in which student is operating.

3.2 Definition of the work triad

A clear definition of the work triad (student, academic tutor and external tutor) is reached when the three subjects are signing a special form summarizing tasks and duties of the internship. In this form are drafted the aims of the traineeship and the relative duties of each subscriber. Each university has its own organization regarding the relationship between the actors involved.

UCM is weekly organizing groups of supervision of 20-24 students for two hours at the university for 20 weeks. The procedure is conducted by a lecturer of the Department of Social Work and is being compulsory. If the student is facing any difficulties at the practice placement, he must contact the supervisor in charge.

ISCTE - IUL is encouraging the student to lead the internship process. Student has a professional supervisor (practitioner on site) and a pedagogical supervisor (responsible teacher at the university). The pedagogical supervisor is the ultimate responsible for the internship and should have meeting with the student every three weeks.

University of Florence has no supervision but there are project tutors as immediate reference for the different actors of the traineeship. They have systematic contacts with the student and are connecting elements for all communications with university and services.

4. Impact and Evaluation

4.1 Perception of the student

Before starting the internship, each university is organizing meetings with the students where a Guide of the Internship is provided. During the meeting are explained the objectives and contents of the traineeship and are given the instructions for writing the final report.

Each student has to complete formality documents during and at the end of the internship:

- Form of the internship hours control with description of the starting date of the internship and the activities that student has done in the institution; it's signed by the supervisor at the end of the internship;

- A final descriptive and reflective report on the experience.

4.2 Perception of services

University and supervisor of the host institution: collaboration, training, recognition

A good relationship between university and host institutions is a prerequisite for a quality traineeship.

As stated in the "Global standards for the education and training of the social work profession" (2004), for a good cooperation is important to consider the following aspects:

  - to plan co-ordination and links between the university and the field placement setting;

  - to provide orientation for fieldwork supervisors and their participation of field instructors in curriculum development;

  - to make available to fieldwork supervisors, a field instruction manual that is detailing its fieldwork standards, procedures, assessment standards/criteria and expectations.

None of the three universities have structured training programs for trainee social workers. **ISCTE - IUL** organises meetings and sessions specifically for supervisors, while **UCM** sometimes offers training for the supervisors as compensation for their collaboration. Communication between professor and the supervisor during the internship process is accomplished through meetings, via e-

mails or phone calls. For any needs arising, the university professor is always open to respond and meet the supervisor and the student.

Regarding the recognition given to the supervisor in the host institution, each university has its own peculiarities in this sense. **ISCTE -IUL** in bachelor's degree permits to the supervisors to attend scientific events held at the university as well as to attend course units in Social Work and other training programmes. For the master's degree supervisors, these are granted with the right to freely join all scientific activities organised by the department. They can also enrol in a maximum of two curricular unites per semester for free. Social worker internship supervisors receive a certificate from the university.

Even in the **UCM** at the bachelor's level the supervisor receives an honorary mention, which may be of importance for future faculty competitions. On the other hand, the university offers them certain facilities such as use of the library.

University of Florence gives no recognition to the supervisors, but the Order of Social Workers recognizes 15 credits as ongoing training.

4.3 Evaluation

As stated in the *"Global standards for the education and training of the social work profession"* (2004) it is necessary to promote a partnership between the university and the agency in the evaluation of student's fieldwork performance.

In **ISCTE-IUL** each degree has an internship regulation which defines formal requirements including the following topics: structure of the internship; learning objectives and competences; procedures; supervisor, student and teacher's tasks; the internship evaluation process. Students use an internship hours control form that supervisors must validate. Attendance forms are given to the professors at the university. To support the preparation of the internship report, the professors are sharing with the students a document with the norms of the reparation of the final report.

Students of **UCM** use an internship hour control too. The university has defined the assessment instruments for the final evaluation of the internship that is made by the academic tutor on basis of:

- *The Field Diary;*

- *Presentation of an intervention process;*

- *Elaboration and design of a social intervention project;*

- *Written report on the organization's analysis;*

- *Final Self-Assessment Record;*

- *Compulsory attendance at educational supervision seminars;*

- *Response (participation, integration, interaction) in group and individual educational supervision seminars;*

- *Information gathered during the periodic contacts maintained with the Social Worker in practical teaching;*

- *Intermediate evaluation carried out by the entity's tutor;*

- *Final evaluation carried out by the entity's tutor.*

Students who meet one or more of the following criteria will not be assessed:

-Negative report from the external tutor (delays/absences not notified in time, negative attitude, non-professional behaviour, transgression of the centre's rules, non- compliance with assigned tasks, ...);

-Three or more absences, even if justified, at the Educational Supervision seminars;

-Non-compliance with the credits assigned to field practices;

- Failure to submit one or more of the papers requested in the Educational Supervision within the deadlines indicated by the academic tutor;

- Absence of one or more of the evaluations to be carried out by the external tutor.

Students have access to the Assessment Instruments.

Students of the ***University of Florence*** are evaluated by a professor dedicated to the discussion of the internship, but who has no contact with the supervisors. At the end of the internship student is presenting the final report. There is no mark, and the student is getting only eligible award. At the master's degree instead, the internship report is evaluated with a mark (until 30) and is generally a first step of the thesis drafting. The thesis supervisor is often consequently part of the process. Students have an internship hours control form and receive a guide to support the preparation of their internship report.

Internship and Diploma Supplement: registration and tracking of the experience.

In none of the three universities, the internship is registered in diploma supplement / official academic portfolio, but it is part of the academic career as the other subjects.

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