

IMBRSEA PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This document provides an overview of practicalities related to the organisation of the Professional Practice. This document is valid for academic year 2020-2021

Version January 2020

*Guidelines
Evaluation*

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PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1. Objective

The main objective of the IMBRSea Professional Practice is to become familiar with different workplace functions and roles expected for a particular profession. The Professional Practice should allow the student to understand how knowledge acquired during schooling may be applied to solving problems in real world situations. Through the Professional Practice the student will be immersed in the working environment and will get acquainted with the real-life job world. They may also be engaged in NGOs for their Professional Practice thereby achieving gains in service learning.

2. Roles

2.1 Intern

Once the Professional Practice is approved and the agreements are signed, it is the responsibility of the student to discuss the practical aspects of the Professional Practice as well as the coherence of the project with the educational objectives of the Professional Practice experience with the Professional Practice mentor. See [Annex 3](#) for the code of conduct for students.

2.2 Professional Practice mentor

The mentor also commits himself to make sure that the rules of the Professional Practice are respected within the host organisation, including providing adequate supervision for guarding the intern and the coherence of the work with the educational objectives. The mentor acts as both resource and guide for the intern within the host organisation.

2.3 Academic supervisor

This is the person who is responsible for the Professional Practice module of the IMBRSea programme. The student should stay in regular contact with the academic supervisor. The academic supervisor should also serve as a resource to resolve both technical and practical problems that may occur during the Professional Practice.

This person is also responsible for the management of the Professional Practices and the development and application of any regulations and rules applicable. This academic supervisor is also the primary contact between the host institutions and Ghent University.

2.4 Coordinator of the IMBRSea programme

The signature of this person is mandatory for establishing a legally binding Professional Practice contract. He or she may also make any final decisions related to conflicts which may arise during the Professional Practice that cannot be resolved through mediation.

3. Rules governing Professional Practices

See IMBRSea Professional Practice Regulations:

http://www.imbrsea.ugent.be/sites/default/files/IMBRSeaPP_Regulations_cohort%202019%20_0.pdf

4. Evaluation

The evaluation of the professional practice will be based on several elements:

1. An online reflective portfolio
2. A final reflective report
3. An evaluation by the Professional Practice mentor on student's performance and adaptation to the working environment
4. An exhibition stand at the annual symposium in which the professional practice is presented.

Further guidelines on the online reflective portfolio and the final reflective report are provided below.

During the Professional Practice, the student will compile a portfolio. The elements within the portfolio will not be assessed directly, but will contribute to the final report which will be evaluated. All elements of the portfolio will however be validated. Not providing the elements will lead to a negative impact on the final grade. At the end of the Professional Practice, the student will submit a final reflective report that will be evaluated by the Professional Practice team taking into account the evaluation given by the Professional Practice mentor.

In the month of January, a webinar will be organised to introduce the requirements and evaluation and follow-up mechanisms of the Professional Practice.

4.1 The online reflective portfolio

The online reflective portfolio is managed by the Matix platform. Some elements will require a validation by the mentor. Other elements will involve also peer students. Via the online platform all actors will be able to easily follow up their tasks.

Week 1:

- An initial meeting is organized between the student and the Professional Practice mentor. Before this meeting, you will need to have defined your personal objectives corresponding with the Professional Practice end competences (see table below for examples). During this meeting the objectives are discussed and finalized. The work plan for the entire Professional Practice is also decided upon.
 - o **Portfolio task 1:**
 - Submit a report of this initial meeting and make an extensive list of all the objectives you wish to achieve. Be as detailed as possible and allocate each of your personal objectives to the overall Professional Practice end competences. Ensure that for each end competence at least one specific objective is specified.
 - Agenda points for the initial meeting should at least include:
 - o Work plan
 - o Who has what tasks and responsibilities
 - o Safety issues
 - Learning objectives should be specific, challenging, proximal and meaningful. They should help you to identify learning opportunities. (extra reading: Setting Goals: Who, Why, How?" by Turkay, 2014).
 - Add a personal reflection on this first meeting and on the objectives you wish to achieve.
 - Personal work plan Professional Practice. If you are doing a Professional Practice together with other students, make sure that your individual tasks and responsibilities have been defined.
 - o This task will be reviewed by the academic supervisor and feedback on the set personal objectives will be provided.

End competence**Example personal objective**

1	<p>Describe how their Professional Practice experience has improved their professional competence (e.g. through an improved ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate and work effectively with others; • show initiative and work independently; • organise their workload and set priorities; • respond to new challenges and changing situations). 	<p>During my professional experiences in the past my tasks were always very clear so I never had to ask what work needed to be done. With this Professional Practice I hope to improve in taking initiative and assessing the situation to examine what tasks need to be done, without hesitating to ask questions when needed to my mentor.</p>
2	<p>Critically evaluate how they have contributed to their host organisation's objectives</p>	<p>E.g. The Centre d'Estudis Avançats de Blanes (CEAB) aims to increase knowledge about biodiversity of organisms and understand their functions and interactions, and aims to use this knowledge gained to determine management actions. During my Professional Practice I aim to contribute to this by investigating population dynamics of invasive species, which will help to improve management actions to control their populations.</p>
3	<p>Explain how they applied previously acquired theory and practical knowledge to their professional duties in the host organisation.</p>	<p>During the Fundamentals Module in the course Quantitative Methods in Marine Science I first start learning to use R, and I would like to improve my R skills during the course of this Professional Practice.</p>
4	<p>Explain how their Professional Practice experience has modified their career aspirations.</p>	<p>In order to have a better idea of which direction I want to go in after I graduate, I want to get to know the organization I'm working for and what projects they have running, even the ones not directly relevant to my Professional Practice. This will give me an idea of the possibilities out there.</p>
5	<p>Assess the effect of their Professional Practice on their future employment prospects.</p>	<p>To improve my chances of finding work after the master, I want to take the opportunity during this Professional Practice to get to know the research field and the people working in it so that when I want to work within this area of research, I</p>

	already have some background knowledge and contacts.
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Table 1. Examples on translating learning outcomes to personal objectives. See [Annex 2](#) for tips and tricks to define your personal objectives.

Week 2:

- Get to know the institute you will work for in the coming six weeks via introduction meetings, by talking to staff members, by research on sources.
 - o **Portfolio task 2:**
 - Describe the overall scientific and professional objectives, tasks and characteristics of the institute. This can be accompanied by pictures/diagrams/videos? Identify the most attractive characteristic of the institute in terms of your own personal development. Discuss why you chose this characteristic.

Example question	Answer	Reflection
<i>What type of organization is it? (NGO, company, university...)</i>	BREEN is a commercial aquaponics company.	I chose this Professional Practice to learn how it is to work in a company environment. I want to know how BREEN approaches research when the objective is to be profitable rather than publish papers.
<i>Is the organization organized into different research groups?</i>	IUEM is a research institute that does research on multidisciplinary themes. Laboratories from different disciplines combine forces to investigate themes from different angles.	I would like to know how this is organized practically because I am interested in multidisciplinary research.
...

Table 2. Potential features to use when characterising your institute

From Week 1 to 6:

- **Portfolio task 3:** Every week, upload 2 pictures that illustrate yourself (or someone else) in an activity in which you were involved and explain the context in which this picture was taken. You should not always be visible in the picture, but at least show you were present. If possible, link the pictures to one of your personal objectives from task 1.
- **Portfolio task 4:** Every week, comment on at least one skill you acquired or worked on during the past weeks and upload proof that shows this. Proof can be of any form: a report, a movie, an interview, ... Link these skills to the original defined objectives of your

Professional Practice. Check the following link with some tips to identify your skills
<http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2012/09/so-you-think-you-have-skills>

Remark: Note that the proof uploaded in task 3 and 4 will be the only accepted proof that you can use when writing your final reflective report. Keep in mind that the final report should represent the activities you document on weekly.

Week 2-3:

- **Portfolio task 5: Follow-up questionnaire from the IMBRSea coordination office:** At the end of week 2, an online questionnaire will be available in Matix. In this questionnaire a list of questions that relate to the flow of the professional practice will be asked. You can indicate in the questionnaire if you would like to have a meeting with the coordinators to discuss your answers and/or have a moment to ask questions, share concerns about your professional practice.

From week 3 onwards:

- **Portfolio task 6:** Peer review by a fellow student.
 - Every student will be assigned to another student who will act as peer that will evaluate how the Professional Practice is going. Via a virtual meeting, students will discuss the flow of the Professional Practice. To guide these peer assessments, the interviewing student will have to devise a set of questions based on the five end competences of the Professional Practice (see [Annex 1](#)).
 - The aim is that for each question the answer (as an outcome of the interview) is provided as well as a critical reflection by the interviewer. Both the answers and the reflections will be provided to the interviewed student and to the academic supervisor

Week 3-4:

- A mid-term meeting should be organized between the student and the mentor. During the meeting the progress of the Professional Practice is discussed. This will involve asking for feedback from the mentor (after you have reflected on it yourself first) on how you are doing with your personal objectives. The original list of objectives is evaluated and adapted where needed.
- **Portfolio task 7:** a report of the meeting is uploaded. The mentor will be asked to confirm that this meeting happened. The report should include reflection by the student and feedback from the supervisor on the personal objectives.

End of Week 6:

- **Portfolio task 8:** Final meeting between the Professional Practice mentor and the student. At the end of the Professional Practice a final closing meeting should happen between the student and the mentor. The mentor and student submit an agreed report which shows the outcome of this final meeting.

5. Portfolio and Report formats

5.1 Elements of the portfolio

Deliverable	Description	Person responsible
<i>Task 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Report initial meeting- Work plan- Listing of personal objectives	Student and Professional Practice mentor
<i>Task 2</i>	Describe your institute	Student
<i>Task 3</i>	Weekly activity pictures + discussion	Student
<i>Task 4</i>	Weekly documented personal objective progress as well as time sheets	Student
<i>Task 5</i>	Follow-up questionnaire from the Coordination Office	Student and Coordination Office
<i>Task 6</i>	Report of the virtual meeting with a fellow student	Student 1, student 2, academic supervisor
<i>Task 7</i>	Report of mid-term meeting Listing of potentially adapted objectives after the meeting (including feedback from the student and personal reflections on this feedback)	Student and Professional Practice mentor
<i>Task 8</i>	Report of the closing meeting	Student and Professional Practice mentor

5.2 Preparation of the final report

At the end of the Professional Practice period (one week before the annual symposium) the electronic Portfolio is completed with a final report. This final report should be based on the elements collected for the portfolio throughout the Professional Practice. The final report will be evaluated by two independent evaluators. These evaluators will also interview the student during the exhibition at the Annual Symposium.

Format of the final report:

- **Cover page:** This includes at least the name of student, the name of host organisation, the name of the Professional Practice mentor and the title of the Professional Practice.
- **Introduction:** Include information about your host organisation and details about the type of work that you carried out for the organisation. Maximum: 1 page (use information from task 2)

- **Reflection on Professional Practice experience:** In each of the following sections (1-5) you should provide a reflective account of how the Professional Practice has allowed you to meet the learning outcomes for the module. As well as a descriptive account of the experience it should also include opinions. For example, if you provide information on a task you completed for the host organisation, you could explain why it was done in a particular way, provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the approach and add thoughts on what could be done differently in the future. Evidence to support the reflection should be included in the Appendix. Evidence has to be taken from the weekly uploaded material related to the online portfolio (task 3 and task 4). A maximum of ten separate pieces of evidence in the Appendix are permitted. You should also explain in detail (approx. ½ a page) why particular evidences were included in the Appendices, i.e. what evidence do they provide to show that you have been achieving the competences of the module?
 - **1. Reflection on how my Professional Practice has improved my professional competences**
Maximum: 2 pages, evidence in support of statements should be provided in the Appendix
 - **2. Reflection on how I contributed to my host organisation's objectives**
Maximum: 2 pages, evidence in support of statements should be provided in the Appendix
 - **3. Reflection on how I applied previously acquired theoretical and practical knowledge to work with the host organisation**
Maximum: 2 pages, evidence in support of statements should be provided in the Appendix
 - **4. Reflection on how my Professional Practice has modified my career aspirations**
Maximum: 2 pages, evidence in support of statements should be provided in the Appendix
 - **5. Reflection on my Professional Practice experience has affected my future employment prospects**
Maximum: 2 pages, evidence in support of statements should be provided in the Appendix
- **Conclusion:** This section should contain an overall summary of your Professional Practice. What were the most useful parts of the experience? Could some aspects have been better? What were the main advantages for you?
Maximum: 1 page
- **Bibliography**
- **Appendix**

6. Presentation during the annual symposium

Exhibition guidelines

At the end of June during the Annual Symposium the Professional Practice experiences will be presented during a scientific exhibition. Via a poster or via alternative exhibition material (video, photo album, game, etc), the student will show the experiences gained during the practice. All creative ideas are welcome, just keep in mind that the exhibition is **individual**, each student must present one exhibition item and there are no exceptions.

If you choose to present a poster, we can print it for you. You just need to consider the following specifications:

- Poster dimensions: A2 format (420 mm * 594 mm), vertical or horizontal
- Poster content: you are free to choose the best design and content of your poster, however, you should include the following basic information: student name and number, Professional Practice institution (country) as well as the logo of IMBRSea and Erasmus Mundus.

Poster panel, tables, chairs, extension cable and other materials necessary for the exhibition set-up will be provided to students that required them via the symposium registration. Laptops are not provided, please bring your own.

During this exhibition the members of the reading committee of the reflective portfolio will interview the student and the public will choose the best exhibition items.

7. Profession practice evaluation

The reflective portfolio counts for 75 % of the final grade of the Professional Practice module; the exhibition presentation for 25%.

- All reports and tasks must be uploaded in PDF-format on the Matix platform. The pieces of evidence for the portfolio tasks must also be uploaded onto the Matix platform.
- The Examination/Reading Committee of each reflective portfolio consists of two members, who have to belong to one of the IMBRSea partner institutes:
 - Reader 1 : academic supervisor
 - Reader 2 : external to the academic supervisor institute and external to the host organization

The final Professional Practice score will be deliberated by the examination board of IMBRSea and be communicated to the coordination office, which is in charge of uploading the grade to the course management database and communicating the feedback to the students.

8. Overview of the organisation of the Professional Practice

Step	Description
Call for Professional Practice topics	The coordination office launches a call for Professional Practice topics to interested parties.
Applying for a topic from the Professional Practice catalogue	Students apply for 3-5 topics from the catalogue and write a motivation for each on the Matix platform
Evaluation of applications by the potential host organisations	Scientists that submitted a topic evaluate the applications of the students.

Assignment of topics to the students	<p>Using an algorithm, students are assigned to Professional Practice topics by the IMBRSea Coordination Office based on the preferences of the students, the evaluations of the supervisors and the number of students allowed per topic. Both students and supervisors are then informed about the assignment by the IMBRSea Coordination Office</p> <p>Supervisors are allowed to participate in the selection of the students, however they are not entitled to inform the students about the outcome of the topic selection process.</p>
Contract signature	<p>The Professional Practice contract has to be signed by the student, the host organisation and the coordinator of the IMBRSea programme. The final signed contract will be uploaded by the IMBRSea Coordination office on the Matix platform and be available to all involved actors.</p>
Arrival and installation	<p>The student confirms that he/she is installed at the host organization by notifying the IMBRSea Coordination Office via Matix during the first week.</p>
Portfolio	<p>The portfolio contains the outputs of tasks 1-8</p>
Final report	<p>This report contains a synthesis of the accomplished tasks and objectives during the Professional Practice and time sheets.</p>

ANNEX 1: COMPETENCES TO BE OBTAINED AT THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- 1 Describe how their Professional Practice experience has improved their professional competence e.g. through an improved ability to:
 - communicate and work effectively with others;
 - show initiative and work independently;
 - organise their workload and set priorities;
 - respond to new challenges and changing situations

- 2 Critically evaluate how they have contributed to their host organisation's objectives

- 3 Explain how they applied previously acquired theory and practical knowledge to their professional duties in the host organisation.

- 4 Explain how their Professional Practice experience has modified their career aspirations.

- 5 Assess the effect of their Professional Practice on their future employment prospects.

ANNEX 2: TIPS AND TRICKS TO DEFINE YOUR PERSONAL OBJECTIVES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PORTFOLIO

A useful way of making goals more powerful is to use the SMART principle. While there are plenty of variants, SMART usually stands for:

- S – Specific (or Significant).
- M – Measurable (or Meaningful).
- A – Attainable (or Action-Oriented).
- R – Relevant (or Rewarding).
- T – Time-bound (or Trackable).

For example, instead of having "to be able to communicate better with my fellow researchers" as a goal, it's more powerful to use the SMART goal "To have talked and explained my work at the institute to at least 5 people in the institute by 30 April, 2019."

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective, achievable goals:

- State each goal as a positive statement – Express your goals positively – "Be able to work with a titration unit" is a much better goal than "Not making mistakes anymore when doing titrations"
- Be precise – Set precise goals, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you'll know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.
- Set priorities – When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- Write goals down – This crystallizes them and gives them more force.
- Keep operational goals small – Keep the low-level goals that you're working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.
- Set performance goals, not outcome goals – You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. It can be quite dispiriting to fail to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control! If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals, and draw satisfaction from them.
- Set realistic goals – It's important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions. It's also possible to set goals that are too difficult because you might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.

ANNEX 3: CODE OF CONDUCT – FOR STUDENTS

The student should:

- Act within the terms and conditions of employment laid down by the host employer.
- Take responsibility for his/her own Health and Safety and that of others who may be affected by his/her actions.
- Respect the confidentiality of the organisation.
- Adhere to policies, procedures and work practices of the organisation.
- Work diligently, responsibly and in a professional manner at all times.
- Adhere to company dress code.
- Be accountable and accept responsibility for actions.
- Use the email/internet for work purposes only.
- Use the work phone for work purposes only
- Submit all documentation that is requested by the organisation and by the IMBRSea Coordination Office.

Responsibility of the Student to IMBRSea:

- Complete all reports and records for the consortium as specified.
- Consult with the IMBRSea Coordination Office/Academic Supervisor prior to making any changes in the terms and duration of the placement.
- Provide access to all records maintained during the placement for the academic supervisor, except where there is an issue of commercial secrecy.