

Profile of expectations and offers of occupational therapy internship institutions to students from other European countries



Part of the EUPRAC curriculum for the practical training of occupational therapists in the context of internships in other European countries

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There are many reasons for doing an internship abroad, e.g. gaining valuable experience for your own education and career path, acquiring or expanding language skills, intercultural skills and important soft skills.

The success of an internship abroad also depends decisively on the establishment of a suitable partnership between the interns and the companies/institutions that provide an internship.

An important basis for the initiation of a promising partnership is therefore an expectation and offer profile of the internship institution for the assignment of students from other European countries. This should enable potential trainees to make a targeted selection of the internship place. For this purpose, it is necessary to describe the requirements for the trainees and at the same time to clarify which practice-related abilities, skills and competences the interested parties will have after completing the internship. In this context, the profile of the offer should take into account the specified objectives of workplace training curricula for occupational therapists, but also describe the added value that the respective institutions/companies can offer.

1. Profile of expectations of the internship institutions in the field of occupational therapy for the assignment of students/trainees from other European countries

The expectations profile described below is based on the findings of relevant studies and projects on this topic as well as on the results of the survey of practice supervisors in occupational therapy.

The most important focal points can be described in this context:

Specialized knowledge

The internship companies generally expect specialized theoretical knowledge and the ability of the interns to put this into practice.

The focal points described below are to be aligned with the respective level of education of the interns:

- know anatomical, physiological and biological processes,
- understand specific clinical pictures with regard to their aetiology, symptoms and treatment options,
- know occupational therapy media in their complexity, apply them and modify them individually,
- select and apply assessments according to indications,
- place occupational therapy in the context of other social and scientific developments.

In order to prepare for the internships in a targeted manner, however, interested students should submit a portfolio on the current status of their subject-specific knowledge, skills and abilities to the responsible practical supervisors.



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Competences for action

With a view to the objectives and contents of the internships in the field of occupational therapy, the interns should have the following competences:

- observation of procedures and processes in the internship facility, use of the offered observation opportunities,
- communicate appropriately with clients, colleagues or other important contact persons,
- seeking explanations/answers to questions and problems that arise in the course of the placement, working independently with specialist literature,
- listening - e.g. in the context of instruction by the practice supervisors, explanations by the clients etc.,
- reflecting on one's own professional behaviour,
- drawing conclusions from the current theoretical level of training for the practical implementation,
- plan and carry out adapted activities,
- asking questions, professional exchange with the occupational therapists on site,
- acting autonomously (taking into account the internship phases and the level),
- compliance with occupational health and safety and hygiene regulations,
- observance of ergonomic principles.

Soft skills

The practice supervisors rate the following soft skills as essential for completing an internship abroad:

- ability to cooperate, willingness to work in a team of therapists,
- appropriate communication skills,
- flexibility and willingness to change,
- intercultural skills,
- ability to work under pressure and health-consciousness,
- open-mindedness towards new things.

Attitudes

Those interested in an internship in occupational therapy should have at least the following attitudes:

- interest in the occupational therapy profession, professional motivation,
- adherence to all professional ethics,
- an understanding of performance and an appropriate appearance,
- compliance with confidentiality and data protection.



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Technical language and language skills

In addition to the expectations regarding the appropriate use of specialist terms, it is also necessary to have a basic knowledge of the language of the target country when completing an internship abroad. The practice supervisors consider possible language barriers to be an obstacle when working with geriatric or paediatric clients. It is recommended to attend a language course prior to the internship.

Interested students should therefore have the ability to acquire the following competences in this focus area:

- technical language skills, mastery of basic technical terms relevant to practice, also in the language of the target country,
- knowledge of the various communication models and their application in practice,
- basic knowledge of the language of the target country for working with clients,
- at least knowledge of the English language.

In addition, it should be pointed out at this point that the most important information for the supervisors, evaluation forms, attendance lists and other protocols should be translated into the respective language and sent to the supervisors in good time before the start of the internship.

2. Profile of the occupational therapy internship institutions for the assignment of students from other European countries

The aim within the practical training, also in the context of a stay abroad, is to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the theoretical and specialist practical lessons in a targeted patient-related manner. This symbiosis of theory and practice is guaranteed by the qualified cooperation with the internship facilities.

These provide the trainees in detail:

- recognised occupational therapy internships in the following areas: paediatrics, geriatrics, psychiatry, neurology, orthopaedics,
- extensive opportunities for subject-related observation,
- access to specialist literature, in-house assessments, specific treatment methods,
- professional exchange in intra- and interdisciplinary teams,
- qualified professional guidance and support according to the internship phases, with regard to:
 - carrying out client-centred assessment,
 - the creation of individual treatment plans with an explicit statement of treatment goals, taking into account the client's life situation,
 - the practical implementation of the planned therapies,
 - the assessment of the course of therapy.



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- a detailed evaluation of the internship process, a comprehensive and qualified assessment of the performance shown and the growth in competence,
- important information and recommendations for the further career path of the interns.

A large number of institutions also offer their interns support in finding accommodation as well as various opportunities to acquire or expand intercultural skills. Ideally, internships are also available as a tandem model.



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