



Careers and Employability for PhD students

PhD Student Guide to Work-based Learning Experience

10 ECTS Careers, Employability and Work-based
Learning module for PhD students

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Overview

This guide is an extract from the Student Handbook and gives an overview of Work Based Learning (WBL) experience options, supports and assessment.

A WBL experience is a compulsory part of the 10 ECTS module for PhD students and is a key component of this module.

You will undertake a self-sourced work-based learning experience with a partner organisation of 100 hours in duration. This could include a mini-internship, consulting project or other suitable experience. Some students may get connected to suitable experiences through their Supervisor or existing research collaborations in their School/Department. In addition, TCS will work with industry partners and Supervisors to develop suitable WBL opportunities. These will be advertised on MyCareer, our online careers portal.

The timing of the WBL experience will depend on your research schedule and that of the host organisation, so you can fit it around your research commitments. Trinity Careers Service (TCS) will advertise WBL opportunities developed with industry partners for experiences to take place before the end of that academic year.

TCS also provides a variety of supports to help you to make the most of this opportunity: pre-WBL experience, during the WBL experience and post-WBL experience. There is also an option to participate in an *Industry Mentoring Programme (IMPART)* for those who wish to continue their relationship with industry partners over the longer term.

Table of Contents

1. Value of your Work-based Learning Experience
2. Three types of Work-based Learning Experience
3. Key Learning Outcomes
4. Timing
5. Confidentiality
6. Code of Conduct
7. Supports Available
8. Assessment
9. As a student, how can I make the most of my Work-based Learning Experience?
10. Flowchart of process

1. Value of your Work-based Learning Experience

There are many benefits to you engaging in work-based learning as part of your research degree.

Why should I complete a WBL experience?

- Gain insight into a research or professional organisation and develop your awareness of that sector. This is a great way for you to try out a sector of interest and thus help with future career decision-making.
- Develop professional and employability skills such as communication, team-working, consulting skills, commercial awareness, problem-solving, presentation skills, applied research and self-management. These skills help you to achieve career readiness for future roles of interest.
- Make new professional contacts from whom you will learn and potentially develop more long-term relationships with.
- Boost your CV or LinkedIn profile by including your WBL experience.
- Gather examples and evidence from the workplace to use in interview situations.
- Gives you an opportunity to reflect further on your enhanced skillset, your research and what you are looking for in a career.
- The WBL experience is flexible depending on your schedule and that of the host organisation so you can fit it around your research commitments.

2. Three Types of Work-based Learning Experience

Your work-based learning (WBL) experience is a compulsory part of the 10 ECTS module for PhD students and is a key component of the module.

You will undertake a self-sourced work-based learning experience with a partner organisation of 100 hours in duration.

Three different types of WBL experience will be 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 you 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 you. This includes on-the-job interaction with an assigned supervisor or mentor from the host organisation. You will develop professional skills, increase your 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 you 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. You will develop communication and applied research skills, increase your 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.

3. Key Learning Outcomes of the Work-based Learning Experience

By the end of the WBL experience, you should be able to:

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

4. Timing

The timing of the WBL experience will depend on your research schedule and that of the host organisation, so you can fit it around your research commitments. Trinity Careers Service (TCS) will advertise WBL opportunities developed with industry partners once a year 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.

5. Confidentiality

Clear rules of engagement will be agreed between all parties involved: 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. You are encouraged to discuss this with your Academic Supervisor in advance of the WBL experience and to participate in an intellectual property training module if required.

6. Code of Conduct

It is expected that you will conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times and uphold the same standards of conduct during the WBL experience as is required of you whilst in attendance at Trinity in accordance with student codes of conduct and [Trinity's Dignity and Respect policy](#).

7. Support Available

As part of this module, you will be supported before, during and after your WBL experience. Academic Supervisors will be involved at all stages to support your skills development.

Pre-WBL experience:

Your Academic Supervisor will facilitate you to attend the relevant TCS sessions, including:

- An online session *Preparing for your work-based learning experience*, which will cover work expectations, organisational culture and emotional intelligence. It will also help you to optimise your impact on the experience through clear goal setting. You will complete the *Intercultural competence and the global workplace* online session, which will assist you to appreciate cultural difference and develop your 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 you may have about the WBL experience and to share this learning with other students.
- Completion of your 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*.

You also have access to a range of job search and application supports that are available in TCS e.g. CV/LinkedIn Clinics, Shortlist.Me video interviews, live practice interviews and one-to-one careers guidance appointments.

Sourcing the WBL experience

You will be required to proactively source your own WBL experience from across a range of sectors, in either 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 industry partners and Supervisors to develop suitable WBL opportunities. These will be advertised on MyCareer, our online careers portal.

During WBL experience:

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

TCS will hold regular live webinars to address any queries you may have while undertaking your WBL experience and to encourage collaborative learning and support.

Review meetings with your 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. For example, more review meetings may take place during a mini-internship as you will be engaging in on-the-job interaction with your assigned supervisor.

You should also keep your Academic Supervisor updated on your progress and seek their advice where necessary.

Post-WBL experience:

Participating students and host organisations will give feedback on their WBL experience to TCS. This can also be shared with your 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 industry partners over the longer term. It is also proposed to hold an annual PhD Careers Conference to showcase WBL experiences and support student learning.

8. Assessment of Work-based Learning Experience

Trinity Careers Service will oversee the assessment of the WBL experience, which includes:

1. The host organisation giving feedback to you 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.
2. You will complete a *WBL self-assessment* which will involve critical reflection on your WBL experience and skills gained. This document with prompt questions will focus on key skills gained and to what extent, through completion of your WBL experience. The assessment rubric will be explained to you in advance. This is a formal assessment, with a 10% percentage contribution towards the final module grade.

You may wish to share and discuss these documents with your 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.

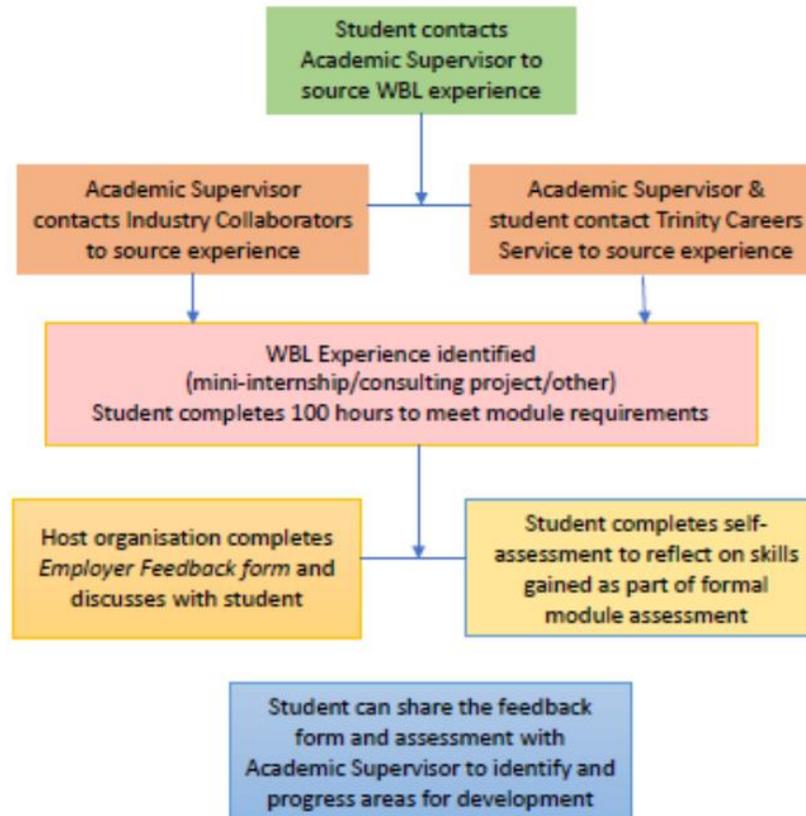
9. As a student, how can I make the most of my Work-based Learning Experience?

- **Set goals together:** work together with your host organisation supervisor at the beginning of the WBL experience to define some SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, Time-related) goals. Make a simple plan for working towards those objectives and review the progress you are making. Be sure to acknowledge what you have achieved.
- **Take time to reflect on your experience:** maintain an attitude of openness to new experiences and reflect on what this might mean for your future career.
- **Participate in feedback:** Host organisations will be asked to provide you with an *Industry Partner feedback form*. Discuss this report with your host organisation supervisor. You may also wish to share and discuss this document with your Academic Supervisor.
- **Access more help if needed:** All Trinity students have access to a dedicated Careers Consultant for their programme in TCS in addition to other student supports such as personal counselling and disability-related issues. See <https://www.tcd.ie/students/supports-services/>. Your Academic Supervisor and School will also support you to undertake the WBL experience and in any relevant discussions.
- **Procedure for making complaints:** In the unlikely event that this occurs, please discuss in confidence with TCS in the first instance.

10. Flowchart

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)

Student Actions

Pre-WBL:

- Complete online *Skills Audit and Reflective PDF*
- View *Preparing for your Work-based Learning Experience*; attend additional online & face-to-face sessions & coffee chat
- Avail of job search and application supports

During WBL:

- Attend Q&A sessions
- Regular meetings with WBL host organisation

Post-WBL:

- Attend *Reflecting on your Work-based Learning Experience*
- Complete formal self-assessment