A photograph of a person's hand holding a black smartphone over a dark wooden table. In the background, a silver laptop is open, and a tablet lies flat on the table. The tablet screen displays an article titled "How to start a Cafe Business?" with a picture of a coffee cup and some text. A person's arm and hand are visible in the upper right, resting near the laptop. A glass of coffee and a sugar dispenser are also on the table.

Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit

learn to work

Supporting Apprenticeships between
Professional Higher Education and
Small and Medium Enterprises

Technical Fiche

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Scope

Apprenticeships exist all over the world as a form of education and most countries have different types of them, the most common being:

1

Those offered through educational institutions in conjunction with studies – sometimes also known as Curricular Apprenticeships. These usually take place during the study programme and the responsibility for them is shared between the educational institution and the partner company that provides the placement; and

Those offered directly by companies, not in conjunction with educational organizations – sometimes also known as Professional Apprenticeships or internships. These usually take place after the study programme has finished or at any moment with no relation with previous academic studies of the Apprentice. The responsibility for these apprenticeships is solely of the companies that offer them.

2

Only the first type follows under the scope of this Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit, which focus all criteria and requirement on both PHEIs and the SMEs and the relationship of both with each other and with the apprentices.

Figure 1 - Types of Apprenticeships

Nature and Structure of the Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit

The Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit follows a quality management system style approach. A management system can be described as “a set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organization to establish policies and objectives, and processes to achieve those objectives” (ISO, 2015). These elements can address a single discipline - such as quality, as in this case - or multiple disciplines at once, such as quality and environment or quality, environment and social responsibility, among others, depending on what thematic areas the organization which to manage with a systematic approach.

Management systems can be more or less complex depending on the organization's context. For some organizations such as SMEs, it may simply mean having a strong leadership, by providing a clear definition of what is expected from each individual employee and how they contribute to the organization's overall objectives, without the need for extensive documentation. However, more complex operations, in highly regulated sectors, such as an educational context, may need extensive documentation and control, to fulfil their legal obligations and meet their organizational objectives (ISO, no date).

To this end, a quality management system can be a very powerful tool to support the apprenticeships provided in cooperation between PHEIs and SMEs. And while the Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit is not a management system standard per se, it was developed to be used as a starting point, which can promote their future adoption by PHEIs and SMEs. It works in a bi-directional way: outside-in, by organizing and controlling the apprenticeship-related processes and communications of both

organizations, which facilitate the employees' understanding of their roles, improving their performance and making daily operations more efficient; and inside-out, by providing quality assurance to the students and other beneficiaries of the apprenticeships provided, bringing market trust and recognition for all parts.

The Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit is composed by:

- an introduction
- a checklist
- a glossary
- Examples of tables to record evidences and suggested actions

These documents combined provide, as mentioned, a hands-on, easy-to-use management tool for PHEIs and SMEs.

Relation to the EU's Proposal for a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

The EU's Proposal for a Framework for Effective and Quality Apprenticeships (European Commission, 2017) calls for Quality Assurance processes to be put in place for apprenticeships. It further sets out seven criteria for quality apprenticeships, namely a:

- written contract
- learning outcomes
- workplace component
- pay and/or compensation
- social protection
- work, health and safety conditions

This document provides such a quality framework, whose implementation would meet and go beyond the requirements set in these seven criteria.

Purpose of the Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit

The Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit was designed as a flexible management tool, to be used in a variety of different situations with different purposes:

- A guideline for PHEIs and SMEs to set up the basis for a future apprenticeship management system;
- A self-assessment checklist for PHEIs and SMEs to diagnose their spontaneous preparedness to manage apprenticeships in a systematic way;
- A self-assessment checklist for PHEIs and SMEs to identify areas of improvement in their apprenticeship-related processes;
- A checklist to support Peer-Review initiatives;
- A checklist to support external second party audits (PHEIs to SMEs);
- A checklist to support external third party audits (by a certification body).

How to use the Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit?

It is very simple: start by carefully reading the Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit, to assure the correct understanding of the processes, criteria and requirements. Then use the Apprenticeship Quality Checklist to compare the Apprenticeship Quality requirements with the current reality of your organization and record the results using the forms provided. This will give you with an evidence-based picture of your current situation and enable continual improvement.

We wish you excellent Apprenticeship Quality Checks!

Apprenticeship Quality Checklist for PHEI

PROCESS

1. Setting the Learning Objectives of the Overall Programme

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to translate in a systematic and transparent way, the requirements of stakeholders in what regards the competences to be acquired in a given apprenticeship and the method of assess its acquisition.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

1.1	Involvement of Stakeholders in Designing Learning Objectives	1.1 Is there a documented procedure to identify relevant stakeholders?					
		1.2 Does the procedure specify:					
		a) the method of consultation?					
		b) the frequency of consultation?					
		c) how to keep records of the consultation?					
		d) how to keep documented information on actions taken on stakeholders' feedback?					
1.2	Definition of SMART Learning Objectives	1.2.1 Is there a documented procedure on Learning Objectives Design for Apprenticeships, specifying:					
		a) what is the needed competence described in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy?					
		b) the criteria to assess competence acquisition?

PROCESS

1. Setting the Learning Objectives of the Overall Programme

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to translate in a systematic and transparent way, the requirements of stakeholders in what regards the competences to be acquired in a given apprenticeship and the method of assess its acquisition.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

1.2

Definition
of SMART
Learning
Objectives

1.2.2 Is there a documented procedure on Integration of Stakeholders' Relevant Requirements?

1.3

Transparency

1.3.1 Are the below procedures published and assessable to relevant stakeholders?

a) procedure on Identification of Stakeholders and their Relevant Requirements;

b) procedure on Learning Objectives design for Apprenticeships;

c) procedure on Integration of Stakeholders Relevant Requirements;

PROCESS

2. Identifying and Recruiting Placements - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assure placement positions are selected using a systematic and transparent approach based on pre-established requirements and on a mutually beneficial relationship between the PHEIs and the SMEs, including the provision of capacity-building support to the later.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

2.1

Definition of
Standards for
Placements

2.1.1 Is there a standard for apprenticeships defining:

a) learning objectives?

b) conditions of employment?

c) condition of mentoring and/or supervision?

d) the apprenticeship workflow, including timelines, responsibilities, rights and reporting requirements?

2.2

Identification
(finding) of
Placement-
Positions

2.2.1 Is there an institutional coordinator for placement nominated?

2.2.2 Is there a Marketing and/or Advertising Strategy for placements, including:

a) Strategy to Mobilise Staff?

b) Strategy to Mobilise students?

PROCESS

2. Identifying and Recruiting Placements - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assure placement positions are selected using a systematic and transparent approach based on pre-established requirements and on a mutually beneficial relationship between the PHEIs and the SMEs, including the provision of capacity-building support to the later.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

2.2

Identification
(finding) of
Placement-
Positions

c) Strategy to Mobilise employer's representatives?

d) Strategy to recruit employers?

2.3

Capacity
building for
SMEs

2.3.1 Does the PHEI published introductory information on apprenticeships online?

2.3.2 Does the introductory information include a Frequent Asked Question (FAQ) or Knowledge Database?

2.3.3 Does the PHEI organizes recruitment and/or information events for SMEs?

2.3.4 Does the PHEI provide educational resources for SMEs?

PROCESS

2. Identifying and Recruiting Placements - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assure placement positions are selected using a systematic and transparent approach based on pre-established requirements and on a mutually beneficial relationship between the PHEIs and the SMEs, including the provision of capacity-building support to the later.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

2.4

System for
Management
of Placement-
Supply

2.4.1 Does the PHEI
keeps an internal
database of placements?

2.4.2 Is there an established
policy for who can access
and edit which part
of the database?

2.4.3 Is there a procedure for
maintaining and updating the
database, including:

a) relevant metadata from the
learning agreement?

b) all evaluation data linked to
the placement?

c) the history of
apprentices assigned to the
placement?

2.5

Security

2.5.1 Is there an
established policy for securing
and managing personally
identifiable information?

A set of interrelated activities to assure the establishment of mutually beneficial agreements to all parts involved.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

e) identification of supervisors and/or mentors, including their roles and responsibilities?

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of squares. The first four columns each contain a vertical stack of four squares, alternating between orange and light gray. The fifth column contains a single, larger orange square.

PROCESS

3. Negotiating the Agreement - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assure the establishment of mutually beneficial agreements to all parts involved.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

3.1

Drafting the Agreement

f) identification of student responsibilities, including student reporting?

g) determination of modes of communication?

h) determination of methods of assessment?

i) description of monitoring arrangements?

j) Description of issues' resolution mechanism, including conflicts?

k) description of forms of certification and/or recognition, for students, for the SME and for the PHEI?

3.2

Matching Students to Placements

3.2.1 Is there a documented list of suitable available placements?

3.2.2 Has the PHEI implemented an information programme for students, including:

a) the availability of informational material for students?

PROCESS

3. Negotiating the Agreement - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assure the establishment of mutually beneficial agreements to all parts involved.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

3.2

Matching
Students to
Placements

b) the organization of informational sessions for students?

c) the availability of specialised consultation services for students?

3.2.3 Is there a documented procedure to identify students' needs and expectations?

3.2.4 Is there a documented procedures for selecting students to match specific profiles?

PROCESS

4. Monitoring of Apprenticeships - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to control the Apprenticeship at different stages while providing support to all parts involved and assuring that any deviation is detected and corrected so results are achieved as planned.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

4.1

Monitoring of SMEs Activities

4.1.1 Has the PHEI appointed a supervisor for each apprenticeship?

4.1.2 Is there an documented communication with SMEs' schedule, identifying the moments for correspondence and visits?

4.1.3 Is there a documented procedure on how to conduct a visit, including requirements for:

a) planning (how, who and communicated to whom)?

b) collecting of evidence (means and tools)?

c) reporting (how, when and to whom)?

4.2

Monitoring of Student Activities

4.2.1 Is there a documented communication with students' schedule?

4.2.2. Is there a procedure for student to report progress, specifying:

a) the information to be reported (what)?

4. Monitoring of Apprenticeships - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to control the Apprenticeship at different stages while providing support to all parts involved and assuring that any deviation is detected and corrected so results are achieved as planned.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

4.2	Monitoring of SMEs Activities	b) frequency of reporting (when)?				
4.3	User Support and Issue Resolution	c) report method (how)?				
		d) report channel (to whom)?				
		4.3.1 Has the PHEI established a Helpdesk (number to call, central email)?				
4.4	Evaluation of Apprenticeships	4.3.2 Is there a documented procedure for contacting the PHEI's Helpdesk?				
		4.3.3 Is there a documented procedure for promoting the PHEI's Helpdesk?				
		4.3.4 Is there a documented procedure for resolution of issues including specifications to deal with urgent critical issues?				
4.4	Evaluation of Apprenticeships	4.4.1 Is there a documented procedure for the PHEI to evaluate the SMEs and its mentors, including:

4. Monitoring of Apprenticeships - PHEIs

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to control the Apprenticeship at different stages while providing support to all parts involved and assuring that any deviation is detected and corrected so results are achieved as planned.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

4.4

Evaluation of Apprenticeships

a) how to collect input form students;					
b) how to collect input from the SMEs?					
c) which questionnaire(s) shall be used?					
d) which analysis methodology shall be used?					
e) how to record and report potential corrective and/or improvement actions identified?					
f) what mechanism of transparency shall be used?

PROCESS

5. Assessment of Apprenticeships

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assess, grade and certify the acquisition of competences by the Apprentices in a systematic and transparent way.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

5.1 Assessment design	5.1.1 Does the PHEI have an established template for the assessment report to be filled in by the students?					
	5.1.2 Does the PHEI have an established a template for assessment of student progress to be filled in by the SMEs?					
	5.1.3 Does the PHEI have established rules for assessment?					
	5.1.4 Are those rules published?					
5.2 Performing and Monitoring the Assessment	5.2.2 Is there a documented procedure for collecting assessment data, including responsibilities and timelines?					
	5.2.3 Is there a documented procedure for data security including requirements for document traceability, anti-tampering and privacy?					
5.3 Grading	5.3.1 Has the PHEI established a grading system, including a documented:

PROCESS

5. Assessment of Apprenticeships

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assess, grade and certify the acquisition of competences by the Apprentices in a systematic and transparent way.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

5.3

Grading

5.1.3 Does the PHE have established rules for assessment?

a) list of grades?

b) description of grades?

c) procedure for determination of grades?

d) template to record the grades attributed?

5.4.1 Has the PHEI established a credit awarding system?

a) does the system includes a documented procedure for allocation of transferable credit?

b) does the system includes a documented model for the certificate to be used?

5.4

Certification

5. Assessment of Apprenticeships

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assess, grade and certify the acquisition of competences by the Apprentices in a systematic and transparent way.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

5.4

Certification

c) does the system includes a documented model for any supplemental information to the certificate (diploma supplement, Europass, etc)?

d) does the system includes a documented procedure to keep records of awarded certificates?

e) does the system includes a documented procedure to

5.5

Complaints and Appeals

5.5.1 Has the PHEI established a complaints and appeals system?

a) does the system includes documented information of channels and contact points?

b) does the system includes documented templates to submit them?

c) does the system includes documented procedures with rules to:

c.1) define the scope of complaints and appeals?

5. Assessment of Apprenticeships

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assess, grade and certify the acquisition of competences by the Apprentices in a systematic and transparent way.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

5.5

Complaints
and Appeals

c.2) investigate complaints and appeals affecting the PHEI?)?

c.3) investigate complaints and appeals affecting SMEs?

c.4) decide on the complaint/appeal?

d) information on the timeline to give feedback on the complaints and appeals to their authors?

Apprenticeship Quality Checklist for SME

1

Creating Positions for Apprentices

PROCESS

1. Creating Positions for Apprentices

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to prepare the SME to receive Apprentices in a planned and controlled way, including risk management and to assure the maximum return on investment.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

1.1

Preparation for the Apprenticeship

1.1.1 Has the SME systematized the inclusion of the apprenticeship positions in the company's structure (e.g through an organigram, job description, etc)?

1.1.2 Does the SME have a financial plan and/or allocation for apprenticeships

a) does the financial plan has specific resource allocation for mentors?

b) does the financial plan has specific resource allocation for apprentices?

c) does the financial plan has specific resource allocation for health and safety infrastructure?

1.1.3) 3.2.1 Does the SME have a procedure to register apprenticeships with all social benefits?

a) Does the social benefits include insurance?

1.1.4 Does the SME provide a model contract defining the work conditions?

PROCESS

1. Creating Positions for Apprentices

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to prepare the SME to receive Apprentices in a planned and controlled way, including risk management and to assure the maximum return on investment.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

1.1	Preparation for the Apprenticeship	1.1.5 Does the SME have a Risk Management Plan including: a) identification of risks?					
		b) analysis of the severity of their consequences?					
		c) analysis of the likelihood of their occurrence?					
		d) proposed measures to avoid those risks?					
1.2	Identifying Mentors	1.2.1 Does the SME have a documented procedure for Selecting Mentors, including: a) their technical competence profile?					
		b) their basic pedagogic mentorship skills?					
		c) minimum work experience?					
		1.2.2 Does the SME have a procedure for Training Mentors?					

2

Negotiating the Agreement

PROCESS

2. Negotiating the Agreement

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to assure the establishment of mutually beneficial agreements to all parts involved.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

2.1

Drafting the Agreement

2.1.1 Has the SME defined the approval workflow for the contract, including authorities to develop, review and approve which documents at which stages?

2.2

Matching Students with Placements

2.2.1 Has the SME established a documented procedure for describing the placement and its conditions to students and PHEIs?

2.2.2 Has the SME established a documented procedure for personally presenting the placement to nominated students?

2.2.3 Does the SME have a procedure for selecting apprentices?

3

Managing the Apprenticeship

PROCESS

3. Managing the Apprenticeship

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to perform and control the Apprenticeship at different stages inside the SME while assuring that any deviation is detected and corrected so results are achieved as planned.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

3.1

Management

3.1.1 Has the SME assigned to a member of their staff the responsibility for communication with the PHEI related to the Apprenticeship?

3.2

Introduction

3.2.2 Has the SME documented a plan on what the Mentor will do with each Apprentice?

a) Does the plan include the definition of indicators of each Apprentice's progress?

3.2.3 Does the SME have a procedure to introduce the SME to each Apprentice?

3.2.4 Does the SME have a procedure to introduce each Apprentice to their staff?

3.2.5 Does the SME have a documented procedure for Mentorship, specifying:
a) the periodic teaching, training and/or demonstration sessions to be held by the Mentor?

b) the periodic feedback and evaluation activities?

c) the formal review meetings, its participants and timeline?

PROCESS

3. Managing the Apprenticeship

PROCESS SCOPE

A set of interrelated activities to perform and control the Apprenticeship at different stages inside the SME while assuring that any deviation is detected and corrected so results are achieved as planned.

CRITERIA

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE (no.)

EVALUATION GRID

SUGGESTED ACTIONS (no.)

3.3

Mentoring

3.3.1 Has the SME established a plan for each placement, including:
a) general objective of the placement?

b) set of specifics task with clear outcomes to achieve that objective?

3.3.2 Does the SME have a documented procedure for dealing with internal (Staff) complaints and suggestions?

3.3.3 Does the SME have a documented procedure for dealing with external (PHEIs, Apprentices) complaints and suggestions?

3.4.1 Does the SME have a documented procedure to monitor the performance of the overall apprenticeship programme (including all the previous steps)?

3.4

Evaluation

Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit – Evidences List

NO.	Description of the evidence

Apprenticeship Quality Toolkit – Suggested Actions

NO.	Suggested Actions

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