

VERIFICATION AND MATCHING GUIDELINES

ELSA TRAINEESHIPS



elsa

The European Law Students' Association

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I. Foreword

Dear Professional Development Officers,

I am glad to present you with the new Verification and Matching Guidelines.

This document has been created in the term 2022/2023 on the basis of the existing guidelines and will be updated every year if necessary in order to allow the Officers of the Professional Development area to be aware of the main rules related to Verification and Matching of ELSA Traineeships.

We decided with the ELSA Traineeships Team to create new guidelines in order to provide the Officers with more extensive information about these two processes, as well as answer some of the most common questions they might have or might receive from applicants. With these additional details, the Verification and MATCHing will be more accurate and will reflect even more on the quality of the applications. In the end, it will also help us to forward even better applications to Traineeship Providers and keep the professionalism ELSA is known for.

If you need any clarification or further information, please do not hesitate to reach me.

Sincerely yours,

Leia Hindricq
Vice President in charge of Professional Development
International Board of ELSA 2022/2023

Conrad Alroe
Director for ELSA Traineeships
ELSA International Team 2022/2023



1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Verification and Matching:

Verification and Matching are the two processes through which all applications to ELSA Traineeships are subjected before being presented to the Traineeship Provider (TNP). Their purpose is to maintain quality standards for the programme by only allowing the highest quality applications and potential trainees to be sent to TNPs. This handbook is designed to teach Professional Development Officers, both Local and National, how to verify the applications they receive and also introduce them to the Matching process, which is carried out on the international level.

1.2 Who verifies applications?

Verification is carried out by Local Officers first, followed by National Officers. The reason for this is that Local Officers are the closest to the student themselves, and therefore they are in the best position to assess the applicant. This may require the Local Officer to contact the applicant for proof of language proficiency and legal skills. The purpose of verification by National Officers is to double-check the work of the Local Officer prior to the application going to ELSA International.

1.3 What is Matching?

Matching is a process carried out by ELSA International. It is not something that Local or National Officers are required to do. However, it is important that all Professional Development Officers understand the process in order for them to realise how applications are graded and give feedback should it be required.

1.4 When is Verification carried out?

Verification is carried out during the Student Hunting process. Please refer to the ELSA Traineeships Calendar on the [officer's portal](#) to find the relevant dates each year for the two cycles. It is important to verify the applications as soon as possible to give the maximum amount of time to Local and National Officers to get proof of legal and language skills. If Verification is left to the last minute, there often is no time to contact the applicant, and this can lead to unqualified students going to further in the ELSA Traineeships process than they would otherwise be warranted.

1.5 Where is Verification done?

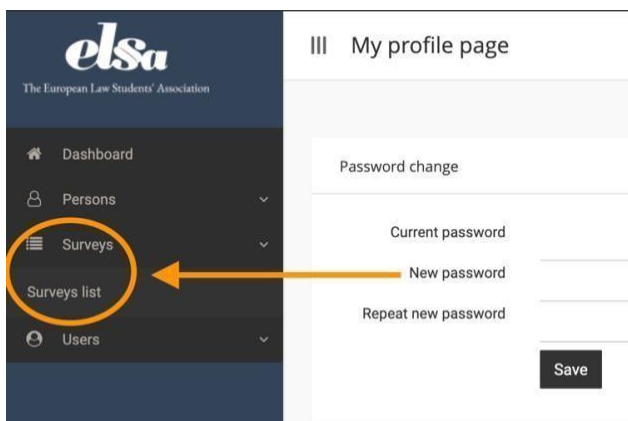
Verification is carried out on the STEP Online System (SOS), and further details of how it is done are contained in this guide.

2. SOS (STEP Online System)

2.1 Introduction

The STEP Online System or SOS is the online verification system that allows access to the Traineeship Application Forms or TAFs of the applicants. The system is designed to allow TAFs to be directed to the relevant Local Officers for verification prior to the National Officers carrying out the second-line verification process. Officers may view and edit applications in the system in the event that a TAF needs correction. This guide will show how to use that system.







2.2 How to find the TAFs?



1. Log into the [SOS](#) with your login credentials.

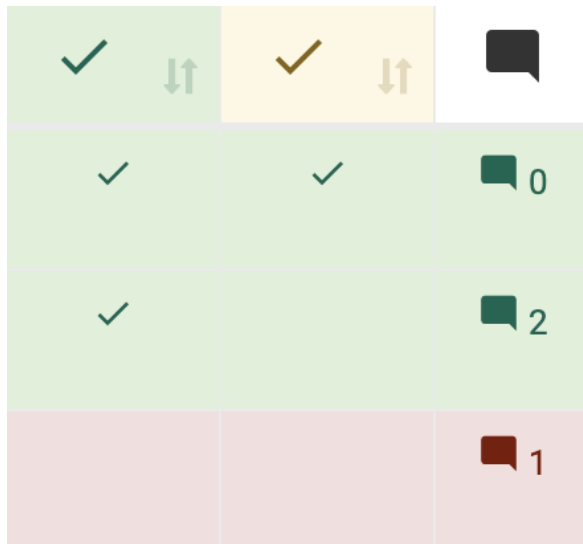
If you do not know your login credentials, contact your National Officer or ELSA International.

2. From the menu bar on the left, go to **Surveys** → **Surveys list**

	 	SAF C1/2019-2020	Student Application Form for STEP
	 	TSF C1/2019-2020	STEP Traineeship Specification Form (TSF)

3. Press the **“menu”** button next to the TAFs of the correct ELSA Traineeships Cycle (i.e. **TAF C2/2022-2023**).

2.3 Commenting on the TAFs



4. Press the **speech bubble icon** right to the TAF you want to comment.

5. In your comment, provide details about the verification process (e.g. what information is missing, general remarks about the quality, edits made to the TAF, etc.). Do not forget to add your name and the group you represent so that ELSA International can follow up if required.

The colour of the TAF in the SOS reflects its status:

- **Red** = Rejected by the Local Group
- **Yellow** = Approved by the Local Group
- **Green** = Approved by the National Group

2.4 Editing the TAF

Press the **“menu” button** next to the TAF you want to edit **View, edit**

There is no **“save” button**. Your updates are automatically updated once you click off the box in which you are editing.



2.5 Approving/rejecting the TAF

Press the **“menu” button** next to the TAF you want to approve/reject. This is the **Approval toggle**.

3. Verification Criteria

From the list of the submitted TAFs, select the one you want to view and click the PDF version. Follow the guidelines set below in order to make sure that the TAF is correct and of sufficient quality to be sent upward in the verification process:

Requirement	Why?	How?
ELSA Membership	Only ELSA members may apply for ELSA Traineeships.	Consult your Group's membership database.
Internationality	Applicants may apply for max. three ELSA Traineeships, and they must be "international", i.e. there must exist no "substantial link" between the Applicant and the country in which the Traineeship is held. This does not apply to Traineeships with the ELSA International code (TN-EI).	Check where the ELSA Traineeships chosen will take place and whether a "substantial link" exists between the applicant and the country in question. ELSA Traineeships is an exchange programme, and therefore, students should not be sent to their home jurisdictions.
Educational Level	Applicants must possess the education level required by the TNP at the time that the traineeship begins. Therefore, for example, if a TSF requires a "Graduate Bachelor" and the Applicant is an Undergraduate but will have graduated by the start date of the traineeship, then they may apply.	Request for academic transcripts or other proof of graduation/enrolment. Use ECTS points to determine education level if required.
Languages	Applicants must meet the required language skills set out in the TSF as a minimum. This requirement is absolute.	Request for certificates and/or conduct tests.
Legal Skills	At least 60% of the legal skills required by the TNP must be met. Students claiming "Advanced" level legal skills must possess proof of additional learning in this subject, above mandatory courses undertaken in law school.	Request for academic transcripts or other proof of coursework, work experience etc.
Motivation Letter	Applicants must write a customised motivation letter in English for each chosen ELSA Traineeship.	Read through the motivation letter(s) and give constructive comments if necessary.
CV	Applicants may include their CV if it is in English.	Open the attachments and check their content.

4. Verification FAQ

The following is a list of some of the most common questions asked about the verification process and how to answer them.

a. What if my country has no ELSA Group?

In this case, ELSA International will handle the verification process in the place of a National Officer.

b. I am a Local Professional Development Officer, but my National Group has no PD Officer in place to verify nationally; what do I do?

Contact ELSA International once you have carried out the correct verification process as per the guidelines. They will assist you in making sure that the application is verified nationally so that the applicant does not miss out on the chance to be considered.

c. An Applicant is on ERASMUS/Exchange in my country; however, they wish to apply for a traineeship in the country in which they originally studied, is this allowed?

No, students may not undertake traineeships in countries with which they have a “substantial link”; this may mean the country in which they spent most of their life or the country in which they are currently matriculating. ERASMUS/Exchange students do not matriculate at the university they are sent to during the exchange.

d. I have an Applicant who wants to apply for an TN-EI code traineeship, but it is geographically located in the country in which they live, is this allowed?

Yes, any student, regardless of location, may apply to an ELSA International traineeship, which is identified by the TN-EI code prefix on the traineeship designation.

e. I have an Applicant who was born in the country in which the traineeship is located but has not studied there, are they allowed to apply?

Yes, the purpose of an ELSA Traineeship is to facilitate exchange between students and a foreign jurisdiction. Students bring their legal skills to this exchange, and so if a student is born in a country in which they wish to apply but is entirely educated in another jurisdiction. They are bringing their foreign legal skills to the traineeship, not simply their nationality.

f. An Applicant in my group wishes to apply for a Graduate Bachelor traineeship but they are still studying, is this allowed?

An applicant must possess the required education level **at the time the traineeship is carried out**. This means that if they wish to apply for a Graduate Bachelor traineeship, they must graduate before the traineeship start date. This applies to all levels, Bachelor, Master and PhD.

g. My country does not differentiate between Bachelor's and Masters's degrees; how

can I assess whether they have the correct educational level?

In cases where there is confusion over the relevant education level, it is useful to use the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) to determine education. In this system, each year of study is equivalent to 60 ECTS points, meaning that a student must possess a minimum of 180 ECTS points to be considered to have met the minimum requirement for a Bachelor's, and 240 ECTS points for a Masters's degree etc.

h. I have an applicant who wishes to apply/has applied but does not possess certificates for the language requirements; how do I assess this?

It is necessary to contact the student and determine why there is no proof of language skills. This is not uncommon for applicants. There may be a straightforward reason for this, such as it being their native language or the language they speak at home. In other cases, it may be more difficult. If you have no objective way of assessing the skill yourself, ask a colleague who speaks that language to perhaps have a conversation with the applicant to assess the skill level. We must make sure we do not send unqualified students on ELSA Traineeships.

i. What does it mean in language skills when it says “Basic”, “Good” and “Fluent”?

These correlate to the following on the European Language System, Basic: A1 - A2, Good: B1 - B2 and Fluent: C1 - C2.

j. I have an Applicant who wishes to apply, but their language skill is “Good”, but the Traineeship says that they require “Fluent” in that language. Can they still apply?

No, unfortunately, the language requirement is absolute, and Applicants must possess the skill required at a minimum.

k. I have an Applicant that possesses some but not all of the legal skills. Can they still be verified and sent upwards?

Applicants must possess a minimum of 60% of the required legal skills. A helpful way to assess this is to apply a point system. Give each required legal skill points, for example, 1 for General level and 2 for Advanced. Now apply that point system to what the applicant possesses and determine whether they have 60% of the requirement.

l. Some of the legal skills required by the Traineeship Provider are not taught in my country; how do I assess the legal skills then?

In this case, Officers must exercise their best judgement in order to determine whether there is an equivalency between what is taught in your jurisdiction and what is required by the Traineeship provider. If there is any doubt, err on the side of caution or contact your National Officer or ELSA International for assistance.

m. An applicant has written that they have “Advanced” legal skills in certain areas but have not provided proof; what do I do?

You must contact the student to make sure they have sufficient proof of the Advanced skills required, and then make sure that proof is written in the “Proof of Legal Skills” section of the

application. Remember, compulsory modules taken at law school do not count as Advanced.

n. An applicant has written a very short/no motivation letter; what do I do?

In this case, you should contact the student and politely ask whether they would like to write something more substantive that you can add to the application. Remember, once an application is submitted, only Local/National Officers can edit it. Therefore if a student wishes to update the letter, an officer must do it in the SOS. Poor motivation letters are not necessarily grounds for rejection, but it must be explained that traineeships are competitive, and if there is a chance the letter is scored quite low, it will almost certainly exclude them from the selection. If there is no motivation letter and the student cannot be contacted or does not wish to add one, this is grounds for rejection.

o. An Applicant has a motivation letter that has spelling mistakes; can I fix these mistakes?

Yes, Local or National Officers may correct errata in a letter at their own discretion. This is part of the potential application support you may offer; however, an Officer may not substantively change the content of the letter; this can only be done in communication with the Applicant.

p. An Applicant's motivation letter and/or CV contains substantive words or phrases that are not in English. Can I still approve their application?

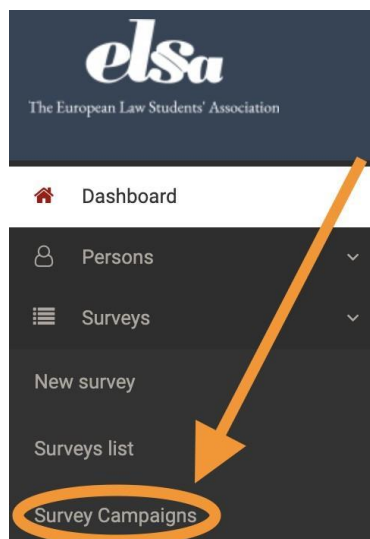
All motivation letters and CVs must be in English unless directly quoting a name or title in the original language. This applies to institutions, qualifications and the titles of books or articles. It is also best practice for the Applicants to provide a translation of a title in English for the benefit of the Traineeship Provider. However, this requirement is not exclusionary.

5. Matching

Matching is a process carried out by ELSA International and the ELSA International Team; it is **not carried out by National or Local Officers**. Therefore, the content in the following section is for National and Local Officers to understand but not apply. It helps if these officers understand the process in order to give adequate feedback and to consider whether an application is of the requisite quality to be considered for selection. The SOS is a semi-automated IT system. It automatically filters whether a TAF fulfils the minimum criteria of a TNP. Regardless, the SOS is not foolproof because it cannot tell about:

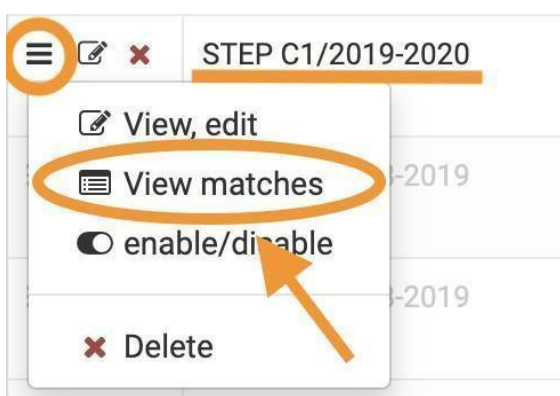
- The overall quality of a TAF (cf. the motivation letter);
- Whether a TAF meets the additional requirements of the TNP;
- Whether a TAF is short of just a few legal skills from those required;
- Etc.

5.1 How to find the approved TAFs?



6. Log into the [SOS](#) with your individual STEP Trainee Team credentials. If you do not know your login credentials, contact the Vice President in charge of Professional Development of the International Board of ELSA.

7. From the menu bar on the left, go to **Surveys** **D** **Survey Campaigns**.



8. Press the “menu” button next to the correct TAF Campaign (i.e. C2/2020-2021)

9. View matches.

Step all matches Print Excel

TN Code SA Code Matched YES NO SAF approved by NG Displayed on the TNP page YES NO

Selected YES NO TNP selection confirmed by the Applicant

- Write in the search column the **TN Code** of the TNP you are checking out (e.g. TN-BG/01) + choose **“TAF approved by NG”** then **“Apply filters”**

Traineeship	Applicant									
<input type="checkbox"/> TN-BG/01, Dimitrov, Petrov & Co. Law Firm, Sofia, Bulgaria	SA-PT/ [REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					-/1 0
<input type="checkbox"/> TN-BG/01, Dimitrov, Petrov & Co. Law Firm, Sofia, Bulgaria	SA-IT/ [REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				-/1 0

The symbols next to the filtered TAFs mean the following:

- **Graduation hat** = the requisite academic level;
- **Building** = the requisite legal skills;
- **Flag** = the requisite language skills;
- **Check/V sign** = the TAF is verified;
- **Arrow** = the TAF is forwarded to the TNP;
- **Gavel** = the TNP made an offer;
- **Clock** = the offer was accepted on time;
- **Double check/VV sign** = the offer was accepted

5.2 Ranking during Matching

Ranking is done only for those TAFs that meet the **formal criteria**, i.e. they are written in **English** with:

- All required fields completed;
- The minimum educational level met; and
- The minimum language skills met.

Based on the **internal ranking system**, the ELSA Traineeship Team may evaluate and rank the TAFs on the basis of accountable criteria. The ranking is done on a scale **that ranges from 1 - 10** in most cases, with some elements done on a lower scale. with respect to three criteria: (a) the quality of the **motivation letter**, (b) the quality of the **CV** and the **legal skills** match.

5.3 Point ranking criteria during Matching

If an application scores 0 in any category, it must be rejected. The maximum score is 30.

Points	Motivation Letter	CV	Legal Skills	Language Skills	Proof of Legal Skills
0	No ML	No CV	0% - 59% Match	Does not possess the requirement.	No Proof
1	Very poor ML, one sentence	Very poor CV, one sentence.	60% Match	Possesses required language	Basic description
2	Poor ML, less than five sentences	Poor CV, less than one page, with errors	70% Match	Exceeds skill level on required languages	Excellent description
3	Below average ML, between five and ten sentences with spelling/grammar mistakes	Below average CV, errors, non-English elements etc.	80% Match		
4	Average ML, one to two paragraphs. Generic content, some spelling/grammar mistakes	Average CV, little formatting but largely error-free	90% Match		
5	Mid-range ML, generic, possibly copied. good spelling/grammar	Mid-range CV, few errors, consistent format	100% Match		
6	Above average ML, relevant content, shows customisation, little to no spelling/grammar mistakes	Above average CV, well-formatted, little to no errors.	Exceeds skill level on required legal skills.		
7	Good ML, relevant content and specific to the TNP, not copied, no evident spelling/grammar mistakes	Good CV, formatted very well, no errors			
8	Very good ML, specific to TNP with clear customisation, well-formatted, no spelling/grammar mistakes	Very good CV, only relevant information, no errors			
9	Outstanding ML, relevant, customised with a clear application of skills to the requirements of the TNP	Outstanding CV, shows customisation for ET and no errors			
10	Flawless ML, excellent format, no errors, shows extensive research of the TNP and clear application of skills.	Flawless CV			

5.4 Explanation of the points system:

This Matching score system is designed to create a level of differentiation between applications in order to create the clearest separation. **The maximum score is 30 points.** The movement to a 30-point scale is to create greater differentiation between matched applications and provide TNPs with higher quality and more fairly selected applications in the higher range of scores. It is within the discretion of the EIT member assessing the application what score an element should get, but that being the case, very few motivation letters should ever score ten points.

5.4.1 Motivation Letter:

There are a total of ten points available for the scoring of motivation letters. The table above is clear for the lower tiers of scoring, which are evident in the characteristics of the letter, such as it being one sentence, not being proofread etc. Many applications that students submit have copied and pasted motivation letters; this is obviously discouraged, but in the event that this is the case, the **highest a copied motivation letter can score is five points.** Copied letters cannot, by definition, be customised, and so to move past five points, the greater the customization and quality of written English are the primary point scorers. Between five and seven points, a letter must show increasing levels of customization and decreasing instances of spelling/grammar mistakes. Please make the best use of the software available to the EIT in order to assess this. Between eight and ten points, a motivation letter should show detailed research of the TNP, specific references to the applicant's personal skills and their relation to the work of the TNP, and it must contain no spelling or grammar errors. Whilst it is within the scope of the EIT team to correct these errors, it is the purpose of matching also to assess the level of effort that an applicant placed into an application, and so these types of errors are simple indicators of this.

5.4.2 CV:

Much like the other elements within the matching guidelines, the absence of an attached CV means the applicant scores zero points, and the application will be rejected. Much like the motivation letters, there are certain elements that characterize the CV's that score between one and three points; they are poor formatting, which means the inconsistent use of colour, fonts and visual elements. There also may be the presence of large amounts of non-English language text that is there through error. In the range of four to six points, the CV will have a good but basic format, little to no spelling or grammar mistakes, and contain relevant information, but it will still have small errors in the visual style or the details it contains and may be longer than two pages. From seven to ten points, the CV will have no spelling/grammar errors, consistent formatting, only relevant information, the appearance of customisation, no unnecessary visual elements and be no longer than two pages. For example, a complete Europass format CV with no spelling or grammar mistakes and only relevant information that fits neatly on two pages would score an eight.

5.4.3 Legal Skills:

When assessing Legal Skills, an applicant may get six points rather than five if they possess a greater degree of skill in **the Legal Skills that are listed in the TSF.** If the Applicant lists additional skills that are not required by the TNP, they are not eligible for six points as it only

applies to skill level in those listed. In this way, it gives some advantages to the Applicant if they have additional learning, but not to the degree that it would overly disadvantage other applicants who do possess the skills but do not have extremely extensive experience or legal knowledge.

5.4.4 Language Skills:

In the case of Language skills, extra points are awarded if the applicant exceeds the skill requirements. **This only applies to skills that are required.** For example, if the TSF says that it requires English - Good, and the Applicant possesses English - Fluent, then they would be eligible for two points rather than one. However, if the TSF requires English - Fluent, and the applicant possesses this but also speaks other languages, they **are not eligible for the additional points.**

5.4.5 Proof of Legal Skills:

When assessing the Proof of Legal Skills, there is an opportunity for an applicant to gain two points rather than one based on the quality of the proof supplied. The reason why this differentiation is valuable is that when TNPs select applicants, it is to their advantage to have been supplied with a detailed explanation of those skills so that they can select the best-suited applicants. Zero points will be awarded for no proof of legal skills, and the applicant will be rejected for the traineeship. One point shall be awarded for Proof of Legal Skills that are basic and terse; here is an example of a one-point proof:

“Private International Law: General - Compulsory module studied during LLB”

This is an example of the same legal skill that would be given a two-point score:

“Private International Law: General - Compulsory module studied during LLB, with an emphasis on consumer protections, and my final assessment paper was on choice of law clauses in Private International Law contracts”

Many applications will have a mix of high-quality proof and medium quality proof, it is up to the person matching whether to award one or two points based on a balance of what is predominantly required for the TNP and what proof is supplied.

6. Matching FAQ

a. What if the application is missing any of the required information?

In this case, ELSA International must reject and not score the application, and it is not possible for the ELSA International Team to follow up on individual issues following the end of the Internal Student Hunting deadline. This does not apply to international external students who will be handled by the Director for ELSA Traineeships.

b. What if the proof of legal skills is very poor and difficult to understand or contains irrelevant information?

An application may score one point in the legal skills section if it contains the most basic information required. If the application is excellent otherwise, it is up to the discretion of the EIT member assessing the application to contact the national officer regarding this. However, this should only be done in exceptional circumstances, such as the traineeship having one to a very low number of applicants.

c. I have a high number of applications that have scored the maximum number of points allowed; how do I differentiate?

In this case, read the high-point score items again and compare/contrast them. This means reading and comparing the motivation letters and CVs of the top-ranked people in order to reassess their scores and possibly create some separation.

d. How many applications should I match so that the TNP has a good selection of people to evaluate?

Generally, it is good practice to match a minimum of three trainees for each available place at a TNP, so if a TNP has three traineeship spots, that would mean matching a minimum of nine students (if possible). You may match a maximum of four trainees per place if there is very little separation between the top point scorers. Of course, this also depends on the overall number of applications and the quality of each.

e. How do I track my evaluations?

Please use the spreadsheet provided to you by the Director for ELSA Traineeships and make sure that it is sent in its entirety to the Director following the end of the matching process so that your evaluation is available for possible feedback requests.

f. What should I comment in the SOS when I have evaluated someone?

The comment should follow a set pattern; here is a generic example:

“TN-EI/01:

ML: 8

CV: 6

LS: 3

Language: 1

LS Proof: 1



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Total: 19

Applicant possesses the required skills in order to be matched for this traineeship, the ML was excellent, and the CV was good.”

g. The TNP has only one applicant; however, they do not meet the requirements of the traineeship. Can I still match them?

This is up to the discretion of the Director for ELSA Traineeship or the Vice-President for Professional Development on the International Board. If this is the case, refer it to those individuals for assessment. We want to balance the quality of our applicants with the desire to make sure that all TNPs get applicants.

7. Forward the Matched TAFs to TNPs

7.1 What to do?

- Click the menu button on the left above all the matched TAFs **D With selections D Display on the TNP page D TRUE**

Traineeship	Applicant	✓	✓	✓
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Select All <input type="checkbox"/> Select None <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invert Selection <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With selections ▾	SA-TR/55, Zeynep Bagir, Turkey	✓	✓	✓
	SA-GB/39, Kirila Bucheva, United Kingdom	✓	✓	✓
				✓
				✓

Send emails to the applicants

Display on the TNP page (true/false)

Toggle the applicant confirmation (true/false)

Toggle the applicant confirmation cancellation (true/false)

7.2 Where are the TNP credentials?

You can find the TNP log-in credentials to the Traineeship Providers Interface (TPI) (the same as SOS) by following the steps below:

- From the menu bar on the left, go to the **Users list**
- Search for the TN code of the TNP
- The login “username” (xyz@elsa.org) is presented on the right next to the TNP name.

Users list

+	👤	👤	👤
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TN-BG/01	TN-BG/01, Bulgaria, Dimitrov, Petrov & Co. Law Firm	<u>095a8fc37934e95b803fd22e624e53b5@elsa.org</u>	Traineeship Provider

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries (filtered from 934 total entries)