

Work placements abroad for apprentices in the Danish vocational education and training system / OPU

Information
for employers
2025/26

Placements of apprentices abroad



Work placements abroad for apprentices in the Danish VET-system / OPU

Information for employers on placements
of apprentices abroad

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The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science works to promote the internationalisation of education and training programmes in Denmark. The Agency also provides information on the possibilities for work placements abroad under the OPU scheme.

This publication can be requested free of charge from the Agency while stocks last.

The publication can also be downloaded from the Agency website www.ufm.dk/opu-ordningen

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Introduction

OPU is the Danish abbreviation for Oplæring i Udlandet, which means workbased learning abroad for apprentices. The OPU scheme was introduced in 1992 (under the previous name PIU) and allows apprentices to work and undertake training in a company outside Denmark as part of their Danish vocational education training (VET) programme. Thousands of Danish enterprises and apprentices have taken advantage of this opportunity.

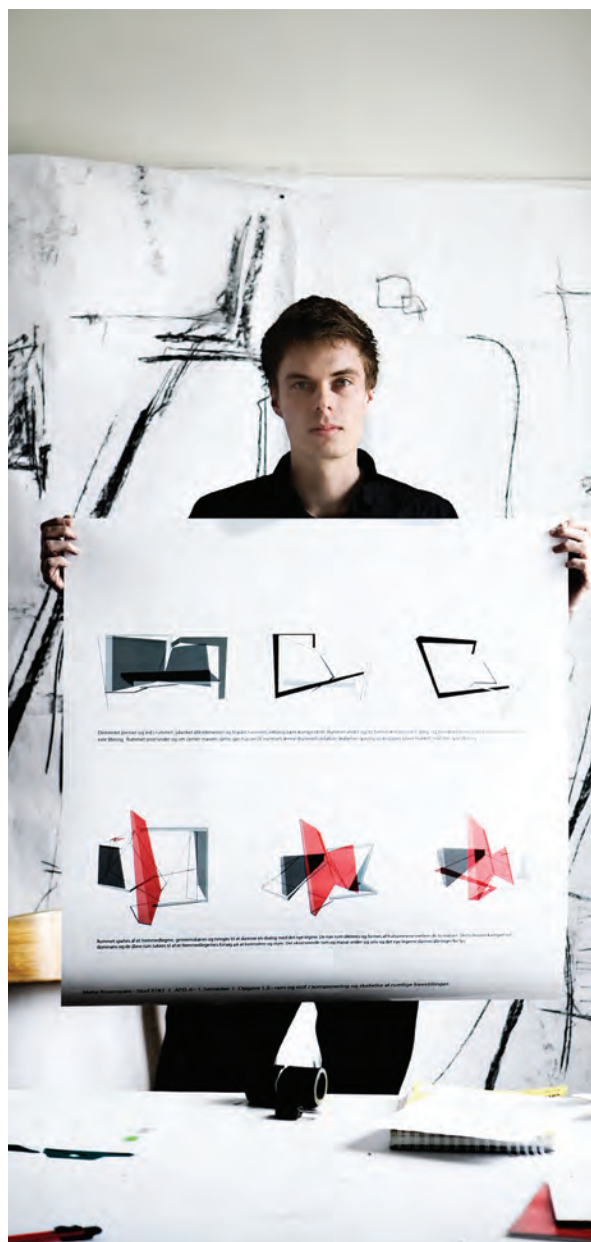
Work placements abroad can take place anywhere in the world and it is possible to apply for financial support via the Danish Employers' Reimbursement Fund (AUB). This publication provides practical information on the planning and implementation of work placements abroad.

Queries can be directed to:

The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science.

Please note that all vocational colleges also have so called OPU coordinators or guidance counsellors responsible for placements abroad.

This publication furthermore contains references to additional information on various web sites. Some of this information is in Danish, however.





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Work placements abroad in the OPU scheme

The aim of the OPU scheme is to make it easier for apprentices to undertake work placements abroad in order to internationalise vocational education and training, and to help enterprises prepare for global competition.



The OPU scheme consists of two elements:

- The opportunity to have a placement abroad recognised as an integral part of a Danish vocational education and training programme.
- A grant programme whereby the Danish Employers' Reimbursement Fund (AUB) can subsidise the majority of direct costs incurred by the employer when placing an apprentice abroad.

All apprentices in the Danish VET-system may undertake all or parts of their mandatory work placements in an enterprise outside of Denmark.

Why send apprentices abroad?

There are many advantages of sending apprentices on a work placement abroad:

- They gain international competences, not least intercultural understanding and increased foreign language proficiency.
- They develop their personal competences like self-reliance and maturity.
- They gain experience with tools, methods and workplace culture in other countries.
- For seasonal businesses, a training placement abroad can provide apprentices with a meaningful experience during periods where there is a lull in work in Denmark.
- Enterprises offering work placements abroad are attractive places to work and train for young people.

Work placements abroad in the OPU scheme

Who can undertake a work placement abroad, and where can they go?

All private and public employers in Denmark can use the OPU scheme and send apprentices abroad on periods of work placements with financial support from AUB.

To qualify for support, the training programme of the apprentice must be covered by the Act on vocational education and training programmes (*Lov om erhvervsuddannelser*). More information about this can be found at www.uvm.dk.

Apprentices can be placed in any country around the world, except those that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommends should be avoided by travellers. See the current travel recommendations at <https://um.dk/en>.

How does it work?

The employer in Denmark must conclude an agreement with two parties: the apprentice and the enterprise hosting the placement abroad (the host company).

The placement can be included in the apprenticeship contract between the apprentice and employer from the beginning, or can be agreed upon and included at a later point in the course of the apprenticeship.

Many placements take place between enterprises that have already established relations. These could be e.g. subsidiaries, parent companies, branches, distributors, customers, or suppliers. If an international



partner cannot offer a placement, it may be able to facilitate contact with another employer in the same sector.

Before the placement begins, the Danish employer and the host company abroad must conclude a written agreement concerning the conditions governing the placement – including the time and duration of the placement, what tasks the apprentice will carry out, on what location(s) he/she will work, and who will be responsible for paying his/hers salary during the placement.

NB! The AUB only covers expenses incurred in connection with placements of at least one month's duration (excluding travel days).

The employer in Denmark retains full responsibility for the apprenticeship during the placement abroad and is responsible for ensuring that the overall learning objectives of the VET programme are met in accordance with the programme's regulations. The employer in Denmark is also responsible for ensuring that the apprentice receives a salary that equals the current Danish apprentice salary level during the placement. If there is any doubt, the employer can contact the OPU-coordinator of the local vocational college or the relevant trade committee for further information.

What costs can be covered?

The employer in Denmark initially pays the costs associated with the placement for the apprentices, and can have the following expenses reimbursed fully or partially by AUB:

- Salary costs.
- The apprentice's relocation costs to/from the location of placement.
- The apprentice's travel costs in connection with VET college attendance in Denmark and holidays in Denmark during the stay abroad.

Salary

The employer in Denmark must ensure that the apprentice receive the normal Danish apprentice salary during the placement. If the host company abroad pays a salary that is lower than the normal Danish apprentice salary, the Danish company must pay the difference so that the apprentice receives the amount agreed in the apprenticeship contract. This difference in the salaries (the top-up amount) can be reimbursed to the Danish employer by the AUB.

If the employer abroad does not pay a salary to the Danish apprentice, the Danish employer must find out what a person in a similar training position would be paid in the host country.

- If a similar vocational education and a comparable apprentice/trainee salary exists in the host country within the trade/profession of the Danish apprentice, the salary paid to the Danish apprentice must be at a similar level.

- If no similar vocational education and consequently no comparable apprentice/trainee salary exists in the host country within the trade/profession of the Danish apprentice, the work and salary paid to the Danish apprentice must be comparable to an unskilled person within the relevant trade/profession. Minimum wages can often be found on the internet, e.g. <https://da.tradingeconomics.com/country-list/minimum-wages>.

Documentation for this must be sent to AUB, who will then defray the normal salary paid by the employer abroad from the normal Danish apprentice salary and cover the difference. This documentation can e.g. consist of a public document on salary levels or a declaration from the host company about the normal salary level.

In some countries with no apprenticeship-system, trainees/interns may in practice not receive a salary at all or they may rely on a public student stipend during their internship. In the event that this is the case and the Danish apprentice does not receive a salary, AUB then applies a standard deduction of DKK 3,500 per month when calculating the subsidy. AUB must have documentation that there is no tradition for paying salary. Documentation may take the form of a public document stating the practice in the country or a declaration from the employer abroad that the Danish apprentice is being employed as a trainee/intern and that trainees/interns are unpaid in that field in their country.

What costs can be covered?

Board and lodging may be offered as part of the salary. If your apprentice receives board and lodging as part of his or her salary, you must document the value of this according to local conditions. This amount will be deducted before the AUB pays out the subsidy.

Travel costs

AUB reimburses travel costs to/from the location of the work placement abroad.

If the apprentice is obliged to return to Denmark for mandatory VET college attendance for a period of time during the placement abroad, these travel costs will likewise be reimbursed.

Provided the placement lasts a minimum of three months, the AUB will cover costs in connection with travels home for Easter, summer or Christmas holidays as well. Other holidays will not be covered.

Please note that AUB will only reimburse an amount equal to the cost of the cheapest public transportation.

Also note that expenses incurred in connection with obtaining visas, work permits, etc. are not reimbursed.

Other costs in connection with relocation

If there are costs associated with moving household goods or extra baggage when your apprentice is undertaking a placement abroad, you can apply for reimbursement of these costs, too. These will only be covered at the start and the end of the placement, however, and not in connection with intervening travel for holiday or school periods at home.

Before the placement

Before a placement abroad is implemented, it may be necessary for the employer and/or the apprentice to visit a country abroad to find a suitable host company. This journey must be approved by AUB before departure. The AUB reimburses 50% of the costs incurred in connection with this, up to a maximum of DKK 15,000 per year.

Application for reimbursement of costs

All costs previously mentioned must be initially covered by the employer in Denmark, and can subsequently be reimbursed by the AUB according to the current rules. The AUB only provides reimbursement to the employer – not directly to the apprentice.

When applying for reimbursement, employers must use the digital application forms which can be found on the AUB website www.virk.dk/aub. The English language version of the site can be accessed at: <https://businessindenmark.virk.dk/guidance/aub-bid-arbejdsgivernes-uddannelsesbidrag/>

When applying for reimbursement, documentation for all costs (copies of receipts) should be attached, including salary slips from the Danish enterprise and the host company abroad, copies of travel and relocation costs, as well as documentation for any requirement to attend mandatory periods at the VET college in Denmark.

Digital application forms must be completed and signed by the employer in Denmark and sent to AUB **no later than 4 months after** the placement has been completed.

Rules and regulations governing work placements abroad

When undertaking a work placement abroad, there are many rules which must be taken into account, governing areas such as holiday pay, working hours and conditions, tax, work and residence permits, social security (including health insurance) etc. These rules vary depending on whether the apprentice is a Danish citizen or not, in which country the placement is organised, and whether the apprentice will receive the full salary from the employer in Denmark or it will be provided fully or in part by the host company abroad.

Some of the key rules are listed below. Please note that these rules may change and that it is the responsibility of the apprentice and employer to check up on their current status.

Holiday pay

The employer in Denmark is obliged to ensure that the apprentice receive holiday pay in line with regular Danish conditions.

Working hours and conditions

The student placed abroad is formally covered by Danish regulation on working hours and conditions in accordance with the stipulations of the apprenticeship contract. However, there may be instances where it is practical and necessary to show a certain amount of flexibility concerning this when entering into a placement agreement with an employer abroad. The employer in Denmark must ensure that the student understands and accepts this in advance.

Tax

Denmark has double taxation agreements with many countries to prevent an employee being taxed twice on their salary. These double taxation agreements are not necessarily identical for all countries. There are also special rules for tax deductions when working abroad. It is therefore important that the apprentice obtain advice from the tax authorities in due time before embarking on the placement. The rules and contact information can be found on the Danish tax authority's website www.skat.dk.

Work and residence permits

Rules for visas, work and residence permits vary from country to country. Please note that these rules are liable to change.

If the placement abroad takes place in an EU Member State, or Norway, Iceland, Switzerland or Lichtenstein, a work or residence permit is not necessary. If the placement lasts more than 3 months, it should normally be registered with the local authorities in the country where it takes place.

For placements in countries outside the EU and the Nordic countries, applications for work and residence permits as well as (where applicable) visas, should be made to the relevant country's embassy in Denmark well in advance of departure.

See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for more detailed information on rules for visas and work and residence permits for Danish citizens travelling abroad. Find more information at <https://um.dk/en> under "Travel and residence".

Rules and regulations governing work placements abroad

Social security

Be aware that apprentices posted on work placements abroad by Danish enterprises must be covered by social security – including health insurance and workplace accident insurance. However, the apprentice is not automatically covered by Danish social security schemes during the placement, even when he/she is a Danish citizen, lives and pays tax in Denmark and is employed by a Danish enterprise.

To ensure this, the employer in Denmark should apply to Udbetaling Danmark for a certificate of coverage by the Danish social insurance scheme, if the apprentice is to retain access to Danish social security rights such as health insurance, unemployment benefits and workplace accident insurance.

If the apprentice undertaking the placement is covered by Danish social security then neither the company nor the apprentice has to pay social contributions in other countries than Denmark.

The Danish employer has rights and obligations regarding social security in accordance with Danish legislation. Please be aware that there are special rules for public employers.

Find out more at https://virk.dk/myndigheder/stat/Udbetaling_Danmark/selvbetjening/Social_sikring_ved_beskaeftigelse_i_udlandet/ where you also find the relevant forms to be used in connection with the placement of an apprentice abroad. The English language version of the site can be found at: https://businessindenmark.virk.dk/authorities/stat/Udbetaling_Danmark/self-service/Apply_for_social_security_cover_when_working_abroad_as_employer/iss-apply-for-

[social-security-cover-when-working-abroad-as-employer-guide/](#)

Insurance and other issues

It is important that apprentices on placements abroad are also covered by insurance outside of working hours. Therefore they must ensure that they have relevant accident and home insurance and that this also covers them while abroad – or alternatively take out extra travel insurance. Students can find out more about working and living abroad at www.borger.dk.

More information about rights and duties associated with working and living in other EU countries can be found at: www.europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_da.htm



Being fit for work placements abroad

Danish apprentices often come professionally and linguistically well equipped for a longer period abroad. However, a placement abroad also presents some personal challenges which require another set of competences, e.g:

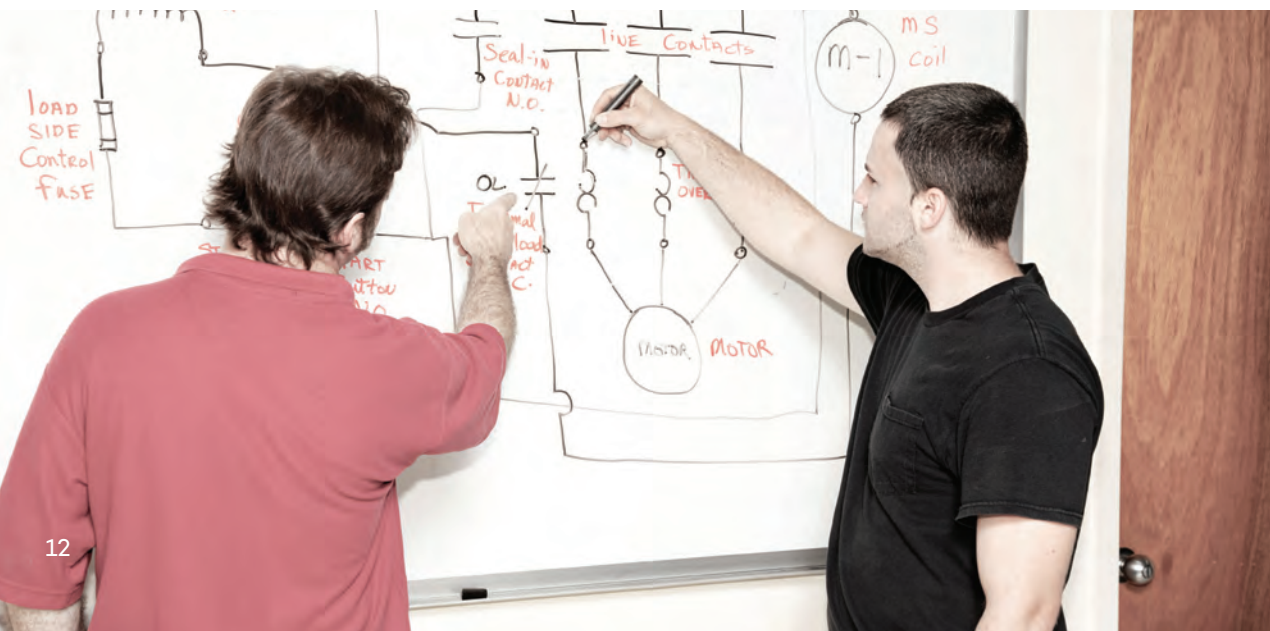
- being able to deal with a period of loneliness and homesickness that typically affects many during their placement
- having the ability to create a new network to replace family, friends and colleagues in Denmark
- having the initiative to create an exciting time for themselves while working abroad
- being able to work with people of a different background and a different work culture while abroad

Apprentices' personal competences are significantly strengthened during time spent abroad, but some foundation must be there in advance. If a young person is outgoing and socially active with a lot of interests and hobbies, then he or she also stands a good chance of doing well while abroad.

Some young people might be a little reluctant to leave their usual surroundings and need a little encouragement to take first step towards going abroad. However, it is important that it is the apprentice who takes the decision on their own.

An unsuccessful placement abroad, or one that ends prematurely, is often perceived as a personal defeat and thus often has the opposite effect of what was actually intended.

A lot of uncertainty or doubt associated with a work placement abroad can be eliminated with good preparation.



Preparing the placement abroad

A successful work placement abroad requires good preparation. This involves linguistic and professional as well as cultural aspects. It is also about helping the apprentice prepare mentally by reducing elements of uncertainty or fear, so that he/she feels confident about the experience. The process leading up to a work placement abroad should allow for plenty of time for planning so the apprentice has the opportunity to e.g. undertake extra language classes if necessary and gather information about conditions in the host country.

Information about the local area and the workplace, as well as information about housing conditions and the opportunities for pursuing hobbies and interests are important elements in preparing for a good placement experience. The better an apprentice can picture his or her daily life abroad, the safer he/she will feel in the situation, freeing energy to better tackle new and unforeseen challenges.

It is also for this reason that it is important that the formal conditions of the placement are clarified well in advance of departure. Housing, tax, insurance and travel arrangements should be confirmed. It is a good idea to involve the apprentice in clarifying these elements, and thus prepare the apprentice to stand on his or her own feet.

Another important aspect of preparation involves the host company abroad and conditions here. The relevant staff here should be given thorough information beforehand about the apprentice they are about to

receive: his or her level of knowledge, skills and competences, and the learning objectives of the stay.

The Danish Ministry of Children and Education provides information in English about Danish VET programmes on its website <https://eng.uvm.dk/>, which can be used to provide host companies abroad with relevant background knowledge. You can also use the Europass Certificate Supplement. Read more at www.europass.dk.

It is always useful to identify a contact person or mentor at the workplace, with whom the apprentice can communicate prior to departure and connect with on arrival.

In many cases, the planning and implementation of a work placement abroad is carried out in cooperation with the vocational college that the apprentice attends. Most colleges have a OPU coordinator or guidance counsellor who can offer assistance. The college may be able to help with finding a host company, preparing the student, or evaluating the outcomes of the experience. The college may also be able to offer help with other practical aspects of a placement abroad.

More information about the OPU scheme can be found at www.ufm.dk/opu-ordningen.



Contact information

Danish Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB)

Kongens Vænge 8
DK-3400 Hillerød
Tel.: +45 7011 3070
www.virk.dk/aub

Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science

Haraldsgade 53
DK-2100 København Ø
Tel.: +45 3544 6200
www.ufm.dk/opu-ordningen

OPU coordinator

List with contact information for OPU coordinators
can be found at www.ufm.dk/opu-ordningen

This booklet concerning work placements for apprentices in the Danish vocational education and training system provides simple and useful information on the planning and completion of work placements abroad.

Work placements abroad can take place all over the world, and it is possible to receive financial support from the Danish Employer's Reimbursement Fund (AUB).

