

Practicum guide for teacher mentors in schools

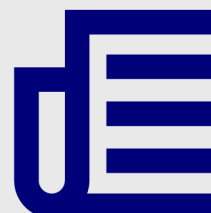
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Index

Introduction	4
1. What is the Practicum?	5
2. What are the functions of the main agents involved in the Practicum?	6
3. How is communication carried out between the educational institution's mentoring faculty and the university?	7
4. What activities should the students carry out with the support of the educational institutions' mentors?	8
4.1. Work plan	8
4.2. Challenge 3. Knowledge of the practical training center.....	8
4.3. Challenge 5. Design of the learning scenario.....	8
4.4. Challenge 6. Final practical training report.....	9
4.5. Collaboration in the development of the Master's Final Project.....	9
5. How are the students assessed?	10

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to inform the teaching mentors of the practical training centers about the main aspects that define the practices of the master's degree in Teacher Education for Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, Vocational Training and Language Teaching at the UOC. The guide aims to help in the understanding of the academic stage in which the students find themselves and, therefore, place the function of the person in charge of mentoring the educational institution in this framework.

To this end, the guide is organized around five questions:

- 1) What is the Practicum?
- 2) What are the functions of the main agents involved in the Practicum?
- 3) How is communication carried out between the educational institution's mentor and the university?
- 4) What activities should students carry out and what role does mentoring play?
- 5) How are the students evaluated?

1. What is the Practicum?

For students, the practical training period is a privileged moment in which they will get to know the educational reality. Its purpose is to establish bridges between the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired in the academic field and those which are built in the professional field. It therefore represents a fundamental axis for achieving the skills that define the teaching profession.

The Practicum is taken in parallel with the other courses that make up the training path, so that students can contrast the reflective processes of observation, analysis and experimentation of the professional activity, with the theoretical and practical training offered by the university.

The Practicum of the master's degree in Teacher Education for Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, Vocational Training and Language Teaching consists of 14 ECTS, which for students means a total dedication of 350 hours: 250 are face-to-face attendance in the practical training centers and 100 are non-face-to-face work in the virtual classroom. The Practicum takes place **throughout an academic year** in a Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) or vocational training center or in an official language school (EOI). According to the planning, the practical training period at the educational institution lasts **approximately five months (between November and April)**. Students join the educational institution during the first quarter of the year and complete their practical training approximately one month before the end of the academic year.

The 250 hours of attendance at the educational institution are structured in three distinct phases that are distributed throughout the practical training period, which is done continuously and without the possibility of condensing the hours.

1) First period: observation practical training, lasting between 2 and 3 weeks. A total of 40-45 hours.

In this period, the students' main aim is to become familiar with the secondary education or vocational training center and learn about its operation in order to be able to analyze the model of educational practice, the aspects of organization and of management that it offers, and the relationship it has with the environment and with external services. The goal is also to establish the first contact with school life, with the different actors who interact there and with the dynamics of the educational institution and the classroom.

2) Second period: accompanied intervention practical training, lasting between 5 and 6 weeks and a total of 125-130 hours.

In this second period, the students' aim is to carry out specific interventions with the teaching staff, students and families, with the support and supervision of the educational institution's mentor on one hand, and the monitoring of the teaching staff of the university on the other. At this time, the students will also plan the educational interventions and design the programming units that they will apply later, with the support of the university professors and the mentoring of the educational institution.

3) Third period: independent intervention practical training, lasting between 3 and 5 weeks and a total of 80-90 hours.

In this last period, the purpose of the students is to execute the intervention or didactic program designed previously and to monitor and evaluate it. They also act as teachers in charge of a group of students or in charge of an intervention situation, taking the appropriate decisions to manage the classroom, and reflecting in depth on their own performance.

2. What are the functions of the main agents involved in the Practicum?

During the Practicum, the students have access to the teaching staff who tutor the university's practical training; the teaching staff responsible for the Practicum course and its coordination; the mentor at the practical training center, and the coordination of the practices of the educational institution.

Below is a brief explanation of the functions of each of these figures:

- **Teaching staff of the Practicum (university practical training tutoring).** The person who teaches in the virtual classroom, an expert in the course content and someone who explains the work to be done throughout the course. They guide students in carrying out the learning activities. They also maintain personalised contact both with the students and with the educational institution's mentors. In addition, they monitor the activities of the students individually and establish dynamics in the virtual classroom so that the experiences had during practical training period can be shared.
- **Teaching staff in charge of the course (coordination of the university Practicum).** They are responsible for designing the training proposal for the course and for establishing the evaluation criteria and procedures. Likewise, they coordinate the teaching team that tutors the Practicum in the development of the teaching tasks and they ensure the proper functioning of the subject in its academic dimension. In addition, they are part of the Practical Training Committee, in charge of managing the relationships established between the three parties involved in the practical training: the university, the students, and the mentor from the educational institution.
- **Mentors at the educational institution.** The mentors guide students in the dynamics and activities they must carry out during their stay at the practical training center. The educational institution's mentors basically have five functions:
 - Accommodating students within the framework of the practical training center.
 - Explaining the work or services provided at the educational institution and how it operates, while facilitating access to information and contact with the various professionals and users in order to enable the development of the practical training activities.

- Facilitating mobility within the educational institution and attendance at the various pedagogical meetings (staff meetings, teacher team meetings, department meetings, tutorials, interviews with families, etc.) and participation in the educational institution's activities.
- Helping the students to focus correctly on the learning scenario in the context of the educational institution, to accompany and support them in their development.
- At the end of the practical training period they will make an assessment of the work carried out by the students (see point 5 of this guide).

If requested by the educational institution's mentors, they will receive a certificate from the university attesting to this function at the end of the practical training.

- **Coordination of the practical training center.** This person is responsible for coordinating with the territories' practical training centers and the practical training coordination at the institution. Also, with those involved with the innovation or research projects shared with the university, if applicable.

3. How is communication carried out between the educational institution's mentoring faculty and the university?

During the practical training period, the teaching staff of the Practicum who supervise the university's practical training will contact the educational institution's mentor via e-mail a minimum of four times.

The first contact is established at the beginning of the semester, and its purpose is for the university tutor to introduce themselves to the practical training mentor. During this contact, the *Practical training guide for the mentor teachers of the educational institutions* is also provided and confirmation is given that the student has correctly registered at the educational institution.

The objective of the second and third contact is to monitor the students' work in order to assess both the observation phase and the accompanied intervention phase.

Finally, the fourth contact serves to add the final touches to the evaluation of the Practicum so that the educational institution's mentor can make the final assessment of the practical training period of the students they have tutored.

Although all follow-up contact is normally made via e-mail, there is no issue in establishing telephone contact if necessary.

4. What activities should the students carry out with the support of the educational institutions' mentors?

During the Practicum, students must respond to the different academic activities that the University's practical training tutor proposes in the virtual classroom. Below, only the activities that need the participation of the practical training mentor are presented.

4.1. Work plan

The work plan is the framework document that regulates the student's time at the educational institution and establishes the mentoring monitoring mechanisms. This document must also capture the distribution of the 250 hours the student will spend at the educational institution throughout the three phases of the Practicum (observation, accompanied intervention and independent intervention). Students must submit the work plan to the university's Practicum tutor during the first weeks of the practical training.

To draw up the work plan, it is necessary to have the consensus of the educational institution's mentor, therefore the students and the mentor must jointly define both the calendar and the hours of attendance at the educational institution, as well as the activities that will be carried out there.

4.2. Challenge 3. Knowledge of the practical training center

In this activity, the students are asked to analyze the context of the practical training center and to identify the features that define the professional profile of the educational institution's mentor and the tasks and functions they carry out. In order to respond to this activity, it is necessary that at the educational institution students are allowed to observe educational practices, attend team meetings, access the educational institution's documents and talk to different professionals from the educational institution.

4.3. Challenge 5. Design of the learning scenario

This activity consists of designing a learning proposal that the students will have to implement in the classroom. This is a proposal that must be agreed upon with the practical training mentor, both in terms of content and the number of sessions (it is recommended that it lasts for at least two sessions).

4.4. Challenge 6. Final practical training report

The final practical training report incorporates the analysis and evaluation of the implemented learning scenario. In this case, the feedback from the educational institution's mentor is decisive; this is so the students can integrate areas for improvement into the proposal.

4.5. Collaboration in the development of the Master's Final Project

Given that the practical training students develop their Master's Final Project within the context of the educational center where the placement is done, the person acting as the mentor is asked to collaborate, while accompanying the student in the development of their work.

5. How are the students assessed?

In accordance with the Order EDU/39/2021, of February 16, which establishes the development of the professionalizing practices of universities and other training institutions in educational institutions, educational services and departments within the Department of Education, and in which the procedure for the selection and accreditation of training centers is established, the evaluation of the university practical training corresponds to the academic tutoring of the university, with the collaboration of the mentoring of the training center, in the terms established by the collaboration agreement between the Department of Education and the university.

The university's teaching staff and the educational institution's mentor must coordinate to monitor the student's learning throughout the Practicum and at the end of the process. The collaboration of the mentors in the evaluation of students in practical training is specified in their participation in monitoring the students, through the two forms that are delivered during the practical training and at the end of this period, with the assessment and evaluation of the practical training.

In the evaluation tool that is provided to evaluate students, four major dimensions are considered. These are presented below:

- 1) **General requirements for mandatory compliance.** They refer to criteria related to student obligations, such as punctuality, respect for the school's operating rules, responsibility, respectful treatment of the educational community, etc.
- 2) **The scope of the educational institution's knowledge and student participation.** This refers to the attitude that students maintain when integrating into the educational institution, to the relationships they establish with teachers and students, and their participation in the educational institution, among other things.
- 3) **The scope of the performance in the classroom.** This focuses on the actions carried out by the students in the classroom, whether in relation to communication with the students, or in maintaining an appropriate classroom environment that favours learning conflict resolution, for example.
- 4) **The field of design and implementation of didactic units, projects or training units.** This relates to the actions carried out by students to design and implement teaching and learning activities, to design resources, to evaluate students, to manage time, etc.

Whenever possible, it is recommended that the mentor share the assessment with the students, so that the students can identify the skills that can be improved and also their strengths.

The assessment by the educational institution's mentor represents 40% of the final grade.