## Practices of practical learning on distance during the COVID19 pandemic

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**Background:**

“Gilde Opleidingen” is one of the biggest VET school in the south of the Netherlands and have around 9000 students and over 1000 staff members. Gilde Opleidingen provides VET training for youngsters and adults for almost all economic sectors (Technical, Economic, Logistic, Defense, Healthcare, Welfare, Hospitality, Wellness, Bakery, facility services, ICT etc.)

**Workbased learning in the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, workbased learning is one of the most important elements of the qualification. There are two ways to achieve a qualification: a workbased route, where the students has a contract in the company and works 4 days/week in the company and has 1 day lessons at school. The other possibility is the schoolbased route, where the workbased learning is also a major part of the curriculum. Both learning pathways lead to the same qualification. Students who choose for the schoolbased route often go further to higher VET. The students who choose for the workbased route often stay in the company.

In the Netherlands it is obliged to do the workplacement in a recognized (certified) company. This means that they comply with certain quality standards and are able to host students for that particular (part of the) qualification. This label is provided by the SBB. An instititute for labour market and VET.

**Practical training training during the COVID19 pandemic**

The requirements as stated above makes the situation during the pandemic very complex and challenging. The advantage however, is that the schools in the Netherlands have a lot of authonomy. As long as they comply with the qualification standards, they are free to design the curriculum at school level.

The situation in this time of year is that almost all students have planned their workplacement period, or were already in the middle of it. Most of the workplacement periodes are long and between 10-20 weeks. This means that missing this part, is crucial for their pathway.

Gilde Opleidingen follows the guidelines of the ministry of education and the national health service organization. Within this framework the VET centre tries to design the workplacements as good as possible.

The following situations are happening:

* Students who are doing, or planned to do their internship in the healthcare sector are more than welcome. In this case there is no problem. The students continue their training programme.
* The national guidelines indicate that internships can go on, as long as they comply with the guidelines and as long as both parties (student and company) agree. In some of the cases this is the situation. So then there is no problem.
* The students that cannot longer continue with their internship have to temporarily stop their internship. For some of the students the school managed to find another work placement company, but this situation is rare. In practice it means that for the majority of the students their internships ends here.

In this case some of the companies provide the students practical assignments at home or in some cases, at school. For example when the students needs specific equipment or machines, the student has to ask for permission so finish their assignment at school. It is also possible that the school gives the student an assignment to do at home. It requires a lot of tailor made solutions.

Examples of practical training at home:

* The instructors record video`s/ tutorials for specific assignments. For example in the bakery, the students can follow via an instruction video on how to make the dough and bake the cake. The instructor is online to provide support and the student record their process and results.
* For the hairdressers, the students get an artificial “model” to practice on at home. Here as well, they are instructed via video.
* For the construction sector, students receives a practical assignment at home. Often they first have to make a plan and prototype and the trainer provides support. All students have their own toolbox, but in case they need specific machinery, an appointment can be made at school. Following a planning to make sure that there are not too many people in one room, the students can finish their assignments. Especially the students who have to graduate this year get priority.
* For students in sectors where it is difficult to do an assignment at home, or where the practical training is about contact with customers, the training center provides other training. In this case the school provides the theoretical training that was foreseen for the next schoolyear already now and the work placement will be done next schoolyear. This is only applicable for students who are not graduating.
* It is also possible for students to do temporarily voluntary work in a sector where hands are much needed at the moment. Their effort will be taken into account in their record as well.
* It is also possible that student can focus on excellence programs on higher VET for example. This is especially for students who have planned to go to higher VET.

The national guidelines state that in this exceptional situation, the student can be judged on the *quality* of the work and not longer on the obliged work placement *hours* (this is not possible anymore). This means that the judgement of the practical part of the training not longer depends only on the workplacement that they had to do in this period, but also on results that are achieved earlier this year and during other workplacements (comparable with recognition of prior learning).