

ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY EXTERNAL INTERNSHIPS. TOWARDS A MIXED MODEL FOR MEASURING THE ACQUISITION OF SKILLS AND THE SATISFACTION OF PARTIES INVOLVED

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Abstract

The continuous improvement of management and assessment processes for curricular external internships has led a group of university teachers specialised in this area to develop a mixed model of measurement that combines the verification of skill acquisition by those students choosing external internships with the satisfaction of the parties involved in that process. They included academics, educational tutors of companies and organisations and administration and services personnel in the latter category.

The experience, developed within University of Alicante, has been carried out in the degrees of Business Administration and Management, Business Studies, Economics, Advertising and Public Relations, Sociology and Social Work, all part of the Faculty of Economics and Business. By designing and managing closed standardised interviews and other research tools, validated outside the centre, a system of continuous improvement and quality assurance has been created, clearly contributing to the gradual increase in the number of students with internships in this Faculty, as well as to the improvement in satisfaction, efficiency and efficacy indicators at a global level.

As this experience of educational innovation has shown, the acquisition of curricular knowledge, skills, abilities and competences by the students is directly correlated with the satisfaction of those parties involved in a process that takes the student beyond the physical borders of a university campus. Ensuring the latter is a task made easier by the implementation of a mixed assessment method, combining continuous and final assessment, and characterised by its rigorousness and simple management.

This report presents that model, subject in turn to a persistent and continuous control, a model all parties involved in the external internships are taking part of. Its short-term results imply an increase, estimated at 15% for the last course, in the number of students choosing curricular internships and, for the medium and long-term, a major interweaving between the academic world and its social and productive environment, both in the business and institutional areas.

The potentiality of this assessment model does not lie only in the quality of its measurement tools, but also in the effects from its use in the various groups and in the actions that are carried out as a result of its implementation and which, without any doubt and as it is shown below, are the real guarantee of a continuous improvement.

Keywords: Assessment, external internships, satisfaction, improvement, skills, quality.

1 INTRODUCTION

Universities are expected to afford the current and future students a number of tools, abilities and competences that allow them to successfully deal with the extant challenges in a global society, with a markedly competitive job market. This crucial -and hefty- task involves students, teaching staff, academic authorities and administration. Beyond the application of new information and communication technologies (ICT) and a conceptual shift as to what the teaching-learning process should be, there are other factors that affect the convergence towards the European Space for Higher Education (ESHE). Among them, university teaching staff's motivation is fundamental and, thus, it is crucial to empirically know what this motivation depends on.

In this context, one of the most relevant changes in the teacher-student relationship is assessment. In fact, the transition from a *static assessment* -focused on only one temporal point (final exam)- to a *dynamic assessment*, will require changes in thought and action, both on the part of teachers and students.

This article relates the experience of a group of university lecturers who have expertise in the area of external work experience, developing a mixed assessment model that combines the verification of skill acquisition by the students who opt to undertake external work experience, with the satisfaction of the agents participating in this process, including academics, training tutors at companies and institutions and administration and service personnel.

In order to meet this goal, the rest of this document is organised as follows: the second section sets out the assessment analysis methodology used -*continuous assessment and final assessment*- after certain considerations regarding the continuous assessment system; the third section briefly presents the results and the fourth gives the conclusions and practical implications.

2 METHOD

The experience carried out at the University of Alicante is linked to the subject Work Experience at Companies, which is elective and commonly chosen by students studying Business Administration and Management, Economics, Advertising and Public Relations and Sociology. This subject has a number of lecturers and academic tutors who carry out continuous and personalised assessment on each student doing work experience externally, that is to say, in regional, national or international institutions or companies: SMEs, financial institutions, advertising agencies, the media, government bodies, non-governmental organisations... These have signed up to a framework agreement covering cooperation with Alicante University through which each year they apply for students with specific profiles to do work experience at their offices, supervised by a tutor who, preferably, has the degree which the student is studying for.

Therefore, there is a double tutorialisation model: academic and company-institution. The final mark depends on the academic tutor, designated by the Faculty from among the lecturers, and is based on continuous assessment criteria; on the marks obtained in the final work experience report written by the student; and also on the evaluation of the work experience which the student and the company-institution tutor carry out using the instruments which have been designed for this purpose and which are externally validated. Previously this was done by the Spanish Association for Standardisation and Certification (AENOR according to its initials in Spanish) and it is currently performed by Alicante University's own Technical Quality Unit.

2.1 The continuous assessment method

Students' level of knowledge is valued by their assessment, which originally consisted of comparison between learning outcomes and the objectives previously determined (Tyler, 1942). Afterwards, this model was substituted by a broad, valid, exact assessment based on experimental procedures (Cronbach, 1973).

As a consequence of the changes promoted by the ESHE, the student is the main figure in the learning process (not the teacher in the teaching process). In this context, assessment goes beyond the mere measurement of knowledge assimilation to evaluate the acquisition of competences defined beforehand by the teaching staff.

Traditionally, the final stage of the learning process has been the *final assessment*, closely related to passing an *objective test* in which the student must show the acquisition of knowledge (Rosales, 2000). Therefore, students' learning is subject to the evaluation method proposed by teachers.

According to the guidelines suggested by the ESHE, the valuation function of teachers does not finish with the final assessment, but they have to get involved in controlling students' assimilation of a series of contents as well as the development of competences. In fact, Delgado and Oliver (2006) consider that continuous assessment is the optimum procedure to evaluate competences because what has to be assessed is the execution of the competence (Delgado et al., 2005),


In this context, university teachers have to design a series of evaluating proposals throughout the academic year that the students must pass periodically. This way of operating makes it easier for the future graduate to acquire knowledge and competences, as well as for the teachers to continuously assess the progressive evolution of students' work and achievements (for an extensive review of traditional and new assessment techniques, see Dixon and Rawlings (1987) for the former, and Isaksson (2008) for the latter).

Thus, continuous assessment is a holistic, significant and accumulative evaluation that can bring huge advantages for all the parts that form the teaching-learning process. Students receive information about their learning rate -making it possible to modify methods and habits-, about the way they are assessed in a practical way, re-orienting their learning if necessary, and acquiring gradually certain knowledge and competences.

For teacher, applying continuous assessment substituting or complementing final evaluation permits the possibility to improve their teaching process during an academic year. This is an advantage as it allows them to raise quality, because follow-up throughout the whole academic year is guaranteed, and provides them with several indices and value judgment to configure a complete assessment system (De Pablo et al., 2009). However, there is no denying it that a huge support is required to carry out this process (López, 2001): the effort university teachers must put in to correctly apply continuous assessment is big, and sometimes it is not in line with their professional and environmental characteristics.


In order to facilitate continuous assessment in the case shown here, academic tutors have a monitoring file, where they register contacts with the student and with the tutor at the company or institution with the aim of evaluating the student's incorporation, adaptation, skill acquisition and ability to put into practice the degree's curriculum content; it also has basic contact details and traceability of the different documents involved in the process: agreement, report and questionnaires.

Figures 1 and 2: Visit/tutorial monitoring sheet



Universitat d'Alacant
Universidad de Alicante

Facultat de Ciències Econòmiques i Empresariales
Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales



VPe
Visites de Pràctiques en Empresa
Visiting Companies and Enterprises

FITXA DE SEGUIMENT VISITES / TUTORIES
FICHA DE SEGUIMIENTO VISITAS / TUTORÍAS

DADES DE L'ALUMNE/A DATOS DEL ALUMNO/A		
DNI 44770810 E	Nom / Nombre: BEATRIZ	Cognoms / Apellidos: DELTELL PADILLA
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DADES DE L'EMPRESA / INSTITUCIÓ DATOS DE LA EMPRESA / INSTITUCIÓN		
CIF G53363131	Nom / Nombre: FUNDACIÓN NORAY - PROYECTO HOMBRE	
Adreça / Dirección: PARTIDA AGUAMARGA Nº 5/N		Localitat / Localidad: 03008 Alacant/Alicante - Alacant/Alicante
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Tutor/a de la Facultat: Tutor/a de la Facultad: RAÚL RUIZ CALLADO		
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DADES DE L'ACORD DE PRÀCTIQUES DATOS DEL ACUERDO DE PRÁCTICAS		
Data inici / Fecha inicio: 15/01/2011	Data fi / Fecha fin: 15/06/2011	Data prevista per a lliurar la memòria / Fecha prevista entrega memoria:
Horari / Horario: AYUDA ECONOMICA=SÍ, A CONVENIR CON EL ALUMNO / HORARIO=8:30 A 16:30 / PERIODO=2º CUATRIMESTRE /		

CONTROL		
<input type="checkbox"/> Acord firmat / Acuerdo firmado:	<input type="checkbox"/> Visita empresa:	<input type="checkbox"/> Questionari alumne / Cuestionario alumno
<input type="checkbox"/> Acord entregat VPE / Acuerdo entregado VPE:	<input type="checkbox"/> Lliurament memòria / Entrega memoria:	<input type="checkbox"/> Questionari tutor / Cuestionario tutor
<input type="checkbox"/> Tutoria 1 / Tutoria 1:	<input type="checkbox"/> Questionari empresa / Cuestionario empresa	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tutoria 2 / Tutoria 2:		

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AVALUACIÓ EVALUACIÓN			
Qualificació final / Calificación final:			
SEGUIMENT SEGUIMIENTO			
Data / Fecha:			Notes / Notas:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Alumne <input type="checkbox"/> Alumno <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor	<input type="checkbox"/> Visita <input type="checkbox"/> Telefonada <input type="checkbox"/> Llamada <input type="checkbox"/> A/e E-mail	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Alumne <input type="checkbox"/> Alumno <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor	<input type="checkbox"/> Visita <input type="checkbox"/> Telefonada <input type="checkbox"/> Llamada <input type="checkbox"/> A/e E-mail	
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Alumne <input type="checkbox"/> Alumno <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor	<input type="checkbox"/> Visita <input type="checkbox"/> Telefonada <input type="checkbox"/> Llamada <input type="checkbox"/> A/e E-mail	

2.2 The final assessment method

The evidence for the final mark is obtained through the final report written by the student and from the measurement instruments designed. These are a fundamental part of the mixed model for measuring skill acquisition and the satisfaction of the agents involved that is presented here.


The first of these is the questionnaire for companies and institutions. Here, the professional tutor from the organisation assesses, in general terms, the work carried out by the student using a Likert scale and, with the same technique, the degree to which the student adapted his or her academic education to the organisation's needs, the degree of integration into the team, personal attitude and performance with regard to activities planned.

As well as being for the integrated education of students, the work experience is intended to facilitate the student's entry into a profession. For this reason, the questionnaire also features questions such as: "Do you think that this work experience will facilitate the student's entry into the job market?" or "If you needed personnel, would you hire the student who has been doing work experience with you?" The different questions have a closed response format but some of them ask for further explanation, with questions of the semi-open kind.

Given that the Faculty of Economics and Business has the powers to appoint and remove academic tutors, it is important to find out objectively how these carry out their work. This is done by means of an evaluation of students and professional tutors as well as checks as to whether the responsibilities set

contractually have been taken on and whether academic obligations are being met. As well as evaluating the university lecturer who is acting as tutor, the companies and institutions indicate whether the external curricular work experience programme has met their expectations, with a general and also a detailed evaluation of administrative dealings and the website. The elements that go into deciding how to achieve continuous improvement are acquired, among other ways, through recommendations by the services' users. Therefore, the instrument for measuring the satisfaction of companies and institutions participating on the work experience programme also includes sections for this, as can be seen in figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Assessment questionnaire for the company/institution

CUESTIONARIO EVALUACIÓN PARA LA EMPRESA/INSTITUCIÓN	FECHA: _____	 Universitat d'Alicante Universidad de Alicante
NOMBRE DEL ESTUDIANTE: _____	APELLIDOS, NOMBRE DE TUTOR/A E/I: _____	
EMPRESA/INSTITUCIÓN: _____		

Estimado tutor/a nos gustaría conocer su opinión sobre la Práctica realizada por el estudiante con el fin de introducir las mejoras necesarias en dicho servicio. Por favor, cumplimente este cuestionario señalando con una "X" las respuestas que considere oportunas, y entréguelo al tutor/a del estudiante en prácticas de la Universidad de Alicante. Nuestro programa de prácticas garantiza la confidencialidad en el tratamiento de la información recogida en este cuestionario. Gracias por su colaboración.

<p>EVALUACIÓN DEL ESTUDIANTE</p> <p>1. Valore de 0 a 10 la práctica realizada por el estudiante en su empresa. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. Valore de 0 a 10 los siguientes aspectos del estudiante durante la realización de la práctica:</p> <p>2.1. Adecuación de su formación académica a las necesidades de la empresa/institución. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2.2. Grado de integración en el equipo de trabajo. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2.3. Actitud personal. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2.4. Desarrollo de las actividades previstas. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3. ¿Cree que esta práctica facilitará la incorporación del estudiante al mercado laboral? 1. Sí <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4. Si la hiciera falta personal, ¿contrataría al estudiante que ha tenido en prácticas? 1. Sí <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">↳ ¿Por qué? _____</p> <p>5. ¿Volvería a tener un estudiante en prácticas? 1. Sí <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">↳ ¿Por qué? _____</p> <p>TUTORIA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE ALICANTE</p> <p>6. A su juicio, la labor del tutor/a de la Universidad durante el desarrollo de la práctica ha sido:</p> <p>1. Muy buena..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. Buena..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3. Regular..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4. Mala..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5. Muy mala..... <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>SATISFACCIÓN CON LAS PRÁCTICAS</p> <p>7. ¿El programa de "Prácticas en Empresa" ha cubierto sus expectativas? 1. Sí <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">↳ ¿Por qué? _____</p> <p>8. Valore, en general, las "Prácticas en empresa" de 0 a 10. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>9. Valore de 0 a 10 la información recibida por parte del Vicedecanato de Prácticas en Empresa. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>PERSONAL ADMINISTRATIVO</p> <p>10. ¿Es fácil contactar con el personal administrativo de la universidad? 1. Sí <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>11. Valore de 0 a 10 el servicio que ha recibido por parte del personal administrativo de la universidad. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>PÁGINA WEB</p> <p>12. ¿Ha accedido a la página web de la Universidad de Alicante o del Vicedecanato de Prácticas en Empresa para realizar alguna consulta? 1. Sí <input type="checkbox"/> 2. No <input type="checkbox"/> 99. Ns/No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>13. ¿Cómo ha conocido el Programa de Prácticas en empresas? 1. A través de la página web de la Universidad de Alicante..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. Por los carteles o por el tablón de anuncios de la oficina de prácticas..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3. Por medio de otras empresas o instituciones..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4. Me llamaron desde el Vicedecanato de Prácticas en Empresa..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5. Contactó un alumno directamente..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>6. He participado en el programa de la UA otros años..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>7. Otros..... <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">↳ ¿cuál? _____</p> <p>14. En general, ¿qué aspecto o aspectos cree usted que es necesario mejorar en relación al servicio de prácticas del VPE? _____ _____ _____</p> <p>OBSERVACIONES/SUGERENCIAS</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>
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Firma del Tutor/a de la empresa y sello

The second questionnaire is aimed at the student, regardless of what degree he or she is studying for, whether Business Administration and Management, Economics, Advertising and Public Relations or Sociology. Anonymity is guaranteed, given the collection system and the way the information reflected

in the header of this standardised questionnaire is later analysed and processed. The first question covers the need for a close relationship between that studied in the lecture hall and that practiced outside it. It is written as follows: *Is the work experience you have carried out suitable for the curricular content of your degree?* Following this are scaled and reasoned questions for evaluating the work, the qualification and ability to follow through of the university tutor and in order to mark the work carried out by the non-academic tutor from the company or institution and, in general terms, the host centre. A number of questions about entering the job market are given, stated in the following way: *Do you think that this work experience will facilitate your entry into the job market?, As regards you entering the professional world, do you think this experience has been very beneficial, quite beneficial, not very beneficial or not at all beneficial?, Did the company/institution offer you the chance to continue within it once the work experience period ended? and, if so, How was your relationship with the company established?* After these, there is a request, as shown in figure 4, for an evaluation of the administrative personnel and of the website, concluding with a request for aspects that could be improved and a space for comments and suggestions.

Figure 4: Assessment questionnaire for the student

CUESTIONARIO PARA EL/LA ESTUDIANTE	Titulación:	Fecha:	 Universitat d'Alacant Universidad de Alicante
Apellidos, nombre:			

Nos gustaría conocer tu opinión sobre las prácticas que has realizado con el fin de introducir las mejoras necesarias en el servicio. Cumplimenta este cuestionario, señalando con una "X" las respuestas que consideres oportunas y entregalo en "sobre cerrado" junto a tu memoria de prácticas o en la oficina administrativa del Vicedecanato de Prácticas en Empresa de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales de la Universidad de Alicante. Los datos que nos facilites son confidenciales y serán tratados sólo de forma conjunta. Gracias por tu colaboración.

1. ¿Las prácticas que has realizado, se adecuan a los contenidos curriculares de tu titulación?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

TUTORIA DE PRÁCTICAS

2. Valora de 0 a 10 la labor de tu tutor/a de la UA.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99. Ns/Nc
Explica el motivo de tu valoración: _____

3. Tu tutor/a de la UA durante las prácticas se ha mostrado:
1. Muy interesado/a
2. Bastante interesado/a
3. Ni muy interesado/a ni poco
4. Poco interesado/a
5. Nada interesado/a

4. ¿Ha sido fácil contactar con tu tutor/a de la UA?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

5. ¿Cual ha sido la forma habitual de contactar con tu tutor/a de la UA?
1. Visita personal
2. Por teléfono
3. Mediante correo electrónico o tutoría a través del campus virtual

6. ¿Consideras que tu tutor/a de la UA tiene la cualificación necesaria para resolver las dudas e incidencias que puedan surgir a lo largo de la practica?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

7. (Sólo en caso de haber tenido algún problema durante las prácticas) ¿Tu tutor/a de la UA solucionó eficazmente dicho problema?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

TUTORIA DE LA EMPRESA/INSTITUCIÓN

8. Valora de 0 a 10 la labor de tu tutor/a de la empresa/institución
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99. Ns/Nc
Explica el motivo de tu valoración: _____

9. Dentro de la empresa/institución, te has sentido:
1. Muy integrado/a
2. Bastante integrado/a
3. Ni muy integrado/a ni poco
4. Poco integrado/a
5. Nada integrado/a

SATISFACCIÓN CON LAS PRÁCTICAS

10. La práctica realizada, ¿ha cubierto tus expectativas?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc
↳ ¿Por qué? _____

11. Valora tu práctica de 0 a 10.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99. Ns/Nc

12. ¿Ha sido difícil compatibilizar las prácticas con los estudios?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

13. ¿Crees que esta práctica te facilitará la incorporación al mercado laboral?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

14. En relación a tu inserción en el mundo del trabajo, consideras esta experiencia:
1. Muy beneficiosa
2. Bastante beneficiosa
3. Poco beneficiosa
4. Nada beneficiosa

15. ¿Te ha ofrecido la empresa/institución la posibilidad de continuar en ella una vez finalizado el periodo de prácticas?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

16. ¿Y de qué forma se establece tu relación con la empresa?
1. A través de una beca
2. Con un contrato en prácticas
3. Con un contrato de trabajo temporal
4. Con un contrato de trabajo indefinido
5. Otra situación (especificar) _____

PERSONAL ADMINISTRATIVO

17. ¿Es fácil contactar con el personal administrativo del Vicedecanato de Prácticas en Empresa (VPE)?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc

18. Valora de 0 a 10 el servicio que has recibido por parte del personal administrativo del VPE.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99. Ns/Nc

19. Valora de 0 a 10 la información facilitada sobre las prácticas.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 99. Ns/Nc

PÁGINA WEB

20. ¿Cómo has conocido el Programa de Práctica en empresas?
1. Por internet/página web de la UA
2. Por los carteles o por el tablón de anuncios de la oficina de prácticas
3. A través de otros compañeros
4. A través de mis profesores
5. A través de una sesión informativa
6. Otra forma
Especificar _____


21. ¿Has utilizado la página web del VPE para realizar algún tipo de consulta?
1. Si 2. No 99. Ns/Nc
↳ ¿Por qué? _____

22. En general, ¿qué aspecto o aspectos crees que es necesario mejorar en relación al servicio de prácticas del VPE?

OBSERVACIONES/SUGERENCIAS

Figure 5 shows the tool designed for the final assessment, by the academic tutor, of the organisations where the students tutored have carried out their external curricular work experience. The intention is that this be an analysis and measurement instrument, based on the scalar evaluation of variables and of the suitability of organisations for hosting university students during their education through external curricular work experience. Therefore, the items subject to evaluation are as follows: *The position is suitable for the skills and knowledge involved in the degree, In this company/institution, the student has the chance to acquire knowledge related to his or her degree, In this company the student has the chance to develop skills and attitudes that are valid for his or her professional future, The tutor from the company/institution has met expectations as regards guidance in the work experience, Would you place a student in this company/institution for work experience again?* The suggestions and comments come before a general mark for the assessment. If this mark is lower than ten, as reflected in the following figure, it is recommended that the organisation do not continue on the university work experience programme.

Figure 5: Alicante University tutor questionnaire regarding the companies/institutions he or she is responsible for

CUESTIONARIO DEL TUTOR/A DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE ALICANTE SOBRE LAS EMPRESAS/INSTITUCIONES A SU CARGO	Fecha:	 Universitat d'Alacant Universidad de Alicante
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*Estimado Tutor/a de la UA, nos gustaría conocer su opinión sobre las Prácticas que han realizado los estudiantes en las distintas **Empresas/Instituciones (E/I)** a su cargo. Con estos datos, la UA estudiará la idoneidad de las mismas para próximos cursos. Por favor, cumplimente este cuestionario. Gracias por su colaboración*

TITULACIÓN	
TUTOR QUE EVALÚA	
EMPRESA/INSTITUCIÓN	

1. El puesto es acorde con las competencias y conocimientos propios de la titulación
 1 2 3 4 5 99. Ns/Nc
2. En esta empresa el estudiante tiene la posibilidad de adquirir conocimientos relacionados con su titulación
 1 2 3 4 5 99. Ns/Nc
3. En esta empresa el estudiante tiene la posibilidad de desarrollar habilidades y actitudes válidas para su futuro profesional
 1 2 3 4 5 99. Ns/Nc
4. El tutor/a de la E/I ha respondido a las expectativas de tutela de la Práctica
 1 2 3 4 5 99. Ns/Nc
5. ¿Volvería a tutelar un estudiante en prácticas en esta E/I?
 1 2 3 4 5 99. Ns/Nc
6. Observaciones/Sugerencias:

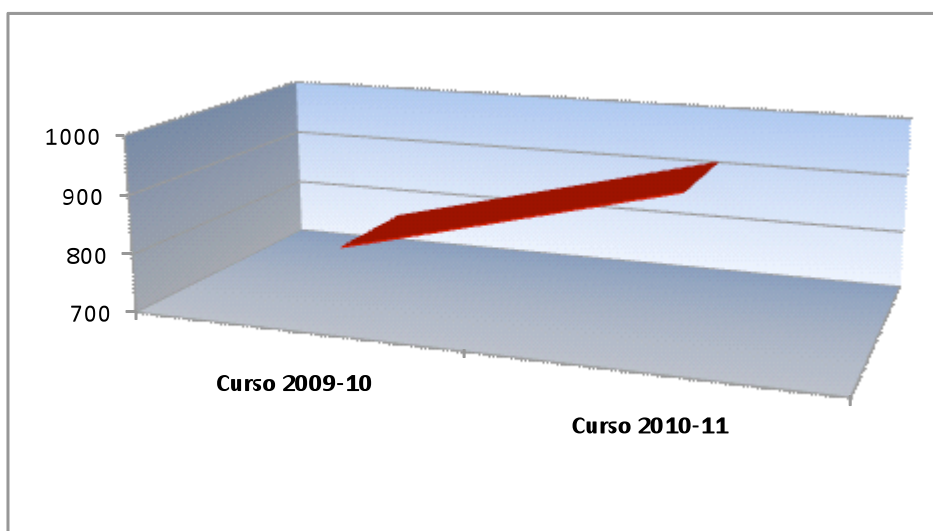
Criterio de evaluación para el curso siguiente:
 Puntuación entre 10 y 15...Analizar su continuación en la UA
 Puntuación < 10 Recomendable su no continuación en el Programa de Prácticas de la UA

PUNTUACIÓN / 25

3 RESULTS

The satisfaction of the different agents involved in the Faculty of Economics and Business' external curricular work experience process is increasing year after year. The same is happening with the number of organisations participating and the number of students registering for the programme. An example of this last trend is the figure for this academic year, 2010-2011, which is 937 students who are supplementing their education with a training period doing work experience. This figure is an increase of 15% on last year, when 795 work experience places were finally allocated. The number of credits matriculated by the students has also undergone a notable increase since the 1999-2000 course, when the centre's work experience programme began.

Graph 1: Change in the number of students registering for external work experience at Alicante University's Faculty of Economics and Business (2009/10-2010/11 academic years)



Although the reasons for matriculating for the Work Experience at Companies subject are very varied, and not always directly related to satisfaction as regards the programme, a clear indicator that the mixed model for the measurement of skill acquisition and the satisfaction of agents involved is working, is the qualitative and quantitative results of the assessments by students, companies and institutions and academic tutors. The results of the Vice-deaconate of External Work Experience's activity report for the last academic year, 2009-2010, showed very positive results that extended the trend registered in recent years; see table 1.

Table 1: Overall evaluation (0-10) of the external work experience at Alicante University's Faculty of Economics and Business by students and companies/institutions

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Students' evaluation</i>	<i>Companies' evaluation</i>
<i>2004-2005</i>	8.35	8.38
<i>2005-2006</i>	8.47	8.48
<i>2006-2007</i>	8.51	8.56
<i>2007-2008</i>	8.58	8.65
<i>2008-2009</i>	8.60	8.70
<i>2009-2010</i>	8.68	8.79

The overall evaluation of the work experience by the students is an average of 8.68 out of 10, and that by the companies and institutions, 8.79. Every day, more students and more companies participate in the external work experience programme and overall satisfaction, with response levels higher than 95%, is showing a gradual increase.

4 DISCUSSION

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this experience of continuous assessment and improvement in performance, constantly adapting to the requirements of the University and its socio-economic environment. These include the fact that the determining factor for achieving optimum and positive results in the process of training, through external work experience, students studying Business Administration and Management, Economics, Advertising and Public Relations and Sociology at Alicante University is the establishment of a link between assessment and quality. This quality is perceived in the student support services, so that students always know who to turn to, and can obtain an immediate answer to a query, doubt or concern from the time when they first consider curricular work experience to the very end of the process. In this way, students have at their disposal: the administrative office of the Vice-deaconate of External Work Experience, with administrators who are both personally and professionally qualified to attend to their doubts and cooperate in the more efficient way possible when processing their work experience; and an academic tutor who carries out personalised and detailed continuous monitoring of the student's work experience, resolving their doubts, ensuring rigorousness and a close relationship between the work experience and the degree's curricular content as well as resolving in a satisfactory way any kind of incident that may arise.

The companies and institutions where the students carry out their work experience are, in turn, a fundamental piece in the external curricular work experience process. For this reason, offering them an excellent service is a priority, especially given that, for them, the Vice-deaconate of External Work Experience is the representative and image of Alicante University and this department is fully aware of the importance of maintaining mutually beneficial and cooperative relationships with the business and institutional fabric of the immediate surroundings. The companies and institutions have the administrative office of the Faculty of Economics and Business at their disposal, with highly-qualified personnel available to attend to their queries and to cooperate actively in administering the work experience; they also have a university lecturer, appointed by the centre as an academic tutor, who will act as a link between the university, the student and the company or institution. The cooperation of this tutor is crucial for achieving optimum results in each case of work experience carried out by a student.

With regard to the management of the information that is handed over and received by the Vice-deaconate of External Work Experience, clarity and objectiveness are the basic premises of the internal approach, and there is special emphasis on transparency with regard to the publication and allocation of the curricular work experience offered to students interested in doing it.

The combination of continuous assessment (tutorial-monitoring) and final assessment (report and questionnaires) is key to ensuring quality with respect to teaching-learning processes in the university sphere and, consequently, shows great potential as a tool to encourage the convergence of university undergraduate degrees within the framework of the European Higher Education Space.

External curricular work experience, that is to say, that included on the syllabuses of the different university undergraduate degrees, is taking on major importance and is becoming very necessary within the current university context, which is globalised and highly competitive. Establishing an assessment system for work experience that contributes to ensuring its quality and the satisfaction of the different parties involved, allowing them to participate in the process and consulting them regularly and methodically, is vital for the success of the experience.

It can be concluded that the modest experience of the University of Alicante, far from intending to become a model to imitate or a panacea for those wishing to implement assessment models that are different from the classical models and who want to correct inefficient aspects of these models, may rather constitute a simple example that works in a certain university context and that is offering positive results.

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