



Framework of “Industrial Practical and Research Internships”

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Contributing partners	Consortium

1. Introduction

The Digi-CHange project aims to support digital transformation in healthcare education through the integration of digital-health concepts and technologies into medical and nursing education. The project is based on an interprofessional approach in which medical and nursing educators work together and interact with technology and industry representatives. The project therefore combines curriculum development with practical exposure to digital-health tools and stronger collaboration between higher education and industry. *Work Package 2, Establishment and Networking of Digi-CHange Labs*, contributes to this objective through the development of Digi-CHange Labs in the beneficiary higher education institutions of Georgia and Ukraine and through establishment of the Digi-CHange Network. The Network is intended to support knowledge sharing and joint activities among consortium institutions, academia and industry. Task T2.3 focuses specifically on the establishment of this Network. Alongside frameworks for joint educational and assessment activities, entrepreneurship initiatives, eLearning and virtual mobility, the task requires development of the concept and framework of “industrial practical and research internships”.

The present document provides this framework.

Its purpose is to establish a common understanding of how practical and research internships **may be organised within the Digi-CHange Network when suitable opportunities are developed**. It describes the purpose of such internships, the principal actors involved and the basic process that can be followed by partner institutions.

The framework is enabling rather than prescriptive. It does not require every Digi-CHange partner to organise an internship, nor does it establish a separate compulsory internship programme within the project. Where a partner institution chooses to organise an internship within the Digi-CHange Network, the framework can be used as a common reference while the detailed academic and administrative arrangements remain subject to the regulations of the participating institution and the requirements of the host organisation.

¹ Funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



2. Place of Internships within WP2

The internship framework should be understood as one component of the broader WP2 structure.

T2.1 establishes the Digi-CHange Labs and provides beneficiary institutions with the physical and digital infrastructure required to strengthen practical exposure to digital-health tools. The Labs are intended to support implementation of the updated medical and nursing curricula and to connect practical learning with the digital-health “knowledge chain”.

T2.2 develops the capacity of faculty and staff to use these tools and facilities effectively in education. This creates a foundation for practical learning inside the higher education institutions.

T2.3 extends this activity through the Digi-CHange Network. Its role is to facilitate collaboration among consortium members and between academia and industry and to establish common mechanisms through which this collaboration may take place. The internship framework represents one such mechanism.

T2.4 subsequently focuses on collaboration and joint activities. It promotes joint educational and assessment initiatives, encourages industry participation in academia-driven projects and research activities, and foresees case- and problem-based approaches for joint practical and research activities.

The relationship can therefore be expressed simply as: **Digi-CHange Labs and academic learning → Digi-CHange Network → possible practical or research internship → further collaboration where relevant.** An internship is therefore one possible way in which the Network may connect academic learning with external practical or research environments. It is not the only form of academia–industry collaboration foreseen by the project.

3. Purpose of Industrial Practical and Research Internships

Within Digi-CHange, industrial practical and research internships are understood as structured opportunities through which a participant may apply academic knowledge, explore a real practical problem or contribute to research in cooperation with an external organisation.

The central purpose is to create a bridge between academic learning and real-world application. Depending on the type of opportunity, this may involve exposure to digital-health technologies, healthcare innovation, digital workflows, research methods, data use, technology implementation or other areas relevant to the Digi-CHange objectives.

Such internships can also strengthen interaction between higher education institutions and industry. A placement may create an initial relationship between an academic institution and an external organisation, provide a setting for knowledge exchange or identify an area for future educational or research collaboration.

The framework does not assume that every internship must produce a larger collaboration. Its main role is to ensure that, where an internship is organised, the purpose and expectations are clear to the participant, the academic institution and the host organisation.

4. Scope

The framework may be applied when a Digi-CHange partner institution develops or participates in an internship opportunity with an industry, technology, healthcare, research or innovation organisation.

It is particularly relevant to students involved in medical and nursing education because these are the primary educational fields addressed by Digi-CHange. Where appropriate, interdisciplinary participation from related areas may also be possible, depending on the nature of the opportunity.

An internship may take place locally or internationally and may be organised physically, virtually or through a hybrid format. The framework does not establish a compulsory duration, number of ECTS credits or common grading system.

These arrangements remain the responsibility of the participating higher education institution.

The essential feature is that the activity has a clear connection with academic learning and provides meaningful practical or research experience relevant to Digi-CHange.



5. Types of Internship

5.1 Industrial Practical Internship

An Industrial Practical Internship is primarily focused on the application of knowledge in an external professional or technological environment.

The participant may observe how a digital-health technology or process is used in practice and, where appropriate to their level of preparation, contribute to a defined activity or problem.

For example, the participant might examine a digital-health workflow, contribute to evaluation of a technology, explore how a digital solution is implemented within an organisation, support development of a practical case or analyse a specific operational challenge.

The activity should be appropriate to the participant's academic level and should go beyond passive observation whenever possible.

The expected result may take different forms. It may be a short report, workflow analysis, practical case, presentation, evaluation summary or another product agreed with the host organisation and academic supervisor.

5.2 Industrial Research Internship

An Industrial Research Internship is primarily focused on a defined research or evaluation activity undertaken in cooperation with an external organisation.

The participant may contribute to a research question relevant to the host organisation and to their academic development. Depending on the opportunity, this may involve evidence review, data analysis, technology evaluation, research planning or another appropriate research activity.

The research activity should be realistic in relation to the available time, resources and level of the participant.

A publication is not required. The expected output may instead be a research report, analysis, protocol, poster, presentation or another agreed research product.

An internship may contain both practical and research elements. In such cases, there is no need to create an additional formal category; the agreed activities can simply be described in the internship documentation.

6. Possible Host Organisations

The term *industrial* is used in this framework in a broad sense consistent with the aims of Digi-CHange.

Potential internship hosts may therefore include organisations working in digital health, healthcare technology, medical devices, diagnostics, digital pathology, health information systems, artificial intelligence, software, biotechnology, research and development or other relevant areas.

Healthcare institutions with relevant digital-health, research or innovation activities may also provide suitable environments.

The suitability of a host should be determined by the nature of the proposed activity rather than only by the type of organisation.

The important consideration is whether the organisation can provide a meaningful environment relevant to the objectives of Digi-CHange and appropriate guidance for the participant.

7. Development of an Internship Opportunity

An internship opportunity may originate from a Digi-CHange partner institution, a Digi-CHange Lab, an industry organisation or another organisation connected with the Network.

Before an opportunity is offered to a participant, the academic institution and host organisation should agree on its basic purpose. They should establish what the participant would do, what type of experience would be gained, what output could reasonably be expected and who would provide supervision.

The activity should be sufficiently clear to ensure that the internship has educational or research value. An internship should not be created solely because an organisation is available to host a participant.

Where the opportunity is considered suitable, the academic institution may identify or select a participant according to its normal institutional procedures.



A brief **Internship Opportunity Description** may be used to support this process. A common template is provided in Annex 1, but partner institutions may use their own equivalent documentation.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

The framework requires only a small number of clearly understood roles.

Actor	Role
Partner Higher Education Institution	Confirms that the opportunity is appropriate, identifies or selects the participant and applies its institutional requirements.
Host Organisation	Provides the practical or research environment and the resources needed for the agreed activity.
Academic Supervisor or Coordinator	Ensures that the internship has academic or research relevance and remains available to support the participant.
Host Supervisor	Provides guidance within the host organisation and feedback on the participant's activity.
Participant	Undertakes the agreed activity responsibly and completes the agreed output.
Digi-CHange Lab, where relevant	May support preparation or follow-up connected with digital-health tools or practical learning.

RTU, as the lead beneficiary for T2.3/MS5, and TMA, as the coordinator of the Digi-CHange project, are responsible for coordinating the common framework at project level. This does not mean that RTU nor TMA manage individual internships organised by other beneficiaries.

Each beneficiary remains responsible for the project activities it implements and for compliance with applicable requirements.

9. Internship Process

Where a Digi-CHange internship is organised, the process should remain simple.

It begins when a suitable opportunity is identified and discussed between the higher education institution and the potential host organisation. The partners clarify the purpose of the activity, the expected participant contribution, the likely duration and the supervision available.

An appropriate participant is then identified according to the procedures of the participating institution. Before the internship starts, the participant, academic contact and host supervisor agree the main activity, expected outcome and practical arrangements.

These elements may be recorded in a short **Internship Agreement** or equivalent institutional document.

During the internship, the participant undertakes the agreed activities under the guidance of the host supervisor. The academic supervisor or coordinator remains available where academic or research guidance is required.

At the end of the internship, the participant provides the agreed output and receives brief feedback. Where useful, the participant may also provide a short reflection on what was learned from the experience.

The process can be represented as: **Opportunity identified → activity agreed → participant identified → internship undertaken → output and feedback → possible follow-up**

This is intended as a common orientation rather than a compulsory administrative procedure. Partner institutions may incorporate these steps into their existing internship arrangements.

10. Expected Learning

The internship framework does not create a separate Digi-CHange competency framework.

The expected learning should instead be appropriate to the participant's programme, level of study and the specific internship activity.



Depending on the opportunity, a participant may strengthen their ability to apply digital-health knowledge in practice, understand how technologies are used within real organisations, analyse practical problems, contribute to research, communicate with people from different disciplinary backgrounds or reflect on the responsible use of digital technologies.

For a practical internship, emphasis may be placed on understanding and applying knowledge in a real environment.

For a research internship, emphasis may be placed on research reasoning, use of evidence, analysis and interpretation.

The exact learning expectations should therefore be agreed for each internship rather than prescribed identically across the Digi-CHange Network.

11. Relationship with Digi-CHange Labs

Digi-CHange Labs and internships are complementary but do not have to be directly linked in every case. Where relevant, a Lab may support preparation for an internship by allowing participants to become familiar with a digital-health tool or approach before entering an external organisation.

A Lab may also provide a setting for discussion or continuation of an activity after the internship. For example, a non-confidential problem identified during an internship may later be used as a case for teaching or practical discussion.

In other situations, the internship may have no direct connection with a particular Digi-CHange Lab activity. This does not prevent it from being relevant to the Network.

The connection should therefore be used where it adds educational or collaborative value rather than imposed as a compulsory element.

12. Practical and Research Outputs

The framework does not prescribe one common internship product.

The output should be appropriate to the activity and agreed before or at the beginning of the internship.

A practical internship might lead to a report, workflow description, technology evaluation, case, presentation or recommendation.

A research internship might lead to a protocol, analysis, research report, poster or presentation.

The output should demonstrate that the participant engaged meaningfully with the agreed activity.

Where confidentiality applies, the format should be adapted so that protected information is not disclosed.

13. Ethics, Data Protection and Confidentiality

Internships organised within Digi-CHange must respect the applicable requirements of the participating institutions, host organisation and national legislation.

Where personal data are involved, the relevant data-protection requirements must also be respected.

If a proposed research activity requires ethical approval, the relevant approval must be obtained before the activity begins.

Where the host organisation requires confidentiality arrangements, these should be made clear to the participant before the internship.

The framework itself does not replace the more detailed ethical, legal or institutional procedures that may apply to a specific activity.

14. Connection with Other Digi-CHange Network Activities

Internships are one possible form of collaboration within the Digi-CHange Network.

Where an internship produces a useful new relationship or identifies an area of common interest, the academic institution and host may choose to continue their cooperation.

For example, the experience may lead to a joint educational activity, further research, a workshop, an industry contribution to an academic project or another internship opportunity.



T2.4 provides the broader context for such continuation because it is dedicated to collaboration and joint activities within the Digi-CHange Network and to encouraging industry participation in academia-driven projects and research.

Such continuation is desirable where appropriate but is not a compulsory outcome of every internship.

15. Monitoring

No separate complex monitoring system is required for this framework.

If internships are organised, participating institutions should retain basic information sufficient to demonstrate the activity and support project reporting. This may include the host organisation, type of internship, participating institution, period of activity, general topic and type of output.

A brief participant or host feedback note may also be useful for understanding whether the opportunity should be repeated or modified.

At project level, internship activities may be reported together with the wider academia–industry joint activities implemented through WP2.

The framework does not create new quantitative targets beyond those already contained in the Grant Agreement.

16. Sustainability

The framework is designed so that it can be used beyond the immediate project period without creating a heavy additional administrative system.

Where partner institutions find the model useful, internship opportunities may continue through existing institutional procedures, formal partnerships with industry or other forms of collaboration.

The value of the framework therefore lies primarily in providing a shared Digi-CHange concept and a simple structure that partners can adapt to their own context.

17. Minimum Common Elements

The common Digi-CHange approach can be reduced to several essential elements.

Where an internship is organised within the Network, there should be a clearly defined practical or research activity relevant to academic learning and to the objectives of Digi-CHange. The host organisation and participating higher education institution should agree on the activity and identify appropriate persons to provide academic and host-side guidance.

The participant should understand what is expected, undertake meaningful activity and produce an agreed output. Where relevant, safety, ethics, data protection and confidentiality requirements should be addressed according to institutional and host procedures.

These elements are sufficient to provide a common framework without creating an additional compulsory internship regulation for the consortium.

18. Conclusion

The Framework of “Industrial Practical and Research Internships” fulfils the purpose of MS5 by establishing a structured and formalised approach that may be used when internship opportunities are developed within the Digi-CHange Network.

The framework reflects the broader aim of WP2 to connect Digi-CHange Labs and higher education institutions with industry and to strengthen practical exposure and academia–industry collaboration.

It distinguishes two broad possibilities: practical internships, which emphasise application of knowledge in an external environment, and research internships, which emphasise participation in a defined research or evaluation activity.

The framework defines the main actors and a simple implementation process while leaving detailed academic and administrative arrangements to participating institutions.

Most importantly, the framework should be understood as an **enabling mechanism of the Digi-CHange Network**. It makes internships possible within a common project approach but does not require every partner to organise an internship or create a separate institutional internship programme.



Annexes

The following annexes form an integral part of the Framework of “Industrial Practical and Research Internships”. They are limited to the essential templates that may support the development, agreement and completion of practical and research internship opportunities within the Digi-CHange Network. The main body of the framework defines the overall purpose, roles, responsibilities and implementation process, while the annexes provide simple instruments that partners may use where an internship opportunity is developed. Each institution may adapt the templates to its internal regulations, organisational structure and existing internship procedures. Where an equivalent institutional document already exists, it may be used or referenced instead of duplicating information. The use of these templates does not create an obligation for Digi-CHange partners to organise internships within the project.

Annex 1. Indicative Internship Opportunity Description

This template may be used where a partner develops an internship opportunity. Institutions may also use their own equivalent documentation.

Information	Description
Host organisation	
Partner HEI	
Internship title/topic	
Type	Practical / Research
Proposed period	
Mode	Physical / Virtual / Hybrid
Main activity or research question	
Expected participant contribution	
Expected output	
Host Supervisor	
Academic contact	
Specific requirements, where applicable	

Brief description

The academic institution and host organisation should provide a short description of the opportunity explaining what the participant would do and how the activity relates to digital health, research, healthcare technology or another relevant Digi-CHange area.



Annex 2. Indicative Internship Activity Plan

Participant:

Higher Education Institution:

Host Organisation:

Academic Supervisor/Coordinator:

Host Supervisor:

Internship type: Practical / Research

Period:

Mode: Physical / Virtual / Hybrid

Purpose

Briefly describe the practical activity, project or research question.

Expected activity

Describe what the participant is expected to undertake during the internship.

Expected learning or research result

Describe what the participant is expected to gain, investigate or demonstrate.

Expected output

Indicate the report, presentation, analysis, research product or other output expected at completion.

Supervision

Describe the basic arrangement for host and academic support.

Specific conditions

Where relevant, indicate requirements concerning ethics, data protection, confidentiality, safety or intellectual property.

Confirmation

Participant: _____

Host Supervisor: _____

Academic Supervisor/Coordinator: _____

Date: _____



Annex 3. Indicative Completion and Feedback Note

Participant:

Host Organisation:

Internship period:

Type: Practical / Research

Participant

Briefly describe the activity completed and the main result or output.

What was the main learning from the experience?

Host Supervisor

Were the agreed activities substantially completed?

Yes / Partly / No

Short comment:

Academic Supervisor/Coordinator

Was the internship completed in accordance with the agreed purpose?

Yes / Partly / No

Short comment:

Possible continuation

Has the internship identified an opportunity for further Digi-CHange collaboration?

Yes / No / To be explored

If yes, briefly describe:
