wblchampion

Who mentors the mentor?

A new CPD module builds the practical skills that make workplace placements work.

Sixty minutes. Seven frameworks. One practical toolkit for better mentorship. Free, online. Join our new CPD.

There is a persistent and well-documented gap in Work-Based Learning (WBL): institutions invest heavily in programme design, employer partnerships, and student preparation — yet the person most directly responsible for whether a placement succeeds or fails rarely receives any structured development themselves. The workplace mentor.

A 2025 systematic review published in the Review of Education, examining fifty WBL studies across Europe, found that workplace mentors frequently operate without clear guidelines, and that the quality of mentorship varies considerably, and not because mentors lack commitment, but because they have not been given the tools.

The WBL Champion project was designed, in part, to address this gap. This newsletter introduces the project's third Continuing Professional Development module: **Ensuring Quality Mentorship at the Workplace** — a structured, evidence-based resource built specifically for industry professionals who host higher education students on WBL placements.

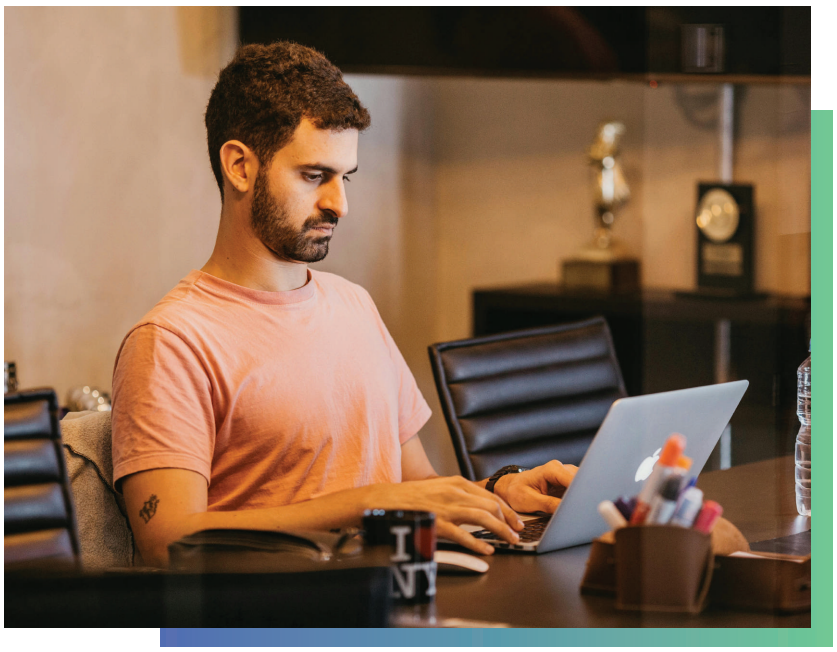
View CPD Course

About this CPD

Our new CPD module gives industry mentors a practical, evidence-based toolkit.

What it is

This course consists of a 60-minute, fully online, asynchronous professional development module delivered via a structured PowerPoint presentation. It is designed for independent completion by industry professionals who serve as mentors for postgraduate students on WBL placements, primarily MBA students at the associate partner institutions.



Why it was developed

The project's national and European policy research — conducted across Malta, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal — consistently identified mentorship quality as a principal risk factor in WBL programme outcomes. Mentors were found to be the most influential actors in a student's placement experience, yet they were also the least likely group to receive any preparation for the role. CPD 3 was developed to address this directly.

Who it is for

The primary audience is industry professionals hosting postgraduate MBA students on Knights College WBL placements in Malta. More broadly, the module is relevant to any employer-based supervisor, workplace mentor, or industry tutor operating within a structured higher education WBL framework, regardless of sector or country.

How it supports Work-Based Learning

This CPD equips mentors with a working toolkit drawn from established learning theory and workplace psychology:

The Kolb Learning Cycle
Learn how to design and sequence real work experiences so they produce genuine learning.

The SBI + Feedforward feedback loop
Learn how to adopt a structured method for giving observation-based feedback that focuses on future improvement, not past blame.

The 5 characteristics of quality mentorship
Delve into characteristics like intentionality, developmental focus, contextual bridging, relational safety, and accountability.

Psychological safety
Explore practical behaviours that create the conditions for honest, productive mentoring conversations.

The four-question weekly check-in
Discover the fifteen-minute, evidence-backed format that can be run consistently within normal working schedules.

Alignment with academic expectations
Gain best practices on how to connect work-place experience to learning outcomes, and when to contact the academic supervisor.

Discover More

Why this output matters

Better mentorship provides a practical response to the skills gap that benefits everyone.

Learners

Students on WBL placements must bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice. The quality of mentor support can have a significant impact on that experience. This CPD equips mentors with the right tools to support learners in developing confidence and capability.

Employers

Hosting a postgraduate student is a significant investment. This CPD helps organisations maximise that investment by equipping mentors with the tools, structure, and feedback strategies that enable students to contribute to organisations more meaningfully and effectively.

Education Providers

This CPD provides institutions with a practical mechanism to raise the baseline quality of mentorship across their employer partner network. By establishing a shared framework, language, and expectations, it helps create more consistent and effective placement experiences from day one.

Policymakers

Work-Based Learning is increasingly central to European skills policy. This CPD offers a practical, scalable, and evidence-based approach to building mentorship capacity that can be adapted across sectors, languages, and institutional contexts.

Why you should join

Without structured preparation, workplace mentors default to patterns from their own professional experience which may not align with the learning framework, the student's developmental stage, or the academic expectations of the programme. This CPD gives mentors a shared language and a shared set of tools, so that the mentoring relationship is intentional and productive rather than incidental.

A global perspective on mentorship

Developed by an international consortium of higher education and training partners across Malta, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal, this CPD brings together cross-border expertise to deliver a practical, evidence-based learning experience. Skills shortages, early attrition from placements, weak links between academic learning and workplace tasks, and uneven mentorship quality are consistent findings across the project's research. This CPD is a direct response to those findings — built to be useful in practice, not just compliant with policy.

Preparing mentors, strengthening outcomes

The skills gap is not primarily a curriculum problem. It is a transition problem — the gap between what education prepares students to do and what the workplace requires. Work-Based Learning helps close that gap in real time, but doing it well requires prepared mentors. This CPD exists to make that preparation accessible, practical, and free. The WBL Champion project invites every employer partner, education institution, and policymakers with a stake in graduate employability to use it.

Follow us on social media for regular updates on course launch announcements, access opportunities, and ongoing WBL resources:

By following the WBL Champion project, you'll be the first to know when courses launch on the digital platform, and when additional resources are released. You'll also be part of a growing community of educators rethinking how we prepare students for real work.

WBL Champion Project partners: VITECO (Italy), KNIGHTS College (Malta), INOVA+ (Portugal), and Technological University Dublin (Ireland).

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