

Internships

in the Language Industry

Best practices for academic institutions,
internship providers and students



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¹ https://translation.ec.europa.eu/get-involved-european-language-activities-and-initiatives/european-masters-translation_en

² https://translation.ec.europa.eu/languages-and-translation-european-commission/language-industry-expert-group-lind_en

Introduction



Internships are a vital bridge between study and employment. They help students and recent graduates gain hands-on experience, build professional skills and better understand the realities of the language industry.

Supporting graduate employability has always been a core priority for the EMT network, and high-quality internships are one of the most effective ways to prepare future language professionals for working life.

Yet internships are not equally accessible everywhere. Not all academic institutions can integrate them effectively into their programmes, and many language industry stakeholders are still hesitant to offer them. This publication shares best practices based on the experience gained through the EMT network.

The primary aim of this guide is to improve consistency in internship practice across the EMT network and support the EMT goal of promoting skills-based training and stronger links between academia and industry. However, it may also be useful to other translation degree programmes and help promote internships as a practice that benefits everyone involved.

This publication provides practical guidance for:

- **academic institutions**, on how to organise successful internships;
- **internship providers in the language industry**, on why internships are valuable and how to make them beneficial for all;
- **students**, on how to make the most of an internship and maximise its learning and career potential.

You can find additional supporting material³ on the Knowledge Centre on Translation and Interpretation (KCTI), a one-stop shop for sharing knowledge, good practices and practical resources on translation, interpretation and language technologies⁴.

³ <https://knowledge-centre-translation-interpretation.ec.europa.eu/en/content/language-industry#promotion-of-traineeships>

⁴ <https://knowledge-centre-translation-interpretation.ec.europa.eu/en>

Internship types

This publication distinguishes between two types of learning and professional development opportunity, which differ in length and scope. Both can be integrated into the EMT curriculum.

Fully-fledged internship

- Longer duration: 1-3 months
- Participation-based: students take part in ongoing projects and organisational processes under appropriate supervision
- Typically organised at a later stage in the study programme
- Intended to support the development of professional readiness through hands-on engagement, task ownership and continuous learning
- May also help providers build a pool of future talent
- Requires clear learning outcomes, regular guidance and greater organisational capacity
- Suitable for providers able to offer a structured working environment

Observational internship

- Shorter duration: up to one week
- Insight-oriented: students familiarise themselves with the professional environment
- Typically organised during the first months of a study programme
- Intended to expose students to workflows, tools and decision-making processes at an early stage, helping them understand the nature of the work and identify possible career paths within the profession
- Low operational impact, with clearly defined observation goals and a limited need for supervision
- Suitable for a wide range of providers and students

Best practices for academic institutions



Internship implementation varies considerably across EMT programmes and countries and is shaped by differing curricular structures and national legal frameworks. Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all model, this section sets out nine best practices intended to inform curriculum development and support meaningful and effective internship experiences.

Best practices 1-5 are considered guidelines that all EMT programmes should be able to implement. Best practices 6-9 are recommendations to be implemented where possible.

1. Inclusion in EMT curricula

Internships – fully-fledged, observational or both – should be an integral part of every EMT curriculum, regardless of programme duration.

Given their higher training value, fully-fledged internships are the preferred option for EMT programmes. However, these programmes operate within different legal frameworks and vary in duration, and longer internships may be particularly difficult to accommodate in a one-year programme. In such cases, observational internships may serve as an alternative or complementary option in curriculum design.

If a curriculum does not include a fully-fledged internship, it should include at least an observational internship. Internships should not be replaced by other curricular or extracurricular activities, unless national laws or regulations prevent them from being included as a standard component of the programme.

2. Format

Internships can be undertaken in person, remotely or in a hybrid format.

3. Timing

The timing of an internship within the study programme may vary.

- Observational internships should take place at an early stage, as their primary purpose is to familiarise students with the profession and help them make informed decisions about their study path.
- Fully-fledged internships should take place at a later stage, preferably during the final semester. By this point, students are better prepared for the internship experience, which can also help ease the transition from academic study to the labour market.

4. Academic supervision

A member of academic staff should be responsible for supervising and supporting internships.

Their responsibilities may include:

- establishing and maintaining contact with the language industry and potential internship providers;

- advising and supporting students in choosing and applying for an internship;
- providing opportunities for interns and internship providers to give feedback during and after the internship.

Materials for academic internship supervisors, are available on the KCTI⁵.

5. Credit for fully-fledged internships

Fully-fledged internships should carry credit points under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)⁶.

6. Credit for observational internships

Observational internships may be recognised as micro-credentials and awarded ECTS credit points.

7. Duration

- Observational internships: up to one week
- Fully-fledged internships:
 - Minimum duration: four full-time weeks (approximately 150 working hours)
This is the average duration across EMT programmes and is considered feasible throughout the network.
 - Optimal duration: at least two months (approximately 300 working hours)
This is the duration that the language industry considers optimal for achieving meaningful professional learning outcomes.

8. Feedback

A sustainable electronic feedback system should be made available to everyone involved – internship providers, academic supervisors and students – both during and after the internship.

9. Information exchange

Academic institutions should maintain regular exchanges of information with local internship providers.

⁵ <https://knowledge-centre-translation-interpretation.ec.europa.eu/en/content/language-industry#promotion-of-traineeships>.

⁶ ECTS allows credit earned at one higher education institution to count towards a qualification pursued at another. Find out more: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>.

Best practices for internship providers



For language industry stakeholders, internships can be a valuable way to identify and attract future talent. However, employers may face challenges in finding suitable candidates and meeting administrative requirements. For some businesses, particularly smaller ones, these challenges can appear to outweigh the benefits. This section outlines how internships can create value for both employers and students, and offers practical guidance on organising them effectively.

How to organise a successful internship

1. Be mindful of ethical considerations

- Design internships as genuine learning experiences in which students can develop professional skills and gain insight into language industry standards.
- Treat interns as emerging professionals whose contribution is recognised within an educational framework, not as substitutes for regular staff.
- Expect interns to uphold professional and ethical principles by maintaining confidentiality, meeting deadlines and demonstrating integrity in their work.

2. Define the purpose

- Start by defining the scope of the internship.
- Clarify whether the aim is to select and train potential employees, support ongoing projects, contribute to research, or a combination of these.
- Set a clear objective so that you can design tasks that are both achievable and meaningful.

3. Make the internship efficient

- Create internship tasks that give interns a meaningful learning experience without creating too much additional work for your staff. This balance is essential if the internship is to benefit both sides.
- Plan manageable, well-scoped assignments that integrate naturally into ongoing workflows rather than sitting outside them.

4. Choose one main coordinator

- If possible, designate a coordinator to oversee the intern's progress, approve tasks, provide feedback and act as a point of contact for the academic institution.
- The designated coordinator should be responsible for monitoring the overall process and ensuring consistency throughout the internship, even where several mentors support the intern in specific areas.

- The coordinator's role should include:
 - introducing the intern to the working environment and explaining company rules and procedures, such as leave and absences, working hours and breaks;
 - acting as the intern's line manager and dealing with all related administrative tasks;
 - scheduling short check-ins with the intern to identify issues early and support progress.

5. Cover the legal and administrative basics

- Review the legal and administrative requirements to make sure your internship arrangements comply with local labour and education laws.
- Bear in mind the requirements relating to duration, insurance, confidentiality, working hours and data protection.

6. Start with a fair and realistic entry check

- Make sure your requirements and those of the EMT programme are aligned on the purpose of the internship and the intern's role.
- Set out the required skills in an internship notice modelled on a real vacancy notice and share it with the relevant academic institutions.
- Include an interview stage to mirror a real employment procedure.
- Assess how interns think, not just what they produce. This will help you identify potential and readiness to learn, which are the most important qualities for long-term professional growth.
- Be fair and realistic when designing entry assessments and day-to-day tasks.
- Offer both remote and on-site participation to make opportunities accessible and inclusive.

7. Welcome and onboard interns

- Begin by introducing interns to your policies, organisational structure, communication flow, tools and quality standards to foster a sense of belonging and integration.
- Provide access to style guides, terminology resources and key project instructions.
- Offer a short refresher on tools to help interns work efficiently and follow your conventions from the start. Clear onboarding reduces uncertainty and accelerates learning.

8. Support learning from real work assignments

- Use real project tasks to encourage interns to apply their skills.
- Encourage them to analyse typical phrasing and stylistic choices in the assignment, familiarise themselves with the essential terminology and understand tone and consistency requirements.

9. Allow interns to work on real translation projects

- Give interns opportunities to work on real translation projects under supervision. This exposes them to authentic workflows, collaboration with experienced professionals and real deadlines.
- Give them the chance to read and reflect on existing translations. This helps them to internalise quality standards and become familiar with every aspect of the project.
- Provide ongoing constructive feedback to help interns understand expectations and improve their performance.

10. Close the feedback loop

- Hold a short debriefing meeting with the intern at the end of the internship to reflect on what they have learned, gather feedback and discuss possible future collaboration.

What's in it for you?

Talent acquisition

- Early access: connect with talented recent graduates before they start looking for a job in the language industry.
- Streamlined recruitment: hire former interns who are already familiar with your working environment and methods.
- Reduced recruitment risk: assess potential future employees on the job, in a realistic setting, with training already given ahead of recruitment.
- Visibility: make your organisation known to EMT graduates as an appealing place to work.

Workforce support: capacity, morale and staff development

- Capacity: interns can help strengthen team capacity during peak periods. If they are allocated clearly defined tasks that align with their skills and development goals, interns can contribute to operational delivery in a way that complements the work of experienced staff, supports workflow efficiency and helps teams respond more effectively to changing business demands.
- Morale: interns can bring fresh energy and enthusiasm to the entire team.
- Staff development: training and supervising interns gives staff an opportunity to develop their management and leadership skills.

Fresh ideas and new knowledge

- Innovation: interns can challenge established processes, bring new ideas, perspectives and creativity to the workplace and contribute to innovation.
- Digital natives: interns are usually digitally savvy and have extensive knowledge of the latest tech and platforms.
- Research: interns are often ideal candidates for research tasks that usually get pushed to the bottom of an organisation's to-do list until there is a lull in production work.
- Experimentation: try out new roles or ideas with interns before you commit to them.

Corporate social responsibility

Bridge the gap between academia and industry

Internships complement formal education with practical, real-world experience. By sharing feedback on emerging needs and sought-after skills, providers help prepare future professionals more effectively.

Build strong networks with EMT programmes

Collaboration with academic institutions can benefit providers, especially in scenarios where research is needed.

Brand reputation

Offering internships provides an opportunity for positive PR, showing that the provider invests in young language professionals.

Industry growth

Supporting the development of young language professionals helps to sustain and grow the language industry.

A practical guide for students ●●●



Internships are recommended as a core component of EMT programmes. They help bridge the gap between academic training and the expectations of employers in the language industry.

Internships allow you to:

- gain experience of real professional environments – see how translation and language services work in practice and develop a deeper, first-hand understanding of industry roles, workflows and tools, including AI-assisted tools;
- develop professional skills and confidence – including key competences such as time management, problem-solving and responding to feedback;
- build contacts and professional networks – helping you navigate the world of work after graduation;
- improve your employability – by gaining valuable experience that you can, and should, include in your CV.

Internships also benefit employers – they gain up-to-date academic knowledge and fresh perspectives, and can identify potential future recruits.

Advice for a successful internship

- Start looking early.
- Be open to different types of provider.
- Focus on learning and developing interpersonal skills, not just on completing tasks.
- Maintain professional communication.
- Use the internship to build your professional network.



Internship options

Internships can be undertaken in person, remotely or in a hybrid format. There are two types:

Observational internship

Duration: Up to one week

Typical timing: Early in the study programme

Purpose:

- Offers an opportunity for learning and orientation, rather than focusing on productivity.
- Gives you early insight into real professional contexts and practices. This can help you identify suitable career paths and make informed decisions about what to specialise in during your EMT programme and future internships.

Typical activities:

- Observe professional translators or other language professionals at work.
- Learn about workflows and tools without using them directly.
- Attend meetings or project discussions.

Fully-fledged internship

Duration: Usually 1-3 months

A minimum of four full-time weeks (about 150 hours) is recommended for meaningful experience, although around 300 hours is considered optimal.

Typical timing: Later in the study programme, often in the final semester

Purpose:

- Enables you to develop professional readiness through active participation in real work environments.
- Consolidates the skills you have acquired during your studies by allowing you to take responsibility for tasks, receive feedback from professionals and work under real conditions.
- Supports your transition into the labour market by helping you build a professional profile.
- May lead to future job opportunities.

Typical activities:

- Translate, revise and proofread texts in one or more subject areas.
- Use CAT tools, machine translation, AI-assisted tools and other language technologies in real workflows.
- Manage terminology and contribute to glossaries or termbases.
- Support project management tasks and requirements, such as preparing files, tracking progress and meeting deadlines.
- Participate in quality assurance processes.
- Contribute to technology-related tasks, such as testing tools, preparing datasets and supporting automation workflows.

Find out more about internships in your EMT programme

Each EMT programme designates an academic internship supervisor to work with interns throughout the process.

This person typically:

- maintains contact with internship providers;
- helps you identify suitable internship opportunities;
- advises you during the application process;
- supports you during the internship.

Some of these responsibilities may be shared between different people. Identify the right contact(s) and get in touch with them early in your planning.

Check with your supervisor whether your internship will earn you credit points under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and count towards your academic workload.



Fully-fledged internship: step-by-step

1

Start early

Begin planning your internship several months in advance, bearing in mind your academic institution's regulations and deadlines, especially if the internship will take place in your final semester. Clarify your interests, possible specialisations and preferred work environment (company, institution/organisation, freelance), and specify whether you prefer a remote or on-site experience.



2

Contact your internship supervisor

Your supervisor can suggest suitable providers, tell you about existing partnerships and guide you on requirements, deadlines and possible financial support.

3

Identify potential internship providers

Look for opportunities with translation agencies, language service providers, EU institutions, international organisations, government bodies, NGOs, companies with translation or localisation departments, freelance professionals and university departments.

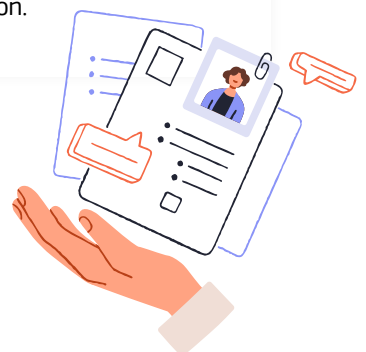
Prioritise organisations that offer:

- clear tasks and learning opportunities;
- professional supervision;
- exposure to real industry practices.

4

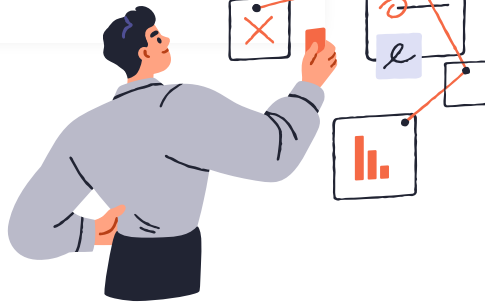
Prepare your application

Typical application materials include a CV and a motivation letter, and sometimes a sample or portfolio of previous work (e.g. translations or other relevant projects you completed during your studies). You may be asked for tax information and other types of administrative/legal documentation.



5 Apply and follow up

Submit applications early, keep track of deadlines, and follow up politely if needed. Inform your internship supervisor once you receive an offer.

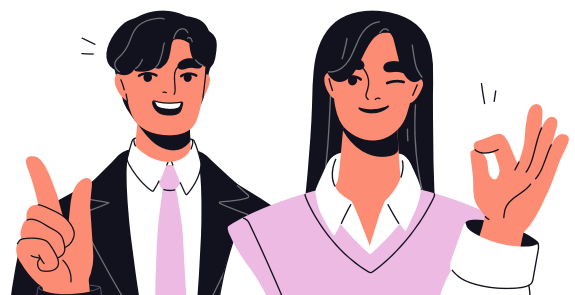


6 During the internship

Take an active role in your learning: ask questions, request feedback and take notes on workflows, tools and professional practices. Reflect on the strategies you use, the difficulties you encounter, the solutions you find and the sources you consult. Record these reflections regularly, for example daily or weekly.

7 After the internship

Complete any required outputs, e.g. an internship report, feedback form or presentation. These give you an opportunity to reflect on your experience and can help improve internship opportunities for future students. Before your internship ends, consider asking for a letter of recommendation, particularly if you would like to highlight the experience in future applications.



A well-chosen internship can be one of the most valuable experiences of your EMT programme and a major step towards your future career.

10 tips from former EMT interns

1. Keep an open mind about what counts as a 'translation internship'

Not all valuable internships take place in translation agencies or involve translation alone. Opportunities in localisation, language technologies, artificial intelligence, project management, terminology, communication, healthcare or public administration can help you develop important professional competences and discover new career paths.

2. It's okay not to know everything (but be prepared to learn!)

It is normal to feel uncertain at the beginning. During the first days or weeks, you may not fully understand the project, the tools, the workflows or even your role. Remember that you are there to learn, not because you are expected to know everything from the outset.

3. Ask questions and seek feedback

One of the best ways to learn is to ask questions, even when they seem obvious. Ask for feedback regularly and use it to improve. Most internship providers expect interns to seek clarification when they need it.

4. Be confident, stay curious

Trust the skills and knowledge you have acquired during your studies but be ready to learn new methods and approaches. Professional practice may differ from what you encountered in your academic experience, and flexibility is an important part of professional growth.

5. Take initiative

Do not limit yourself to completing only the tasks assigned to you. Volunteer for new activities, share ideas, ask to observe different aspects of the organisation, and show genuine interest in the work being done. Initiative is often noticed and appreciated.

6. Accept mistakes as part of the process

Internships are learning experiences. Mistakes will happen, especially at the beginning. What matters is your willingness to learn from them, ask for help when necessary and keep improving.

7. Think carefully about practical and financial aspects

Before accepting an internship, consider issues such as funding, accommodation, travel and living expenses. If the internship requires you to relocate, look into funding opportunities such as Erasmus+⁷ as early as possible. Funding schemes can provide valuable financial support and make opportunities abroad more accessible.

8. Pay attention to the working environment

An internship gives you an opportunity to assess whether a particular company/organisation, role or sector is right for you. From the interview onwards, pay attention to how people communicate, whether expectations are realistic, and how interns are treated. A good internship should challenge you and help you grow, but it should also provide support when you need it. If something is not working, do not hesitate to speak up and ask for help.

9. Build relationships and your professional network

Take the opportunity to get to know colleagues, supervisors and other professionals. Many students consider the contacts they make during an internship to be one of its most valuable outcomes.

10. Use the experience to reflect on your future

An internship can help you discover not only what you enjoy doing, but also what you do not. You may realise that a particular company/organisation, role, sector or way of working is not right for you, and that is valuable information too. Use the experience to reflect on the type of work you would like to do, the environment you thrive in, and the skills you would like to develop further. Even if an internship does not lead directly to a job, it can help you make more informed decisions about your future career.

⁷ https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/education/traineeships/financial/index_en.htm

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