

UniLab Principles to Work-Based Learning Higher Education

Higher level knowledge and skills are not only acquired through academic study within higher education institutions (HEIs) but may also be gained outside the classroom through experiential learning within work or similar contexts. In the constantly evolving knowledge economy, where potential employees are not only required to use state-of-the-art technology, but also possess a range of transferrable soft skills, work-based learning programmes are essential.

The objective of work-based learning is to give students authentic, structured opportunities for learning in a real working environment. This type of education requires HEIs and industries to interact and work together to ensure that it benefits students, employers, and wider society.

If the final objective of higher education is to ensure students' employability and success, higher education programmes should first and foremost be student-centred. Work-based learning can enable this approach because **students are placed at the centre of the WBL placements**. Universities should support students in developing the appropriate attitudes, competences and knowledge for entering the labour market (or for improving their employability).

In this context, **UniLab principles for a modern practical WBL placement system** are:

1. WBL is focused on the **development of relevant experience** connected and complementing their learning activity
2. Students receive **guidance and counselling**
3. The triangle HEI-Business-Student is underpinned by **clarity of communication** and **responsibilities** between the 3 involved parties
4. University-Business relationships are based on **collaboration and partnership**
5. Institutions and companies organise **staff training** for the modernisation of WBL placements and the supervision of students
6. **Quality processes** in WBL placements guarantee the efficiency and effectiveness of the model
7. National and local authorities give **support** and **encourage** institutions to modernise WBL placements and **promote** companies to be active
8. Enterprises being involved in practical WBL placement of students receive some sort of **recognition or reward**