

DIGITAL TRAINEESHIPS GUIDELINES

STUDENT TRAINEE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME
2020/2021



elsa

The European Law Students' Association



The European Law Students' Association

Network Guidelines on Digital Traineeships

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019/2020 term, the International Board of ELSA decided to introduce the possibility of carrying out STEP Traineeships remotely. This decision was made in order to ensure the future of our programme in a socially responsible manner, taking into account the introduction of various travel restrictions worldwide and to further ensure the safety of our members whilst nonetheless continuing to allow them the opportunity to strengthen their legal knowledge and experience.

Naturally, the International Board of ELSA actively has been and is following the recommendations by public health organisations and the input of our National Groups in order to maintain a constant understanding of the different circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic across our network. Furthermore, whilst on-site STEP Traineeships remain present in certain national groups, these remain flexible in nature following the recommendations of national authorities.

The guidelines below serve the purpose of better informing the network on the practicalities related to the carrying out of Digital STEP Traineeships, as well as, better understanding the renewed selling points of these Traineeships in regard to our partners and members.

Lastly, I hope that these guidelines will allow you to better understand how we as STEP officers can adapt and overcome the current circumstances in a safe and socially responsible manner whilst continuing to offer our members an incredible experience.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

I wish you a pleasant and informative read.

Cordially yours,

Francesco Bondi

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of the International Board of ELSA 2020/2021

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Navigation

Navigation	2
1. THE STEP CYCLE 1 SCHEDULE	3
2. ONLINE STEP TRAINEESHIPS	4
2.1 Concept	4
2.2 Benefits of Online STEP Traineeships	5
2.3 STEP brand	5
2.4 Quality standards	6
2.5 Job Hunting	6
2.6 Promoting Online STEP Traineeships to Traineeship Providers	6
2.7 How to fill in the TSF for Online STEP Traineeships	9
3. “ON-SITE” STEP TRAINEESHIPS	11
3.1 Quality over quantity	11
3.2 Social responsibility	11
3.3 Job Hunting	12
3.4 Promoting STEP Traineeships to Traineeship Providers	12
4. PROMOTION STRATEGY	13
4.1 Marketing content	13
4.2 Marketing structure	13
4.3 Student Hunting	13
5. COMMUNICATION	14

1. THE STEP CYCLE 1 SCHEDULE

Job Hunting deadline	6 November
Launch of Traineeships on step.elsa.org	20 November
External Student Hunting deadline	11 December
Internal Student Hunting deadline	15 December
Matching deadline	20 December
Selection deadline for Traineeship Providers	15 January
Selection results publication	18 January
The earliest start date of Traineeships	8 February

2. ONLINE STEP TRAINEESHIPS

2.1 Concept

Online STEP Traineeships are **remote internships** that are performed digitally. Remote internships can be completed by the Trainees from the comfort of their home. Thus, they do not defy any prevailing international travel restrictions and social distancing measures in place.

Furthermore, remote internships offer a unique opportunity in the realm of equal opportunities. Specifically, as remote internships require no travel or accommodation, these allow all applicants, especially those from difficult socio-economic backgrounds to partake in the STEP programme without financial boundaries or restrictions, thus rendering our programme more diverse and inclusive.

Online STEP Traineeships may be offered by a Traineeship Provider either:

- a) **As the only offer**, i.e. the Traineeship Provider is not offering any normal/on-site STEP Traineeships;
or
- b) **In addition to the normal/on-site STEP Traineeships** of the Traineeship Provider either as:
 - a. **Separate vacancies**, i.e. the Traineeship Provider submits separate [Traineeship Specification Forms](#) (TSF) for the Online and normal/on-site STEP Traineeships, respectively;
or
 - b. **Flexible option**, i.e. the way that the Traineeship is performed is up to negotiation with the Trainee at a later date.

The above consideration should be detailed as well as possible in the TSF (cf. **2.7 'How to fill in the TSF for Online STEP Traineeships' below**). This is to avoid unnecessary confusion from the part of applicants.

2.2 Benefits of Online STEP Traineeships

1. Many organisations (including law firms) have already introduced their **own remote internship programmes** (even before and irrespective of the COVID-19 outbreak).
2. Since March 2020 and during the second cycle of the 2019/2020 term, **various Traineeship Providers already offered remote work possibilities** to their respective STEP Trainees.
3. ELSA International reports that **international Traineeship Providers are interested** in providing remote vacancies in addition to their “normal” on-site STEP Traineeships.
4. Online STEP Traineeships offer an efficient **solution** in the form of an opportunity to provide professional experience even if access to “normal” on-site STEP Traineeships is limited.
5. Online STEP Traineeships are **aligned with the spirit of STEP** (cf. 2.3 ‘STEP brand’ below).

2.3 STEP brand

Online STEP Traineeships are in line with the **spirit of STEP**. However, keep in mind that the selling points for these particular types of traineeships as well as STEP in general during these difficult times have been altered.

1. **The purpose of STEP** is to ‘*provide opportunities for law students and young lawyers to gain work experience in a foreign legal system while learning about other cultures.*’
2. **The aims of ELSA** are ‘*to promote, establish and develop mutual understanding, co-operation and personal contacts among law students and young lawyers from different States and legal systems, thereby equipping them for professional life in an international environment,*’ read in conjunction with the **means of ELSA**.
3. Online STEP Traineeships provide the Trainees with learning opportunities about **foreign legal systems** (multijurisdictional work) and **work cultures** (multicultural team dynamics).
4. Online STEP Traineeships equip the Trainees with the **hard and soft skills necessary** to succeed in professional life in an international environment.
5. Online STEP Traineeships foster **direct contacts and mutual understanding** across jurisdictional/cultural boundaries and build the Trainees’ **professional network**.

6. Due to the absence of barriers of participation associated with normal/on-site STEP Traineeships,¹ Online STEP Traineeships may be **more accessible** irrespective of the applicants' socio-economic background and circumstances.
7. There are many possibilities how to also provide **remote reception** in respect of the Online STEP Traineeships.²

2.4 Quality standards

To ensure that Online STEP Traineeships are of the desirable quality, the respective Traineeship Providers shall sign an [annex to the TSF Contract](#). This document explains the specific additional requirements applicable to the proper execution of Online STEP Traineeships.

2.5 Job Hunting

Below you may find further information and guidance regarding the Job Hunting practicalities, as well as, tips & tricks regarding Digital Traineeships.

2.5.1 Promoting Online STEP Traineeships to Traineeship Providers

National Groups that wish to propose Online STEP Traineeships to their Traineeship Providers are encouraged to do so. The benefits include demonstrating the future-oriented approach of ELSA as the global representative of the future generation of legal professionals. Moreover, offering the possibility of

¹ E.g. the high costs (*inter alia* travel, accommodation, documentation) and time-consuming procedures (*inter alia* documentation).

² Generally, the Reception strategy is determined by the respective Hosting Group. This fact applies with regards to both on-site and Online STEP Traineeships. Some of the ideas that so far have been presented about how to engage the respective Hosting Groups in **remote reception** include *inter alia* a mentor/buddy system, sending postcards to the Trainee and hosting virtual after-work hangouts.

Online STEP Traineeships to Traineeship Provides shows how ELSA is responding in a resourceful manner to the unprecedented circumstances.

1. During the negotiations with current or potential traineeship providers, approach the possibility of a negotiable STEP Traineeship where possible. Specifically, be transparent with the potential partner in concluding a STEP Traineeship agreement that includes the possibility of remote work if the standard “on-site” traineeship were to not be available either for the partner or the trainee.
2. Emphasise that the remote vacancies are a solution introduced in order for the Traineeship Provider in question to still benefit from the best international legal talent that ELSA can provide.
3. Explain the applicable **Terms and Conditions**, including the **annex**.
4. Explain how to fill in the **TSF** with the all the necessary information (cf. **below**).
5. Ask **whether the Traineeship Provider implements already remote work** and, if so, how are they finding it so far.
6. Provide **examples** of other organisations offering remote vacancies and how they do so.
7. Remind that the deadline to submit the TSF is on **6 November**.

2.5.2 Examples of how remote internships may be structured & initial email contact:

1. The intern is assigned to a specific project or a more general supportive function within the team. The intern is also assigned a supervisor/mentor to whom they regularly report from the team;
2. The intern and the supervisor/team have regular meetings online (e.g. a weekly conference call). During these meetings, the work tasks and expectations are laid out and feedback about the previously completed tasks can be given to the intern.
3. The supervisor/team provides the intern with tasks and agrees on a production timeline. The intern will report on the completion of these tasks to the supervisor.

Below is a sample email for **reference**:

<i>Title</i>	E.g. "Interns from the European Law Students' Association"
<i>Introduction</i>	<p>Dear Mr./Ms. _____,</p> <p>My name is _____ and I am the Vice President in charge of the legal recruitment and traineeship programme of the European Law Students' Association in _____.</p> <p>I am contacting [name of the organisation] since you actively work with [the area of activity, e.g. human rights advocacy and medium-length projects in different jurisdictions]. I am confident that your organisation would substantially benefit from a greater exposure to ELSA members.</p> <p>ELSA is the world's largest independent association for law students and young lawyers. We are present in 44 countries and reach over 55,000 members at more than 300 universities in Europe. Although non-political, ELSA stands for human rights and cultural diversity, and campaigns internationally for causes such as the rule of law.</p>
<i>Body</i>	<p>One of the most popular initiatives of ELSA is the Student Trainee Exchange Programme (STEP) whereby we provide organisations like yours for free with a streamlined recruitment method for the best talent in accordance with your needs and preferences. You will view only the applications of the candidates fulfilling your requirements which you specify simply by filling the Traineeship Specification Form.</p> <p>There are two intakes for organisations per year, the next deadline approaching in [amount of time] on [the JH deadline]. [You can explain the time-line more in detail here.]</p> <p>Thanks to its adaptive nature, ELSA has recently introduced the possibility of remote internships in conjunction with standards on-site traineeships where possible, in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This due to our wish to ensure the safety of our members, whilst allowing them to continue to benefit from such experiences as well as allowing organisations such as yours to continue to benefit from the best international legal talent that ELSA can provide.</p>

	<p><i>As for the examples of remote internships, many of ELSA's partner organisations offer such vacancies in their research department. Thus, they employ trainees from different jurisdictions for projects involving comparative and international law. These digital internships generally resemble a lot how remote work is generally done.</i></p>
<p><i>Conclusion</i></p>	<p>How does this all sound to you? For further information, please do not hesitate to contact me – I am happy to discuss matters further with you. Attached to this email you can find more information about STEP and its benefits. I look forward to hearing from you soon and wish you a great rest of the day!</p>

2.5.3 Remuneration for Digital STEP Traineeships

The aspect of remuneration for remote work is one that depends on national circumstances and legislation. When negotiating this with the potential STEP Traineeship Provider, STEP officers should:

1. Keep in mind that many organisations will be hesitant to provide STEP Trainees working remotely with the same remuneration as on-site trainees.
2. Research national legislation regarding payment and remuneration for remote workers;
3. Work towards negotiating for a fair remuneration package for the remote Trainee based on the workload that is being requested by the potential TNP;
4. Discuss the possibility of otherwise offering fringe benefits relevant to remote work, such as *inter alia* food, phone bills, and/or internet expenses;

2.6 How to fill in the TSF for Online STEP Traineeships

In addition to the generally required information, the following details need to be described (generally) in the **additional information section** of the TSF:

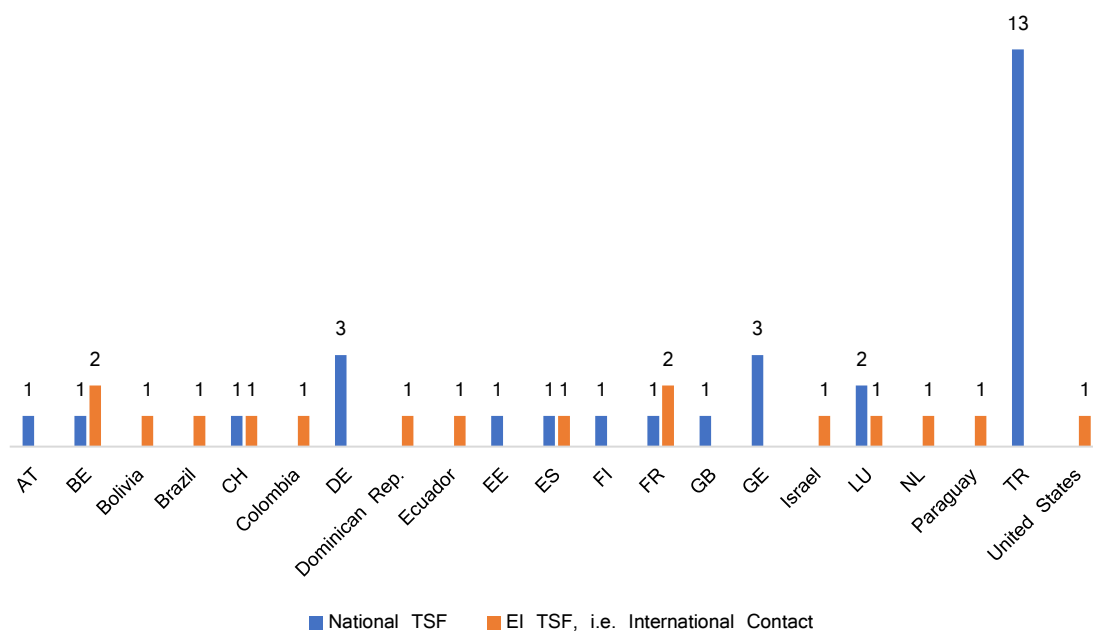
1. The method of **supervision** (e.g. an assigned mentor, weekly calls with the team, daily reporting via email);
2. The **tasks** of the Trainee (e.g. a specific project, different tasks as assigned by the team);

3. The work schedule:
 - a. **Full-time** (include the estimated workload (e.g. 40 hours per week);
 - b. **Part-time** (include the estimated workload (e.g. 15 hours per week, only certain weekdays);
 - c. **Other** (e.g. project-specific, negotiable with the Trainee directly, flexible);
4. Whether the Traineeship Provider wants to offer:
 - a. **Normal/on-site STEP Traineeships also;**
 - b. **Only remote vacancies;**
 - c. **Both Available**, i.e. the way that the Traineeship is performed is up to negotiation with the Trainee at a later date. ***(This is the preferred option)***

3. “ON-SITE” STEP TRAINEESHIPS

3.1 Quality over quantity

As discussed during the X Online KAM, numbers will not be the focus of STEP for this term.



3.2 Social responsibility

Generally, ELSA refrains from encouraging travelling during social distancing measures and international travel restrictions (cf. 4. ‘Promotion strategy’ below).

STEP Traineeships involving physical attendance should have the **earliest start date from much later in the new year if possible**. Alternatively, the start date could be left in the TSF “open”, i.e. to be negotiated with the Trainee at a later date.

3.3 Job Hunting

As communicated before, Job Hunting for normal/on-site Traineeships will be understandably more difficult, albeit not impossible with many organisations already providing remote work opportunities, than normally since Traineeship Providers may be *inter alia*:

1. **Unable** to host any trainees due to the poor economic situation;
2. **Unwilling** to host any (foreign) trainees due to the fear of contact with the outside world.

3.4 Promoting STEP Traineeships to Traineeship Providers

In any case, when communicating with Traineeship Providers about the ongoing situation, it is suggested to:

1. **Be transparent and honest** – you are not expected to see the future;
2. **Avoid making any promises** that there will be:
 - a. Many or any applications submitted;
 - b. Many or any shortlisted applicants to present to the Traineeship Provider;
 - c. Many or any applicants accepting a Traineeship offer made by the Traineeship Provider.
 - d. Encourage the current or potential traineeship provider to proceed with the flexible option.
3. Encourage the Traineeship Provider to offer the vacancies with a **flexible start date set later in the year** which can be adjusted to the prevailing circumstances.

4. PROMOTION STRATEGY

4.1 Marketing content

ELSA International is cautious of the current circumstances and the message of STEP promotion. Hence, ELSA International refrains from references to travelling and focuses on the other valuable attributes of the STEP brand.

The promotion strategy for STEP is led by **social responsibility, professional skills, life-long learning, and cultural awareness**. The focus of promotion is on raising **awareness about professional experience from an international work environment and its benefits**.

The promotional materials focus on educational content that provides information beyond the STEP procedure for prospective applicants generally preparing for their legal career. Hence, the focus is on:

1. **Testimonials from previous Trainees and Traineeship Providers;**
2. **Advice** how to plan for an international career, succeed with a job application/in a job interview and create a professional network;
3. **Cultural exchange** without reference to travels.

4.2 Student Hunting

It is important to emphasise to any prospective applicant that ELSA neither:

1. Encourages travelling at a time of international travel restrictions and social distancing measures; nor
2. Guarantees that the specific Traineeship will not be cancelled, postponed indefinitely or moved digital due to the prevailing circumstances.



The European Law Students' Association

The SAF already draws the applicants' attention to the **Terms and Conditions of applying**. Additionally, **COVID-19 disclaimer** (similar to that already on the TSF) will be included on top of the SAF further elaborating that:

1. ELSA is not liable for:
 - a. Any cancellation of a STEP Traineeship;
 - b. Any changes to the description of a STEP Traineeship (e.g. changed dates);
 - c. The Traineeship Provider's decision to offer the Traineeship digitally;
 - d. The applicant's inability to attend a STEP Traineeship due to the prevailing circumstances (e.g. travel restrictions);

2. The applicant may:
 - a. Withdraw their application before the External Student Hunting deadline;
 - b. Refuse an offer made by a Traineeship Provider.