



# Careers and Employability for PhD students

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## Academic Supervisor Handbook



**NATIONAL FORUM**  
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING  
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**HEA** | AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS  
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

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## Overview

*Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning for PhD students* is a new interdisciplinary 10 ECTS module, the development of which was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and is led by Trinity Careers Service (TCS). It supports Trinity PhD students with career planning, critical reflection and decision-making and will enable students to establish networks to help support their future careers.

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## 1. Module Guide

The *Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning module* is offered in a blended learning format, which includes an online *Skills Audit* tool to help students develop transferable skills that can be applied during and after their PhD. It was designed and is delivered in collaboration with a range of industry partners across all sectors and offers a unique opportunity to undertake work-based learning to prepare students for careers in academia and/or industry. A 5 ECTS module option, which excludes the work-based learning component, is also available.

### Key Learning Outcomes of the Module

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

- Critically reflect on and articulate their skills in relation to their PhD and the workplace.
- Create a career path that reflects their beliefs, values, interests and potential.
- Apply tools to proactively manage their own career.
- Create meaningful connections with PhD students from other disciplines and employers/ alumni.
- Critically evaluate a work-based learning experience in terms of their future career direction (applicable to the 10 ECTS module only).

### Module Structure and Content

#### Pre-work:

Students will be required to complete an online *Skills Audit Tool* and *Reflective PDF*, listen to an introductory podcast and review the Student Handbook, prior to attending the first session.

#### Careers Stream:

- (a) Designing your Career (face-to-face)
- (b) Navigating the Emotions of Planning and Managing your Career (online)

#### Skills Stream:

- (a) Mapping Skills onto Career Options (face-to-face)
- (b) The Art and Craft of a great CV and Writing an Effective Cover Letter (online)
- (c) Networking with Confidence (face-to-face)
- (d) Presenting your Best Self at Interview (online)
- (e) Intercultural Competence and the Global Workplace (online)

#### Work-based Learning Stream (10 ECTS module only):

- (a) Preparing for your Work-based Learning Experience (online)
- (b) Reflecting on your Work-based Learning Experience (face-to-face)

### Work-based Learning Experience

A WBL experience is a compulsory part of the 10 ECTS module for PhD students. Students will undertake a self-sourced work-based learning experience with a partner organisation, which could include a mini internship, consulting project or other suitable experience. Some students may get connected to suitable experiences through their Academic Supervisor, existing supervisor collaborations in their School, or through their funding body. In addition, TCS will support students to source and arrange appropriate WBL opportunities.

The timing of the WBL experience can be negotiated depending on the student's research schedule and that of the host organisation, so they can fit it around their research commitments.

### Teaching and Learning Activities

A range of activities will support students to reflect within the module, including the online *Skills Audit Tool* and *Reflective PDF*, regular journal entries, online discussion boards, coffee chats, podcasts and expert videos, industry partner skills webinars, an industry partner -led assessment centre, mentoring and alumni engagement, and industry partner site visits or events. The wider Careers Service will also offer additional support for students e.g. one-to-one careers guidance appointments, practice interviews, access to labour market information, and psychometric tools.

In summary, this module will help PhD students to:

- develop transferable skills so they can work effectively in academia and/or industry
- build confidence in their abilities and give them an appreciation of how their research and skills fit into a bigger picture
- add value to their CV and improve their overall career readiness.

### What is the role of the PhD Academic Supervisor in supporting students through this module?

In order for your students to get the most from this module, PhD Supervisors are asked to:

- Fully support your student to undertake this module if they express an interest in taking it.
- Factor in the time required to undertake the various module sessions and supporting activities and resources, including the WBL experience for the 10 ECTS module (100 hours) and associated assessments, when planning research work. A clear timeline of module commitments will be provided to the student in advance of undertaking the module.
- Help your student to critically reflect on their skills development through participation in the module. For example by meeting to discuss the results of their Skills Audit or by assisting with preparation for the WBL experience through provision of advice, contacts for internships etc.

### How can I support student reflection?

As a PhD Supervisor you can also play a role in fostering critical reflection focused on deep thought to support the student's development through module participation. This will help the student in:

- Making sense of their experience - critically analysing the experience, actively attempting to make sense of and find meaning in it.
- Standing back to gain perspective of an experience, issue or action. It is not easy to reflect when caught up in the midst of activity.
- Repetition - going over something several times to gain clarity.
- Deeper honesty - reflection strives after the "truth". We can come to acknowledge things we find difficult to admit normally.
- Weighing up - reflection involves even-handed judgement or evaluation.
- Achieving clarity - become more aware of any hidden motivations, thinking styles, and of how they appear to other people.
- Deepening their understanding - opening up to learning and understanding at a deeper level including gaining insight into concepts that are difficult to access by other means; developing a better understanding of what affects performance and progress.
- Making judgements & drawing conclusions.

(Cottrell, 2003)

To assist students with this type of critical reflection, it may help to pose questions when meeting with your student at key points in the module which require a deeper level of reflection, such as after completion of the Skills Audit or the WBL experience. Sample questions include:

- How could you maximise your strengths and minimise areas of weakness?
- Why are you interested in gaining experience in X sector?
- How has your work-based learning experience influenced your future career plans?
- What were your initial impressions of the host organisation. How did those impressions change over time?

Students undertaking the module will be encouraged to keep a reflective journal on Blackboard so you may also wish to refer to this in your discussions with them.

### Support and Referrals

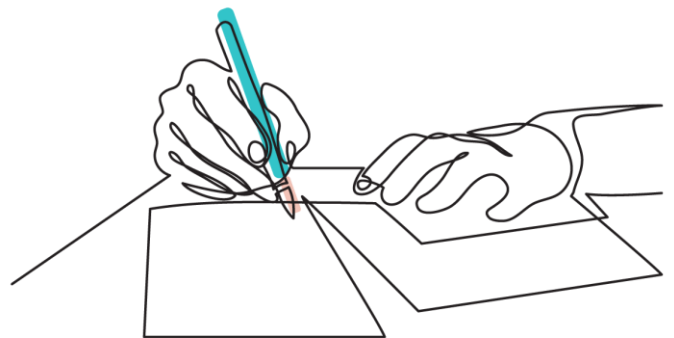
TCS will provide relevant support for students undertaking this module. However, in your role as PhD Supervisor, you may become aware of the need for additional student support for such students. Key College supports that are pertinent to this module include:

- [Trinity Careers Service](#)
- [Trinity Disability Service](#)
- [Student Counselling Service](#) (including Student Learning Development)
- [Postgraduate Advisory Service](#)

- [Graduate Students' Union](#)
- [College Health Service](#)

## References

- Cottrell, S. (2003) Skills for Success: The Personal Development Planning Handbook, Palgrave USA
- Trinity College Dublin: Supervision of Research Students: Best Practice Guidelines  
<https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/assets/pdf/supervision-guidelines.pdf>
- University of Edinburgh Career Service: Thinking about a PhD Internship  
[https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thinking\\_about\\_a\\_phd\\_internship\\_my\\_version\\_interactive.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/thinking_about_a_phd_internship_my_version_interactive.pdf) accessed October 2020



## 2. Work-based Learning (WBL) Experience

A WBL experience is a compulsory part of the 10 ECTS *Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning module* for PhD students and is a key component of the module. **Students undertake a self-sourced work-based learning experience with a partner organisation of 100 hours in duration.**

### Key Learning Outcomes of the WBL experience

By the end of the WBL experience, students will be able to:

- Critically reflect on skills developed through practical experience in the workplace and on how these skills can be developed further
- Critically evaluate host organisation feedback in relation to their WBL experience
- Analyse the WBL experience in terms of their personality, values and fit with organisational culture
- Critically evaluate their WBL experience in terms of future career direction.

### Three different types of WBL experience are available as options in this module:

1. A **mini internship**, which for the purpose of this module, is defined as an approved and supervised *immersive work experience* with a host organisation of 100 hours in duration, that meets specific learning goals consistent with module learning outcomes above, is appropriate for a student at PhD level, and is within the scope of the [College Internships and Placements policy](#).

The mini internship may be completed in one block or in separate blocks e.g. a day per week, half days or specific hours. The purpose of the mini internship is to offer students a general exposure to a research or professional organisation, which will include induction, observation and an immersive work experience that creates real value for the host organisation and valuable learning for the student. This includes on-the-job interaction with an assigned supervisor or mentor from the host organisation.

Students will develop professional skills, increase their awareness of a given sector and benefit from the opportunity to make new professional contacts.

2. A **consulting project**, which for the purpose of this module, is defined as an *independent project* which is undertaken in collaboration with a host organisation over an agreed time period totalling 100 hours, that meets specific learning goals consistent with module learning outcomes above and is appropriate for a student at PhD level.

The purpose of the consulting project is to give students exposure to a specific consulting scenario or challenge in the context of a research or professional organisation, which is likely to include defining the brief, applied research and work on deliverables e.g. proposal of actionable insights and/or solutions in a report and/or presentation. Analyses and recommendations will be evidence based, grounded in academic literature and/or based on organisational tools and approaches. Students will

develop communication and applied research skills, increase their awareness of a given sector and benefit from the opportunity to make new professional contacts.

3. Another **suitable experience** which meets specific learning goals consistent with module learning outcomes above and is appropriate for a student at PhD level, to be agreed with TCS, e.g. development of a new business idea or entrepreneurial venture, community learning.

### Timing

The timing of the WBL experience will depend on the student's research schedule and that of the host organisation, so they can fit it around their research commitments. TCS will advertise WBL opportunities developed with industry partners once a year towards the end of Semester 1 for experiences to take place before the end of that academic year.

In some cases, a longer WBL experience may be available with a host organisation, e.g. 3-6 months. In this case, 100 hours of this experience can be used to count towards achieving the required module credits.

### Confidentiality

Clear rules of engagement will be agreed between the student, the host organisation and the Academic Supervisor for the duration of the WBL experience. This will include a confidentiality agreement and the protection of intellectual property associated with research projects. Academic Supervisors are asked to discuss this with students in advance of the WBL experience and to facilitate student participation in an intellectual property training module if required.

### Support available for students

As part of this module, students are supported before, during and after their WBL experience. Academic Supervisors will be involved at all stages to support their student's skills development.

#### 1. Pre-WBL experience:

The Academic Supervisor will facilitate the student to attend relevant TCS sessions including:

- An online session *Preparing for your work-based learning experience*, which will cover work expectations, organisational culture and emotional intelligence. Students will complete the *Intercultural competence and the global workplace* online session, which will assist them to appreciate cultural difference and develop their intercultural competence in a work context.
- An informal group 'coffee chat' will be held with a facilitator from TCS to explore and discuss any queries about the WBL experience and to share this learning with other students.
- Completion of their individual online *Skills Audit and Reflective PDF* and attending other relevant careers sessions such as *Mapping Skills onto Career Options*, *Designing your Career*, *The Art and Craft of a great CV & Cover Letter*, *Presenting your Best Self at Interview* and *Networking with Confidence*.



TCS will ensure that students are aware of the range of job search and application supports that are available, e.g. CV/LinkedIn Clinics, Shortlist.Me video interviews, live practice interviews and one-to-one careers guidance appointments.

## 2. Sourcing the WBL experience

Students are required to proactively source their own WBL experience from across a range of sectors, in academic or non-academic settings. Some students may get connected to suitable experiences through their supervisor or existing research collaborations in their School/Dept. In addition, TCS will work with partner employers and supervisors to develop suitable WBL opportunities. These will be advertised on MyCareer, our online careers portal.

## 3. During WBL experience

TCS will manage the relationship between the student and the host organisation in liaison with the Academic Supervisor. The Supervisor will facilitate the student to undertake the WBL experience as agreed. In the case of international internships, specific arrangements will be put in place to monitor the internship and offer support to the student in cases of emergency.

TCS will hold regular live webinars for students undertaking WBL experiences to address any queries arising and to encourage collaborative learning and support.

Review meetings between the student and the host organisation supervisor will take place during the WBL experience, the purpose of which will be clearly set out. The number of meetings is subject to the duration and type of WBL experience. The student will also keep their Academic Supervisor updated on their progress and will seek their advice where necessary.

## 4. Post-WBL experience

Students and host organisations will give feedback on their WBL experience to TCS, which the student can also share with their Academic Supervisor. TCS will facilitate a face-to-face workshop *Reflecting on your work-based learning experience* to aid critical reflection on skills developed and to assist with making plans going forward.

An *Industry Mentoring Programme (IMPART)* will also be available to students who wish to continue their relationship with host organisations over the longer term. It is also proposed to hold an annual PhD Careers Conference to showcase WBL experiences and support student learning.

## Assessment Details

TCS oversees the assessment of the WBL experience, which includes:

- The **host organisation** giving feedback to the student using the *Industry Partner feedback form*, which will include a feedback matrix with scoring, qualitative feedback, and an overall 'exemplary/satisfactory/room for development.' TCS will also receive evidence of satisfactory completion.

- **Students** will complete a self-assessment, which will involve critical reflection on their WBL experience and skills gained. The assessment rubric will be explained to students in advance. This is a formal assessment, with a 10% contribution towards the final module grade.

Students will also attend a webinar with TCS to address any queries they may have, discuss the assessment rubrics and engage in peer learning. Students may also wish to share and discuss these documents with their Academic Supervisor to identify and progress areas for development.

Students must complete and pass the WBL component to pass this module. Students who do not reach the required standard in the assessment will have the opportunity to resubmit following feedback. Students who fail to satisfactorily complete the WBL component will be given the option to exit with 5 ECTS credits, once they have satisfactorily passed the assessments required for the 5 ECTS Careers and Employability module.

### **What is the benefit to your student participating in the WBL experience?**

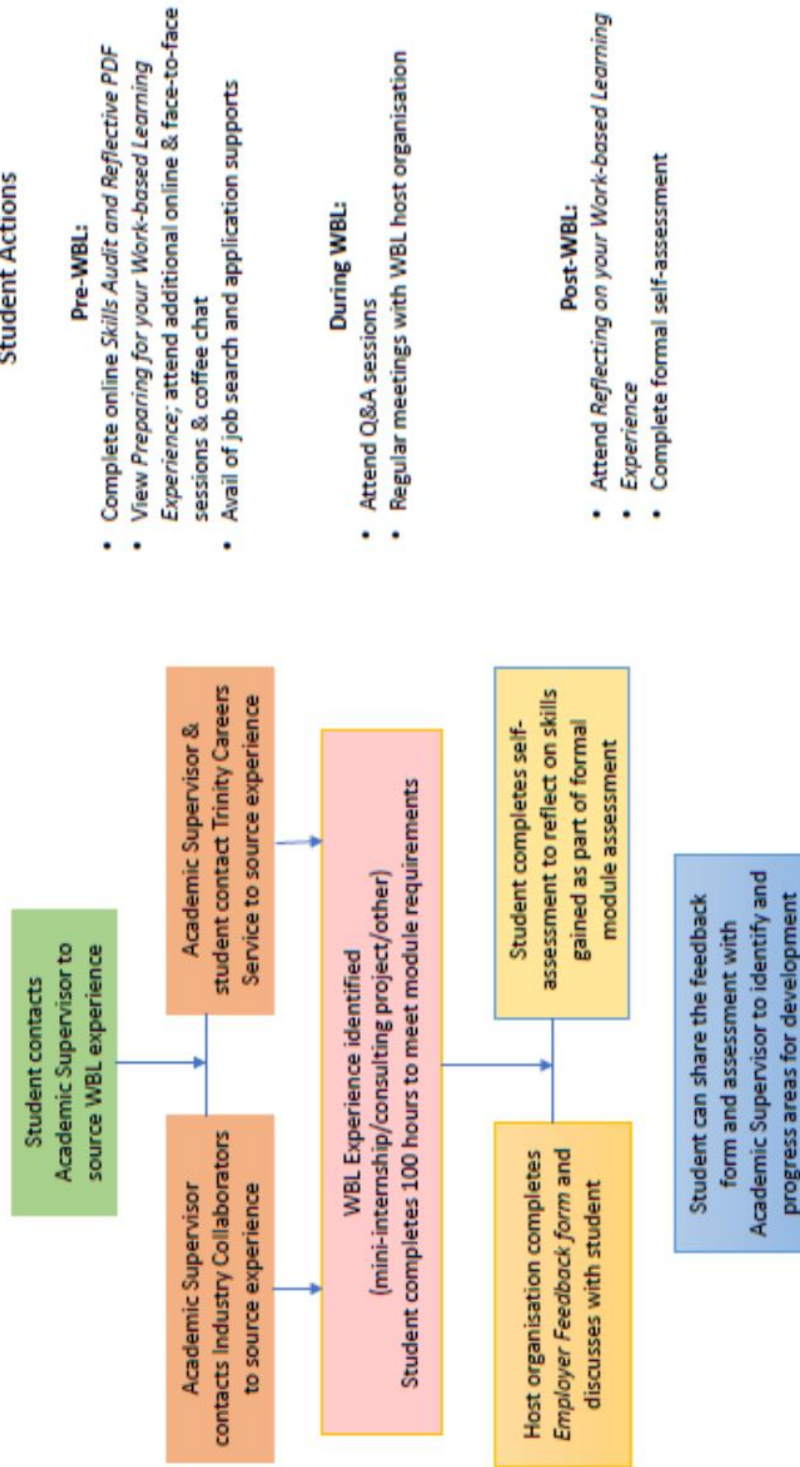
Students will:

- Bring knowledge and skills from their WBL experience back into their day-to-day PhD work.
- Gain insight into a research or professional organisation and develop their awareness of that sector to help with future career decision-making.
- Develop professional and employability skills such as communication, team-working, commercial awareness, problem-solving, applied research and self-management.
- Make new professional contacts and build networks.
- Boost their CV or LinkedIn profile by including their WBL experience.
- Gather examples and evidence from the workplace to use in interview situations.
- Have an opportunity to reflect on their enhanced skillset, their research and what they are looking for in a career.
- Learn how to be flexible.

### **How will students participating in WBL experiences benefit you, as an Academic Supervisor, and your Dept/School?**

- Expanding your networks to new organisations may lead to links and opportunities for guest lecturing, research collaborations, work placements, etc.
- Knowledge of policymaking and business practices gained can be shared with staff and students.
- Create opportunities to access new funding streams, e.g. through knowledge exchange.
- Develop impact case studies to showcase learning and impact.

## Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning (WBL) for PhD students (10 ECTS) WBL Experience Flowchart



Option for student to participate in Industry Mentoring Programme (IMPART)

