

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 2025-2026

Version 14 October 2025

*Guidelines
Evaluation*

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PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1. Objective

The main objective of the IMBRSea Professional Practice (PP) 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 real-life job scenarios. They may also be engaged in NGOs or Consultancy companies, 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/supervisor

The PP mentor/supervisor also commits to making sure that the rules of the Professional Practice are respected within the host organisation, including providing adequate supervision to the internship student, and ensuring work coherence with the expected educational objectives.

2.3 Academic supervisor

The academic supervisor is the responsible teacher for the Professional-Practice module of the IMBRSea programme. Also teaching assistants are involved in providing support and assistance to first-year IMBRSea students during their PP. The student should stay in regular contact with the academic supervision team of IMBRSea. The PP academic-supervision team also serves as a resource to resolve both technical and practical problems that may occur during the Professional Practice. The PP academic-supervision team is also the primary point of contact between the PP-host institutions and the IMBRSea central coordination.

The PP academic supervisor is also responsible for the management of the Professional Practices, as well as the development and application of applicable rules and regulations.

2.4 Coordinator of the IMBRSea programme

The signature of this person is mandatory for establishing a legally binding Professional-Practice agreement. The IMBRSea coordinator has the authority to make any final decisions related to conflicts that may arise during the Professional Practice that cannot be resolved through mediation among the involved parties.

3. Rules governing IMBRSea Professional Practices

See IMBRSea Professional Practice

Regulations:

<https://imbrsea.eu/professionalpractice>

4. The online reflective portfolio

"We do not learn from experience, but by reflecting on experience." – John Dewey

During the Professional Practice, the student must compile an online reflective portfolio. At the end of the Professional Practice, the student must submit a final reflective report.

Two webinars are organized to explain the regulations of the Professional Practice: one, at the second half of the first semester, and a second, at the start of the second semester and before the internships start, to introduce the goals, requirements, evaluation criteria and follow-up mechanisms of the Professional Practice.

4.1 Portfolio tasks: detailed description

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

Week 1:

- An initial meeting is organized between the student and the Professional Practice mentor. Before this meeting, each student must define their 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 should also be decided.
 - **Portfolio task 1: Initial meeting report / Work plan / Learning objectives**
 - 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-competencies. Ensure that, for each end-competence, at least one specific objective is specified.
 - Agenda points for the initial meeting should at least include:
 - Work plan
 - Who has what tasks and responsibilities?
 - 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.
 - PP personal **work plan**: If you are doing a Professional Practice together with other students, make sure that your individual tasks and responsibilities have been well defined.

	End competence	Examples of personal objectives
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).	<i>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.</i>
2	Critically evaluate how they have contributed to their host organisation's objectives	<i>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.</i>
3	Explain how they applied previously acquired theory and practical knowledge to their professional duties in the host organisation.	<i>During the Fundamentals Module in the course Quantitative Methods in Marine Science, I first started learning to use R, and I would like to improve my R skills during the course of this Professional Practice.</i>
4	Explain how their Professional Practice experience has modified their career aspirations.	<i>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 organisation 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.</i>
5	Assess the effect of their Professional Practice on their future employment prospects.	<i>To improve my chances of finding work after IMBRSea, 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 already have some background knowledge and contacts.</i>

Table 1. Examples on translating learning outcomes to personal objectives – Task 1. See [Annex 2](#) for tips and tricks to define your personal objectives.

Week 2:

- Get to know the institute you will work at during the 6-8 weeks of PP via introduction meetings, by talking to staff members, by research on sources, etc.
 - o **Portfolio task 2: Describe the institute**
 - 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.

<i>Example question</i>	<i>Example Answer</i>	<i>Example Reflection</i>
<i>What type of organisation is it? (NGO, company, university...)</i>	<i>BREEN is a commercial aquaponics company.</i>	<i>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>
<i>Is the organisation organized into different research groups?</i>	<i>IUEM is a research institute that does research on multidisciplinary themes.</i> <i>Laboratories from different disciplines combine forces to investigate topics from different angles.</i>	<i>I would like to know how this is organized practically because I am interested in multidisciplinary research.</i>

Table 2. Potential features to use when characterizing your institute – Task 2.

From Week 1 to 6:

- **Portfolio task 3:** Every week, **upload max. 2 pictures** that illustrate yourself (or someone else), in a relevant PP activity in which you were involved in and explain the context in which this picture was taken. You should not always be visible in the picture, but at least demonstrate that you were present. When possible, link the pictures to 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 for some tips to identify your skills:
<http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2012/09/so-you-think-you-have-skill>

Important remark: Note that the proof uploaded in tasks 3 and 4 will be the only accepted proofs 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 are asked.

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 of this task 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 afterwards.

Week 3-4: Mid-term meeting

- A mid-term meeting should be organized between the student and the PP mentor. During the meeting, the progress of the Professional Practice is discussed. This will involve, after a first self-reflection, asking for feedback from the mentor on how you are doing with your personal objectives. The original list of objectives is evaluated and adapted where needed.
- **Portfolio task 7: Mid-term meeting report**
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.

Final week (i.e. end of week 6, or week 8):

- **Portfolio task 8: Final meeting report**
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 student must then upload a jointly agreed meeting report that shows the outcome of this final meeting - the mentor/supervisor will receive a copy of the uploaded file.

4.2 Portfolio tasks: overview

<i>Deliverable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
<i>Task 1</i>	- Report initial meeting - Work plan - Learning objectives	Student and Professional Practice mentor
<i>Task 2</i>	- Describe your institute	Student
<i>Task 3</i>	- Every week, upload max. 2 pictures that illustrate an activity in which you were involved	Student
<i>Task 4</i>	- Every week, comment on at least one skill you acquired or worked on during the past weeks	Student
<i>Task 5</i>	- Follow-up questionnaire	Student
<i>Task 6</i>	- Peer review assessment	Student
<i>Task 7</i>	- Mid-term meeting report	Student and Professional Practice mentor
<i>Task 8</i>	- Final meeting report	Student and Professional Practice mentor

5. Preparation of the final report

At the end of the Professional-Practice period 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.**

Format of the final report:

- **Font, size and spacing:** The report should be written using font Arial, size 11 and spacing 1,5.
- **Cover page:** This must include the name of the student, the name of the host organisation, the name of the Professional-Practice mentor, the start and end dates of the Professional Practice, 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 the 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. Besides a descriptive account of the experience, it should also include opinions/reflections. For example, if you provide information on a task you completed for the host organisation, you should 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 can 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 a particular evidence was included in the Appendix, i.e. what evidence shows 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 how my Professional Practice experience might impact 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 Summer School

Exhibition guidelines

During the IMBRSea Joint Summer School, the Professional Practice experiences will be presented during a scientific exhibition. Via a poster or alternative exhibition material (video, photo album, game, etc.), the student will show the experiences gained during the practice. All creative ideas are welcome and encouraged, 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 but only if you 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 UGent student number, Professional-Practice institution and location (= country), as well as the logo of IMBRSea and Erasmus Mundus.

If you choose a poster, do not forget to be creative in the way you present it. We will provide you with additional material for your presentation, depending on feasibility. Panel, tables, chairs, extension cables are examples of materials that might be needed for the exhibition set-up. Students will be required in due time to fill-up a form that will be sent to you via email by the central coordination. Laptops will not be provided, please bring your own.

7. Professional Practice Evaluation

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

1. An **online portfolio** (10%)
2. A **final reflective report** (60%)
3. An **exhibition stand** at the Joint Summer School in which the Professional Practice is presented (30%)

All elements of the portfolio will be validated and the correctness of completion of the online-portfolio tasks, as well as the respect with the timing to conclude the tasks according to the guidelines, will be evaluated. The report, as well as the exhibition presentation, will be evaluated and graded by an Examination Committee consisting of two members who belong to two distinct IMBRSea consortium partner universities. The assigned evaluators cannot belong to the PP host organisation.

All reports 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 Professional Practice mentor/supervisor will be invited to evaluate the general work performance of the student. This evaluation does not count for the final grade, unless in case of conflicts and/or large discrepancies between the two assigned evaluators.

Evaluation feedback from the Examination Committee will be shared anonymously with the students (comments + score for each item to evaluate (insufficient – sufficient – satisfactory – good – very good – excellent – see Annex 4 Evaluation criteria). The PP mentor/supervisor's feedback will also become available to the student.

The final Professional-Practice grade will be deliberated by the IMBRSea Examination Board and communicated to the Coordination Office, which is in charge of uploading the grades to the grade-management system of UGent (IMBRSea main coordinating university), and of communicating the feedback to the students.

Detailed information about the evaluation criteria is available in Annex 4.

8. Overview of the organisation of the Professional Practice

Step	Description
Call for Professional Practice topics – first half sem1	The coordination office launches a call for Professional Practice topics to interested parties.
Info PP webinar 1 – November sem1	The central coordination organises an info webinar to present the goals of the professional practice and the general guidelines, with focus on topics' selection and ranking by the students, and on topics' allocation
Applying for a topic from the Professional Practice catalogue – second half sem1	Students apply for 3-5 topics from the catalogue and write a motivation for each on the Matix platform.
Evaluation of applications – second half sem1	Students' motivations for selected topics are evaluated.
Assignment of topics to the students – second half sem1	Each student is assigned to a Professional Practice topics by the IMBRSea Coordination Office based on students' ranking & motivation, supervisors' evaluations, and the number of students allowed per topic. Both students and mentors/supervisors are then informed about the assignment by the IMBRSea Coordination Office. <u>Supervisors are allowed to participate in the selection of the students if they indicate so when submitting a PP topic. However, they are NOT entitled to inform the students about the outcome of the topic selection process, nor they have a final decision on the topic allocation.</u>
Info PP webinar 2 – start of sem 2	The central coordination organises a second info webinar explaining the practicalities regarding the PP. The students will learn about the process of entering the information of their tasks in the Online Reflective Portfolio such as: timelines, objectives, pictures, and so on.
Contract signature – before arriving to PP location	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.
Arrival and installation – first week of PP	The student confirms that he/she is installed at the host organisation by notifying the IMBRSea Coordination Office via Matix,during the first week.
Portfolio – during PP period	The portfolio contains the outputs of tasks 1-8.

Final Reflective report – end PP period (exact submission date tbc)	This report contains a synthesis of the accomplished tasks and objectives during the Professional Practice and time sheets.
PP exhibition: Preparation – after PP period	Students will have to prepare a presentation about the experience they had during their Professional Practice
PP exhibition: Presentation – Summer School	Students will present their experiences in an exhibition at the Joint Summer School (JS) venue, prior to the actual start of the IMBRsea JS

9. Agenda for report submission and PP exhibition - Cohort 2025

The final report should be submitted to the IMBRSea coordination office by the **15th of June 2026 16h00 CET**.

The Professional Practice experiences will be presented at the start of the IMBRSea Joint Summer School.

Annex 1: Competences to be Obtained during the Professional Practice

- 1 Describe how your Professional Practice experience has improved your professional competence e.g. through an improved ability to:
 - communicate and work effectively with others;
 - show initiative and work independently;
 - organise workload and set priorities;
 - respond to new challenges and changing situations
- 2 Critically evaluate how you have contributed to their host organisation's objectives.
- 3 Explain how you applied previously acquired theory and practical knowledge to your professional duties at the host organisation.
- 4 Explain how your Professional- Practice experience has modified your career aspirations.
- 5 Assess the effect of your Professional Practice on your 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, 2026."

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 crystallises 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 frustrating to fail achieving 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. be careful with the level of difficulty you set for your goals , and reflect wisely.

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.
- Adhere to the timelines for the online reflective portfolio.
- Adhere to the deadline for submission of the final reflective report.
- Work diligently, responsibly and in a professional manner at all times.
- Adhere to the company dress code.
- Be accountable and accept responsibility for actions.
- Use the host 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 (including time sheets on a weekly basis in Matix).
- 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 confidentiality.

Annex 4: Evaluation Criteria

The online reflective report counts for 10% of the final grade of the Professional Practice, the reflective portfolio counts for 60% of the final grade and the exhibition presentation for 30%.

The final reflective report is graded based on:

- the evaluation of reflection on the learning outcomes:
 - o Reflection on how professional practice has improved my professional competence.
 - o Reflection on how I contributed to my host organisation's objectives.
 - o Reflection on how I applied previously acquired theory and practical knowledge to my work with the host organisation.
 - o Reflection on how the professional practice has modified my career aspirations.
 - o Reflection on my professional practice experience has affected my future employment prospects.
- the evaluation of presentation and quality

The evaluation criteria used by the evaluators are the following (grade 1-20):

Reflection on the learning outcomes	
Sufficient	Unacceptable level of reflection. Primarily a descriptive account of a student's experience. Little evidence that the student has thought about their experience. No examples of work carried out while on placement, or examples provided are not relevant. No reference to Appendix, or information referred to in the Appendix is not relevant. Does not demonstrate that relevant learning outcome has been met.
Sufficient to Satisfactory	Acceptable level of reflection with some evidence that the student has thought about their experience, but still a substantially descriptive account of the student's experience. Some examples of work carried out while on placement, but these examples are of limited relevance. Refers to Appendix, but information referred to is of limited relevance. Some evidence that relevant learning outcomes have been met.
Good	Good level of reflection. Good evidence that students have thought deeply about their experience. Relevant examples provided of work carried out by the student while on placement. Good use of information provided in the Appendix to show how a student has met the relevant learning outcome. Provides good evidence that relevant learning outcome has been met
Very good	Very good level of reflection. Very good evidence that students have thought deeply about their experience. Many relevant examples provided of work carried out by the student while on placement. Very good use of information provided in the Appendix to show how the student has met the relevant learning outcome. Provides very good evidence that relevant learning outcome has been met.
Excellent	Excellent level of reflection. Excellent evidence that students have thought deeply about their experience. Many very relevant examples provided of work carried out by the student while on placement. Excellent use of information provided in the Appendix to show how the student has met the relevant learning outcome. Provides excellent evidence that relevant learning outcome has been met.

Presentation and quality	
Insufficient	Introduction is poor. Provides very little information about the host organisation and about the work carried out by the student. Conclusion provides a very limited summary of the student's placement experience. Poor presentation of information in Appendices. Very many spelling and grammatical errors with no real evidence of proofreading. Grossly outside set page limits.
Sufficient to Satisfactory	Introduction is acceptable. Provides some information about the host organisation and about the work carried out by the student. Conclusion provides an acceptable summary of the student's placement experience. Acceptable presentation of information in Appendices. Many spelling and grammatical errors with little evidence of proofreading.
Good	Good introduction. Provides a lot of information about the host organisation and about the work carried out by the student. Conclusion provides a good summary of the student's placement experience. Good presentation of information in Appendices. Some spelling and grammatical errors, but generally good use of language.
Very good	Very good introduction. Provides detailed information about the host organisation and about the work carried out by the student. Conclusion provides a very good summary of the student's placement experience. Very good presentation of information in Appendices. Very few spelling and grammatical errors and generally very good use of language.
Excellent	Excellent introduction. Provides very clear and detailed information about the host organisation and about the work carried out by the student. Conclusion provides an excellent summary of the student's placement experience. Excellent presentation of information in Appendices. No spelling and grammatical errors and generally excellent use of language.

The exhibition is graded based on the evaluation of the following items (grade 1-5):

Clarity of content
Quality of content
Originality (material is presented in an interesting and novel way)
Appropriate layout and use of visual aids
Clearly identified topic and purpose
Informative and clear material
Professional delivery and engaged with audience
Command of language/avoiding jargon
Response to questions
Overall Impression/Quality