



*Dual Curricula - Study and Work Practice in
Agriculture and Food Safety (DualAFS)*

**“GUIDE FOR BACHELOR STUDIES & PRACTICE
IN “AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT”**

**ERASMUS+, KA2 – COOPERATION FOR INNOVATION & EXCHANGE OF GOOD
PRACTICES CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION -
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This guideline is conceived in the framework of DualAFS Project, in close collaboration between the academic staff of the Agribusiness Department at “Fan S. Noli” University of Korça, with partners of DualAFS project, experts, and representatives from the private and public sector.

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1. Dual Bachelor curricula in Agri-business Management (UNIKO)

This guideline provides general information for all the groups involved on the practical placement and project works of the Bachelor Degree on “Agribusiness Management”, offered by Agribusiness Department of “Fan S. Noli” Korçe. It provides information on the objectives that are aimed to achieve the fulfillment of the practical part by the students, the procedures and regulations applied before and during the practice, and the assessment methods. Moreover, this document provides information of the roles and responsibilities of each chair group involved in the study process.

1.1 General description of the study program “Agribusiness Management”

Agribusiness management is a vast and complex system that reaches beyond the farm and includes various steps, starting from farm inputs, production, agro-processing and marketing of the products in the market.

The bachelor study program in "Agribusiness Management" focuses on topics related to management and provides knowledge with theoretical and practical content, aiming to prepare successful managers in the agriculture sector and sub-sectors.

In this study program, knowledge is offered for the development of integrative, decision-making skills, the improvement of agribusiness practices and strategies, innovation, the improvement of communication skills, leadership and teamwork skills.

The combination of studies in various areas such as: business management, finance, marketing, planning & supervision, technology and innovation and farm operations is suitable for students who intend to be employed in managerial positions in the agribusiness sector, agro-processing industry, tourism enterprises, financial and public institutions, using contemporary management techniques.

Some of the specific objectives of the study program consist on:

- Developing students' theoretical and practical skills that are necessary in any agribusiness operations.
- Preparing qualified specialists that are able to deal with current and future challenges and become successful managers of agricultural businesses.
- To "awaken" the interest of young people and provide opportunities to develop a successful business in the agricultural sector, providing a new dimension to the development of rural areas.
- Promoting teaching and research activities and develop cooperation's with national and international institutions that fits within the scope and aim of the university.

1.2 Rationale for the reorganizing of the curriculum

In different developed countries, long-term practical training as a form of work-based placement, is considered one the most important indicators for the recruitment of young people in the labor market.

Over the years, Albania has undergone into different economic and social developments, while, the high unemployment rate of graduates and the theory-practice gap in the capacity building of students creates barriers for the inclusion of students in the labor market. This is foreseen as one the most important challenges by the government and HEI-s, related to the capacity building process.

The dynamics of these multidimensional changes and considering the fact that labor market operators, both in the private and public sectors, are adjusting and improving the performance of their economic activities, has provided the need to precede to these dynamic changes with contemporary professional knowledge and capacities. In addition, the curriculum of the bachelor study program on “Agribusiness Management” is on the process of reorganization, adapting it according to the “dual curricula’s” as offered by partner European universities.

The development trends of the agriculture sector and its subsectors, and also the flow of students in study programs with agriculture profile, are important indicators for the adaptation of the academic offer toward the dual system, aiming to increase the weight of the professional practice (work based placement), in the respective study program.

Based on the periodic labor market analysis of the academic staff of the Agribusiness Department, and the results of the backdrop description survey that was undertaken in the framework of DualAFS, with representatives from private companies that operate in the sector of agriculture, public institutions and academia, the need for reorganizing the bachelor study program was identified as a necessity. In this context, implementing long-term placement on a company, public institution or a farm, will facilitate the employment of students and provide better prepared specialist in the agribusiness sector.

In order to increase the employment opportunities by integrating young people during university studies in the labor market, and also face the challenges related to the diminishing number of work-force in farm operations and rural areas, the academic staff of the Agribusiness Department at UNIKO, argued that the reorganization of the study program by implementing long term professional practice is the right approach to face the challenges mentioned in the above paragraphs.

1.3 Goals of the adapted curriculum

In the reorganized curriculum of the study program “Agribusiness Management” integrated with practice, the main goal consist **strengthening of practical skills** of students through *increasing the weight of professional practice* and qualitatively integrating it with theory. This will *provide better employment opportunities for them*, and *fulfill the needs of the agriculture sector and its sub-sectors for qualified employees*.

The goals of the re-organized curriculum will be achieved through:

- Implementation of **practical placement** for a period of time over 16 weeks, where the students can gain work experience in work-life-partners, according to the respective curriculum of the study program.
- Implementation of **project works**, where the students get involved into different projects or contribute to the activities of the company.
- Integrating part of the theoretical classes with practice on the farm/business (practical curriculum).

1.4 Structure of the adapted “Dual curriculum”

The structure of the re-organized bachelor curricula in “Agribusiness Management” is as indicated on the figure below.



Figure 1. Distribution ration between theory and practice and total work load

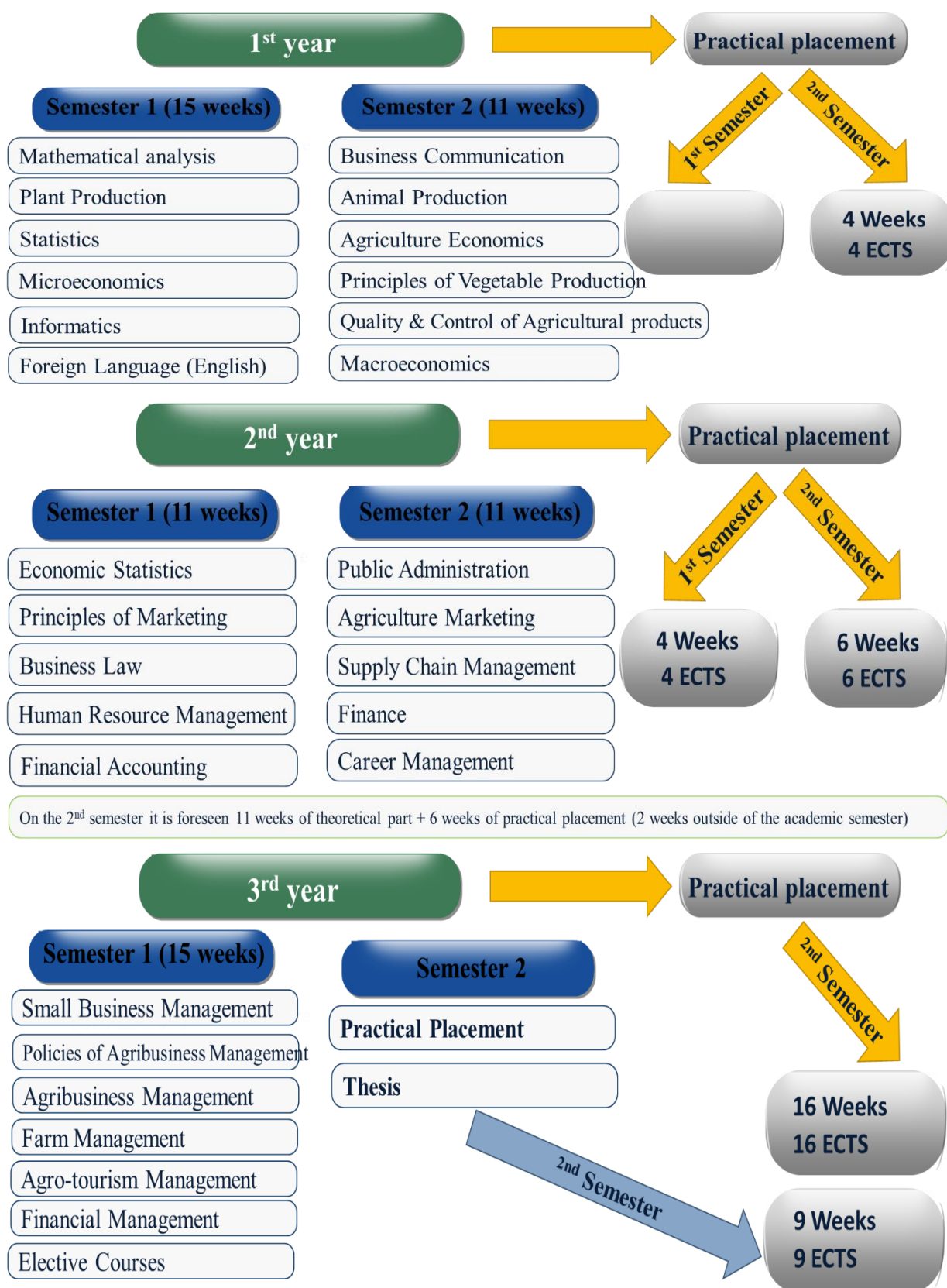


Figure 2. Structure of the re-organized curriculum

1.5 Description of changes in the curricula

In the framework of DualAFS project, aiming to develop a curriculum of studies, integrated with practice and aligned with the "Dual" model, the Agribusiness Department in UNIKO has initiated the procedures for the re-organization of the bachelor study program in “Agribusiness Management”.

The changes of the existing curriculum focus on fulfilling the quality standards provided by the Quality Code of Higher Education in Albania and are in accordance with the following:

- DCM, No. 41 dated 24.01.2018 "On the elements of study programs offered by Higher Education Institutions", amended.
- Draft National Education Strategy 2021-2026.
- Statute of “Fan S. Noli” University of Korca and Internal Regulation of the Agribusiness Department.

Considering the objectives of the international project on "Dual Curricula – Study and Work Practice in Agriculture and Food Safety" within the Erasmus + program, where the basic unit "Agribusiness" is a partner, the Agribusiness Department has applied the following changes according to the respective semesters:

1st SEMESTER

- The course "Plant Production" (type A/5 ECTS) will change its name – to: "Techniques of Plant Production" type (A/5 ECTS), and will also include knowledge from the course "Fertilizers & Plant Fertilization" that is removed from the IV semester;

2nd SEMESTER

- The subject "Economic Mathematics" of type "A" is removed, and the subject "Quality & Food Safety" of type (C/4 credits) is added.
- The subjects "Principles of orchards establishment" & "Principles of Vegetable Production" are removed, and is added the subject "Principles of Horticulture Production" (A/5 ECTS).
- Added “Professional Practice" (D/4 ECTS).

3rd SEMESTER

- The subject "Phytotechniques" type (C/5 ECTS) is removed, and "Professional Practice" (D/4 ECTS) is added.

4th SEMESTER

- The subject "Management of Markets and Prices of Agricultural Products" (B/4 ECTS), is replaced by the course "Supply Chain Management" (C/5 ECTS);
- "Professional Practice" (D/6 ECTS) is added.

5th SEMESTER

- Teaching subjects/modules move from the VI semester to the V semester, and "Professional Practice" moves to the VI semester.

6th SEMESTER

- The ECTS load of "Professional practice/Practical placement" is enhanced by 12 (from 4 – 16) ECTS.

1.6 Competences and skills of the curriculum

The graduated students in the Agribusiness Management study program, will acquire a set of competencies:

- Able to apply managerial and practical knowledge in agricultural enterprises and in private business administration;
- Apply different marketing strategies by combining components according to different practical situations;
- Identify individual skills and paths to follow a career development in the agribusiness sector;
- To build financial statements by analyzing case by case concrete conclusions;
- To interact confidently with others in different organizational environments;
- Increased self-confidence in concrete situations that require problem solving for effective management work operations;
- Acquire professional knowledge and creating a future vision for managing successfully enterprises with an agricultural profile;
- Ethics and professional behavior in various working environments;
- Acquired leadership and teamwork skills;

1.7 Employment possibilities of “Agribusiness Management” graduates

Agricultural farms and businesses in Albania face tough competition and are less integrated to the regional and global markets, due to major barriers to produce high-quality products in order to meet the demands of a constantly evolving market.

Economic integration can bring significant benefits to the agricultural sector, but these benefits can only be fully realized if the country has a skilled and competent workforce in agriculture and related fields. Unfortunately, there has been a decline in the number of students enrolling in and graduating from agricultural programs (agribusiness comprised) in Albania. To ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market, in the framework of DualAFS, the Agribusiness Department is developing a skill-building program that is aligned with the current and future needs of the labor market.

Moreover, the field of agribusiness offers a diverse range of career opportunities across different industries, including food production, food processing, retail marketing and farming.

The graduates of this study program may carry out different job roles within agribusiness, such as food manager, agribusiness office assistant, agribusiness marketing coordinator, farm appraiser, agricultural analyst, and market analyst. These roles can be found in a variety of settings, including farming industries, food production companies, public and private retail or wholesale marketing industries, etc. Also, the graduates in this field may be employed as teachers in vocational schools of agribusiness or manage successfully their own businesses.

1.8 Admission criteria to the study program and tuition fees

The admission of students to this study program is done according to the predetermined quotas proposed by the Agribusiness Department and approved by the Academic Senate. In this study program may enroll Albanian citizens, ethnic Albanians outside the state borders, as well as foreign citizens, that comply with the criteria defined by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Candidates who meet the following criteria have the right to apply on the "Bachelor" program in "Agribusiness Management":

- The candidate must have completed secondary education and have passed the State Matura exams at the average level approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports.
- Meet the criterion of the average grade of secondary education studies and of the State Matura exams determined every year by Decision of the Council of Ministers.

The candidate is required to submit in person the following documentation:

- a) Copy of State Matura Diploma jointly with the list of marks confirmed by the relevant local educational unit.
- b) Application form according to the acts in force.
- c) Copy of the identification document & two personal photos
- d) Mandate payment of the application fee

The registration of candidates in this study program takes place at the teaching secretary of the Faculty of Agriculture. Within the established deadlines, the selected students are announced on the special announcement posts of the faculty and on the university website, ranked in descending order, depending on the accumulated points by the applicants, in accordance with the approved admission quotas.

The candidates of this study program must have completed the pre-university cycle in the following fields:

- General Education;
- "Agribusiness" Professional School;
- "Economic" Vocational School;
- "Agricultural" Professional School;
- "Business Administration" Professional School;

The criteria, quotas, fees and modalities of admission to this study program are proposed by the Agribusiness Department, in accordance with state quality standards, approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Administration's

Currently, the annual study fee is based on the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 778, dated 26.12.2018.

Moreover, there are special categories of students, who belong to low social classes, who are exempted from study fees, as well as scholarships for students who have an average above 8.

1.9 Work-based learning and practical training

The objective of the work-based placement and practical learning experience, that is offered by this study program, it is mainly referred to the consolidation of the knowledge and skills obtained by students during theoretical classes and by integrating them with the practical experience that they will be able to gain during their studies.

1.9.1 Partners for practice implementation

a) *Our partners for the implementation of practical placement of students are:*

- Medium and large farms involved in the sector of agriculture and livestock;
- Agri-business operators (on farm and off farm activities)
- Agro-tourism units
- Production companies
- Companies that operate in the food processing sector
- Companies that collect, storage and evaluate agriculture products and medicinale herbs
- Non governmental organization involved into different projects
- Financial institutions
- Central and local public institutions (municipality, agency of agriculture extension, etc)
- Centers and institutions of transfer technology and consulence

b) Selection of stakeholders for practical part

The stakeholders (companies, farms, agri-business unites), that are involved for the completion of the practical placement and internships of the students is done ***based on the information and data's that the Agribusiness Department possess***, and by taking into account the length of the economic activity of the enterprises and public institutions. *The primary focus is to strengthen the cooperatation with stakeholders that operate in the Region of Korca, and then extend the radius of the stakeholders all over the country. This will enable* students to complete their practical placement near to their homes and providing lower transportation costs. With this regard, students are free to choose where they wish to perform their placement.

c) Distribution of students on companies, farms, public institutions

The students are free to select the place where they will perform the practical placement based on the network list that it is offered by the *Faculty of Agriculture and the student career center*, that is incorporated at the university. In addition, this will be facilitated due to the cooperation agreements that UNIKO and Faculty of Agriculture has with different work life partners.

Students may perform different phases of the practical part on the same or different stakeholders as they did on the previous periods. Also, *they are free to choose a stakeholder that is closer to their residence which fulfill's the criterias for the completion of the practical placement.*

The stakeholders have the right to interview and select the students, prior to their acceptance for the completion of the practical placement. In the cases when a student family possess an agriculture farm, company or business, he/she is allowed to complete the practical part of the curricula on his/her own farm or business.

1.9.2 Structure of the Practical placement

The practical part of the “Agribusiness Management” study program is distributed throughout the three academic years (shown on the sections above).

The organization of the practical part of the curricula is structured and distributed throughout the study period, in order to facilitate this process and create opportunities for students to obtain practical skills and get prepared for their defense. The performance of the student’s project work/practical placement will be evaluated based on their continuity, preparation of the report and final presentation related to the farms / businesses where they conduct their practice.

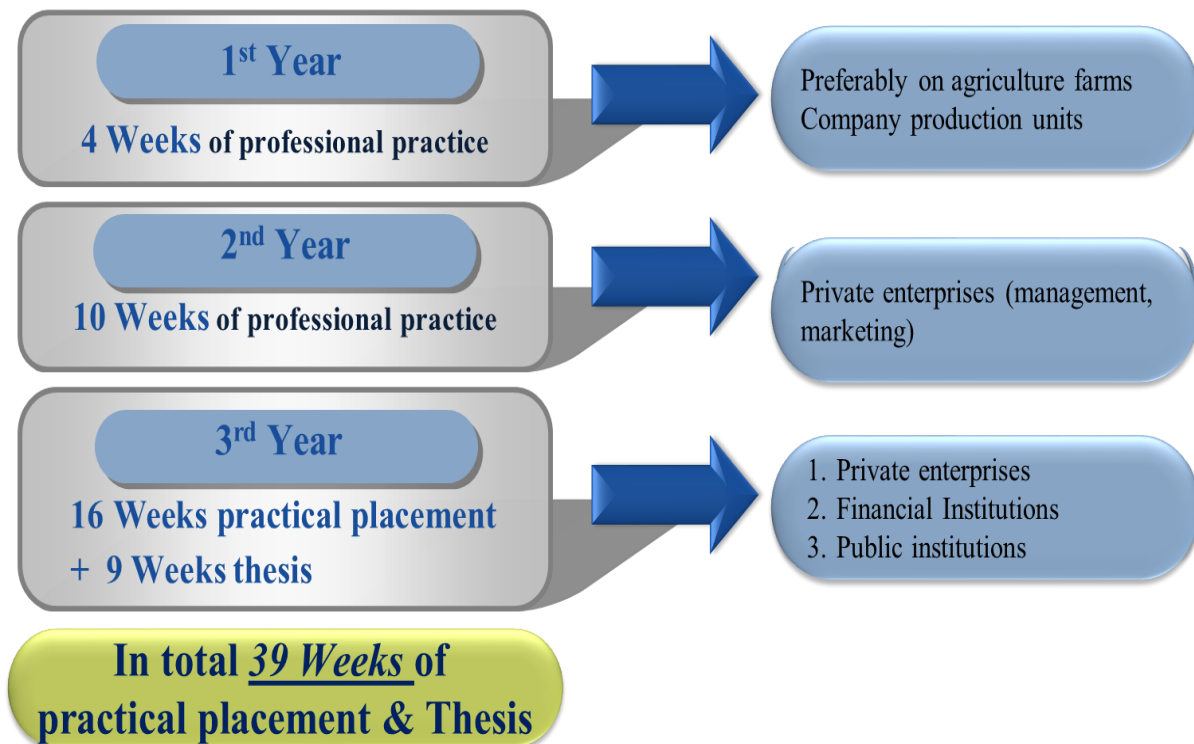


Figure 3. Structure of the practical part of the curriculum

1.9.2.1 Goals of the practical placement

During their practical placement, students will have the opportunity to get acquainted with the organization, management operations, activities and the degree of modernization (technology and mechanization, use of IT, etc.) of a large or medium enterprise in the agriculture sector and its sub-sectors, financial institutions and public institutions (central, regional and local level). In addition, they will be able to analyze what they have learned by preparing final reports and projects.

1.9.2.2 Forms of practice

The **practical placement** consists of a period of time over 16 weeks, where the students can gain work experience that correspond to the Bachelor Degree on Agribusiness Management. The student is obliged to work for a company or other related organizations, supervised by the academic staff of the department and an employee of the company that is offering the practical placement. During this period the student will be involved into working process. This form of practice *is referred when the student is considered as an employee first and as student second*. The aim of the practical placement is to prepare students be more familiar with the different work tasks in a company or organization environment, enabling them to apply their knowledge and *get promoted for future employment*.

A **project work/internship** consist of a period of time period (4 - 10 weeks), where the student can practice the skills and knowledge acquired during their studies, get involved into different projects, contribute to the activities of the company or organization that is offering the internship and prepare a paper or report. During his/her completion, the student will be supervised by an academic staff of the department. This form of practice *is referred when the student is considered as student first and an employee second*.

The objectives of the professional practice of the curricula will be achieved by structuring them into two forms:

1. *Professional practice on work life partners*, where according to the program prepared by the department, the students will participate in different work processes and activities being attached to the partner's representatives, technical managers, specialists, etc. After successful completion of the practical part, students are obliged to prepare a practical report and get evaluated.
2. *Deepening in the form of independent learning for special professional aspects* on company/farm/organizations, where the students according to the internship program or projects will apply the knowledge gained in the theoretical part of the curriculum in the form of a course project, including specific aspects of the topics provided by the department, for the relevant period of practice. Students carry out this task under the guidance and supervision of the lecturers of the Agribusiness Department and if possibly by one of the representatives from the work partner that is providing the practical work environment. At the end of the practice the students will prepare and submit at the project work, and be evaluated.

1.9.2.3 Timeline of the practice during the studies

1.9.2.4 Supervision of students during practice

The guidance of the student during his/her practical placement will be provided by the academic staff of the Agribusiness Department and if possibly in collaboration with managers/technical staff of the business and farm, during the development of the practical placement. This cooperation will be of a complementary and well-coordinated nature. During their practice, it will be targeted that students participate in different work processes and activities of the company/farm/institution. This will be accomplished through the close supervision between the supervisor and one of the representatives of the work-life-partner.

Student responsibilities

- Prior to the start of the practical placement, formulate and define what are their personal learning goals (related to their career, specific skills they want to improve);
- Show commitment and cooperate with the teaching staff in order find a placement;
- Follow the steps of the placement plan drafted with his/her supervisor (academic staff of the department);
- Write the placement report after completing his/her placement according to the guidelines of the study program regulation
- Prepare a presentation related to the work that has done in the company/farm/public institution;

Faculty Supervisor responsibilities

- Provides helpful information to the student for finding a placement;
- Set up the plan of the practical placement in cooperation with the student;
- Sign agreements prior to the start of the practical placement;
- Act as a contact person (student/university/work-life-partner);
- Follow the performance of the student during the practice (organize progress meetings with the student and the representative of the company/institution);
- Assess the student after completing the practical placement;

Work life partner responsibilities

- Cooperate in developing and conducting a training plan which the intern will follow;
- Provide the intern with necessary materials and information.
- Complete an intern evaluation form and mail it to the faculty supervisor.
- Provide the student intern with safety instructions commensurate with the level of danger for the intern, others in the area, and/or the environment.
- Verify that the number of hours the intern is submitting to the faculty supervisor is accurate

1.9.2.5 Practice workload

The total workload of the practical part of the curricula is specified in the regulation of the "Agribusiness Management" study program, as following:

Table 1. Total workload of the practical part

Structure of practical placement/workload	1 st Year		2 nd Year		3 rd Year	
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Project work/Work based placement		4 weeks 4 ECTS 100 hours	4 weeks 4 ECTS 100 hours	6 weeks 4 ECTS 100 hours		16 weeks 16 ECTS 400 hours
Thesis						9 weeks 9 ECTS 225hours

1.9.2.6 Assessment of Practice

During their practice students will be assessed according to their continuous performance. The elements of their evaluation will be as provided in table 2.

Table 2. Assessment criteria's

<p>1. Practical competences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Initiative b) Commitment c) Willingness to follow the plan of the practice
<p>2. Progress during practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Time management b) Handling's and supervisors comments c) Behavior and commitment at the working place d) Feedback from the employer
<p>3. Report preparation & presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Compatibility with the stated guidelines b) Clarity in the description of the place of work c) Writing skills d) Quality of the presentation

1.9.3 Elements of the practical placement

During their practical placement students are required to prepare different assignments in order for the project or practical placement to be completed. The assignments that students have to complete are according to each form of practice foreseen in the curricula of agribusiness management, as provided in the paragraph below.

1.9.3.1 Description of the project work

The main objective of the project work is to provide students the opportunity to study and contribute to a particular aspect of the agricultural business or institution. The students are

responsible for developing a group project, which can be done in collaboration with a cooperating agricultural business or agency. In this context, students are asked to work closely with the other team members and identify a specific project topic. Students may provide project topics that address specific needs or challenges within different organizations. According to the plan of the study program, project works are foreseen for the time period 4 – 6 weeks.

Once it is identified the area of focus, students are asked to develop a project plan and get the assistance of the academic staff of the department. The plan should include a clear description of the project's goals, objectives, methodology, timeline, and expected outcomes.

The purpose of the special project is to provide students with a meaningful learning experience and help them develop their skills and knowledge, relevant to the field of study. The steps that students should follow when performing a project work are as defined below:

- i Identification of the problem & project topic
- ii Development of objectives or hypothesis
- iii Data collection
- iv Data analysis
- v Development of conclusions
- vi Recommendations

1.9.3.2 Description of the practical placement

A supervised practical work experience in an agribusiness firm, public institution, or industrial organization can provide valuable insights into the agricultural industry and enhance student's career opportunities.

Students of the Agribusiness Management program are asked to complete their practical placement in three main concentration areas: agribusiness management; marketing; and agricultural economics. They have to demonstrate their ability to synthesize, integrate, and apply knowledge gained throughout their study program in a practical working environment. The practical placement is foreseen in the second semester of the 3rd year of studies, and consists of a period of time of 16 weeks, equal to 16 ECTS obtained.

Each student must complete a set of documents in order for the practical placement to be completed. The academic requirements for evaluation are as follows:

- **Application for practical placement.** The application for the practical placement should be signed by the academic staff of the agribusiness department.
- **Practical placement agreement.** Agreement must be signed by the student, the representative of the work life partner and handled at the academic staff supervisor.
- **Placement plan:** The plan is created in cooperation with the academic supervisor. The student has to define the learning objectives and task that he/she will perform in the company/farm/institution.
- **Weekly reports.** The student has to report every two weeks the set of activities he/she is performing during their practice.
- **Final report.** The final report should provide a clear description of the activities performed during their practice, the problems that were encountered and how were the problems solved, conclusions and benefits of the practical placement.

- **Evaluation by the company/farm/institution supervisor.** The representative of the work life partner is asked to provide a feedback for the performance of the student within the working environment.
- **Presentation.** The students should provide a final presentation (10 – 15 minutes), describing the deliverables of the practice and the benefits.

The evaluation of the students' performance will be done by a commission of the academic staff of the Agribusiness Department, considering the competencies provided in table 3.

Table 3. Evaluation of student's competencies during practical placement

Courses	Teaching	Problem solving	Communication	Leadership	Team-work
Course 1					
Course 2					
Course 3					
Course 4					
Course 5					
Course 6					

1.9.3.3 Bachelor Project thesis

The bachelor thesis is scheduled on the last semester of the study program. In order start the thesis, students should have passed all the exams and completed the practical placement. Thesis, is intended to help students gain in-depth knowledge and competencies that are outlined in the intended learning outcomes of the study program. According to the structure of the study program, thesis is performed in a 9 weeks period. The thesis project it has to be individual and cannot be taken in groups. During the bachelor thesis, students are expected to deliver an individual project which may have a focus on research or cooperate with a company, farm or public institution, and provide project deliverables for them. Also, bachelor thesis can be conducted as an internal assignment at the university, involving the collection of data at external organizations, but also working with secondary data.

When project thesis is performed at the request or collaboration of a work life partner, the students have to present the following requirements:

- a. Explain why the project was chosen & what is the identified problem
- b. Explanation of general operation activities of the work life partner activity
- c. Project plan & description of the accomplished steps
- d. Study methods used for performing specific operations
- e. The developed marketing or business plan (if applicable).
- f. Conclusions