

# University Career Services Cooperation with employers – Italian Best Practices

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# WHAT IS A CAREER SERVICE

The main aims of the Career Services are students' counselling and supporting the development of their useful competences for the job market.

The way that Careers Services deal with student guidance issues varies enormously between countries and even within different institutions in the same country.

What follows below is a range of activities made in different careers services.

The first activity is the individual Guidance and Counselling to help students to understand the process of career choice; to clarify their own values, interests skills and abilities, then to help them to reflect on these in order to make an informed decision about their future and to take responsibility for the management of their career.

Another activity is to offer to the students access to a wide variety of information facilities on areas such as occupations, training, postgraduate study.

Careers Education – Careers services run also a wide variety of courses requested by students as part of a comprehensive careers education programme. This could include CV writing, Interview Techniques, Effective Applications, plus a wide range of topics relating to transferable skills in general e.g. Presentation Skills, Negotiation Skills.

Career Services support staff in all departments of the University, keeping them informed about the market for graduates and about issues affecting the employment of the University's graduates.

Employer Liaison – Careers services work directly with employers and help them advertise their vacancies to students. This is done via web but also

through careers fairs and presentations which allow students to meet prospective employers to find out more about what they do.

Academic Liaison – Careers services liaise with academics regularly. This allows academics to keep up to date on issues around recruitment and careers services provide academics with details of the destinations of their graduates.

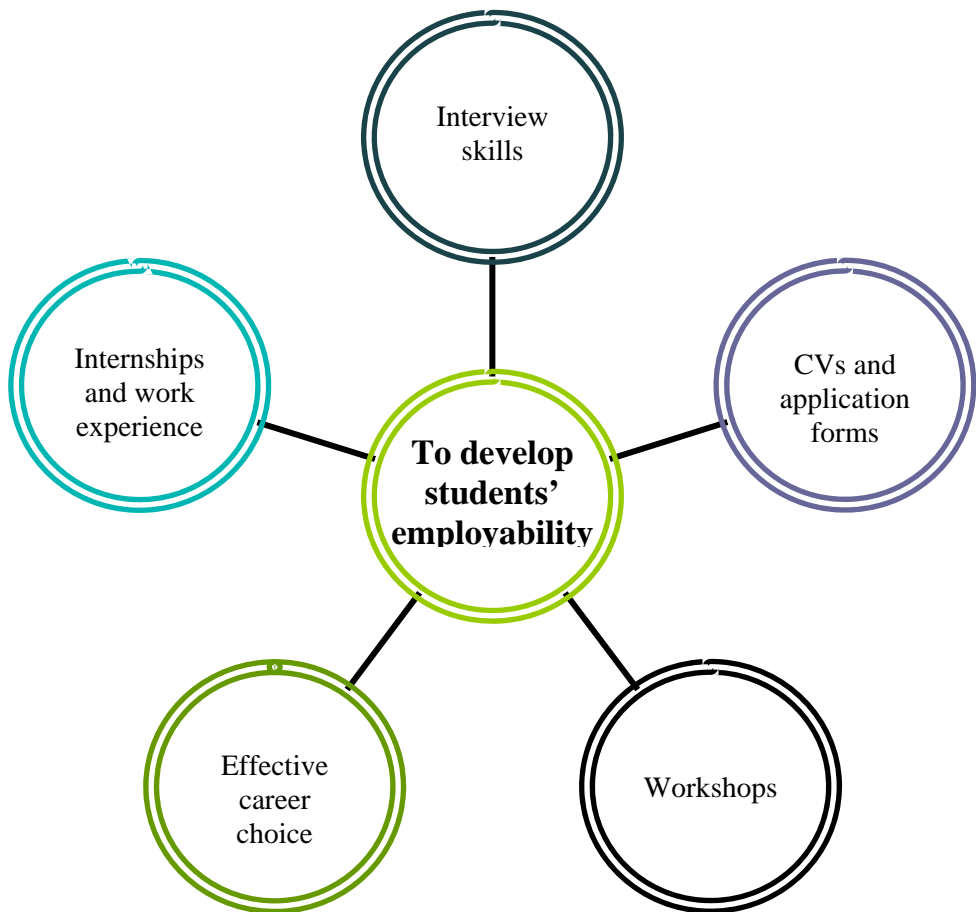
Finally careers services operate as the interface between the world of education and the world of work and are essential to allow students to make this transition effectively and secure the opportunities most appropriate to their needs.

In the next pages are collected some charts that could be useful to summarise the range of techniques used by Career Guidance Offices for the relationship with their stakeholders.

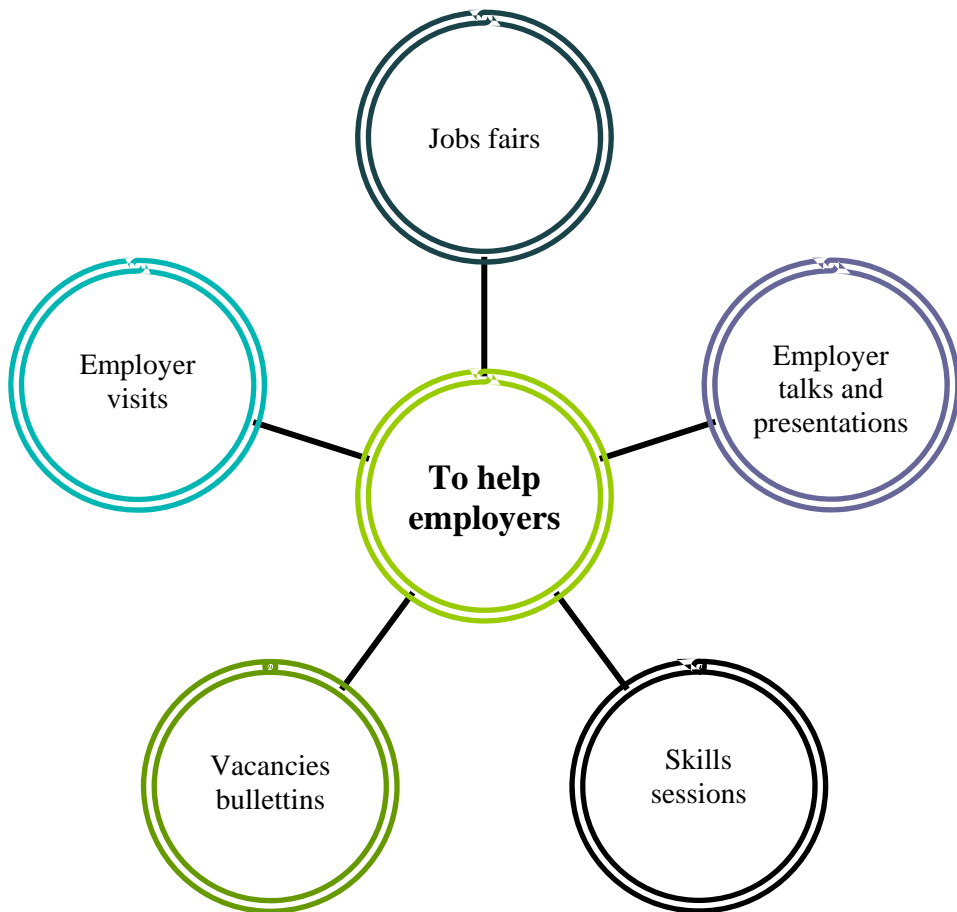
**A range of techniques used in different career services:  
students' guidance**



**A range of techniques used in different career services:  
students' employability**



**A range of techniques used in different career services:  
employers**



## **THE OFFICE**

The career services can be organized at two different levels:

- ❖ the main office,
- ❖ the colleges and departments' divisions.

The great part of the career services are public organizations but in some cases they have charged some private organizations with the management.

The average number of employees in the Career Services is about 10 but the staff can vary depending on the country, the number of students, the activities and the office's organization.

## **THE AIMS OF THE CAREER SERVICES**

The main aims of the Career Services are the consultancy activity, the identification and development of skills in the labour market, and the supporting activity to public and private organizations in the search for qualified staff with a university degree.

## **SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES**

The main services offered to the students and graduates are:

- ❖ CV advice to students and graduates (100%)
- ❖ helping students to find an internship and/or a job (93%)
- ❖ posting internship offers on line (93%)
- ❖ skills training/interview practice (93%)
- ❖ career advising (93%)
- ❖ events (sponsored workshops, company presentations...) (93%)

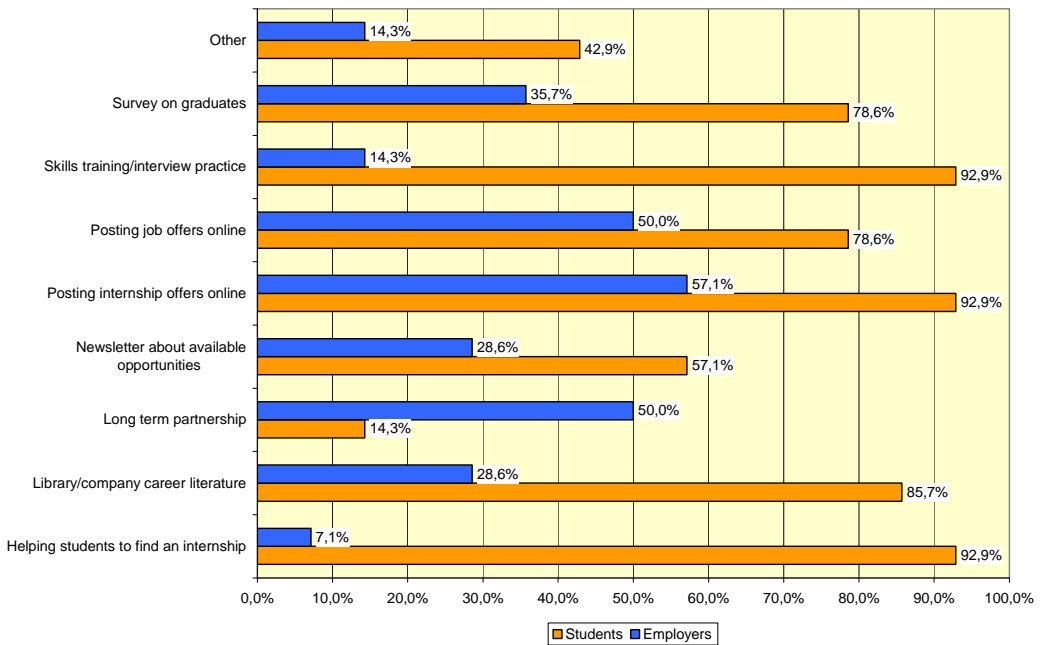
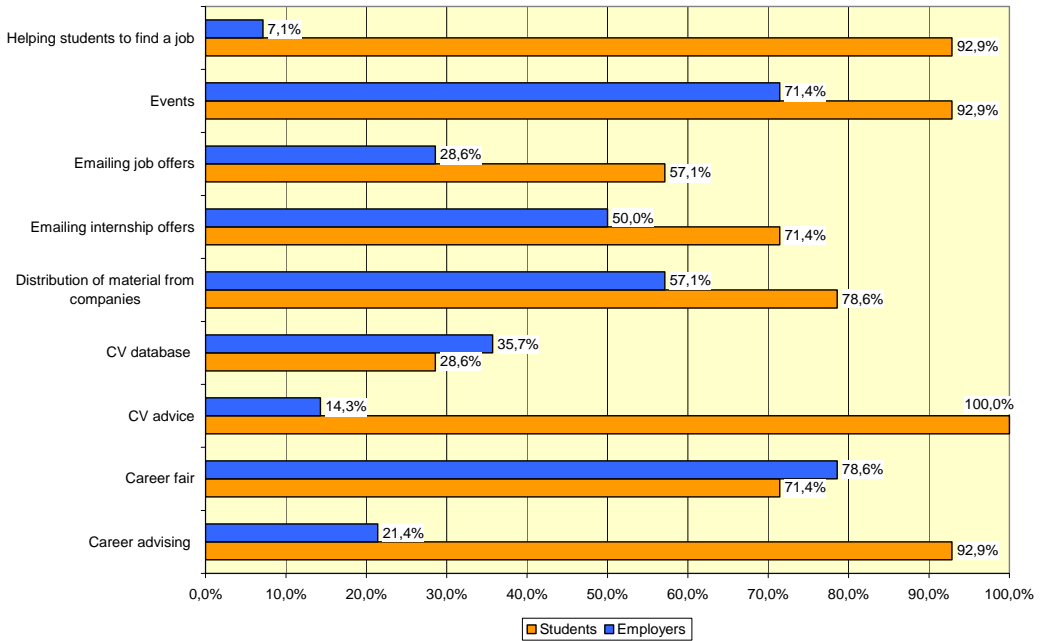
The main services offered to the companies are:

- ❖ career fairs (78,6%)
- ❖ events (sponsored workshops, company presentations...) (64%)
- ❖ distribution of material from companies (57%)
- ❖ posting internship offers on line (57%)
- ❖ posting job offers on line (50%)
- ❖ long term partnership (50%)

The percentage represents the number of offices that carry out these activities.



**Chart 2. Activities and services offered to students/graduates and employers**



## **PARTICULAR SERVICES**

- psychological counselling service
  
- an alumni cooperation service (mentoring)
  
- specific workshops for postgraduate and international students and facilitates liaison with academic departments including attendance at department and faculty meetings
  
- international job fair and supports the setting up and development of Junior Businesses
  
- information about other/departmental advisory services inside and outside the University
  
- collect and divulge information about the local labour market and the professional figures companies require the most through statistical surveys (Osservatorio sul Mercato Locale del Lavoro)

## **ACTIONS, PROCEDURES AND COSTS**

In order to promote services and activities career service offices use:

- ❖ orientation interview
- ❖ help in writing the CV
- ❖ preparation for the job interview
- ❖ collection of information and data on the labour market
- ❖ seminars on job orientation
- ❖ career fairs
- ❖ workshops and companies' presentation
- ❖ off and on–line internships management
- ❖ monitoring and evaluation on internships
- ❖ off and on–line job offers management
- ❖ surveys on graduates

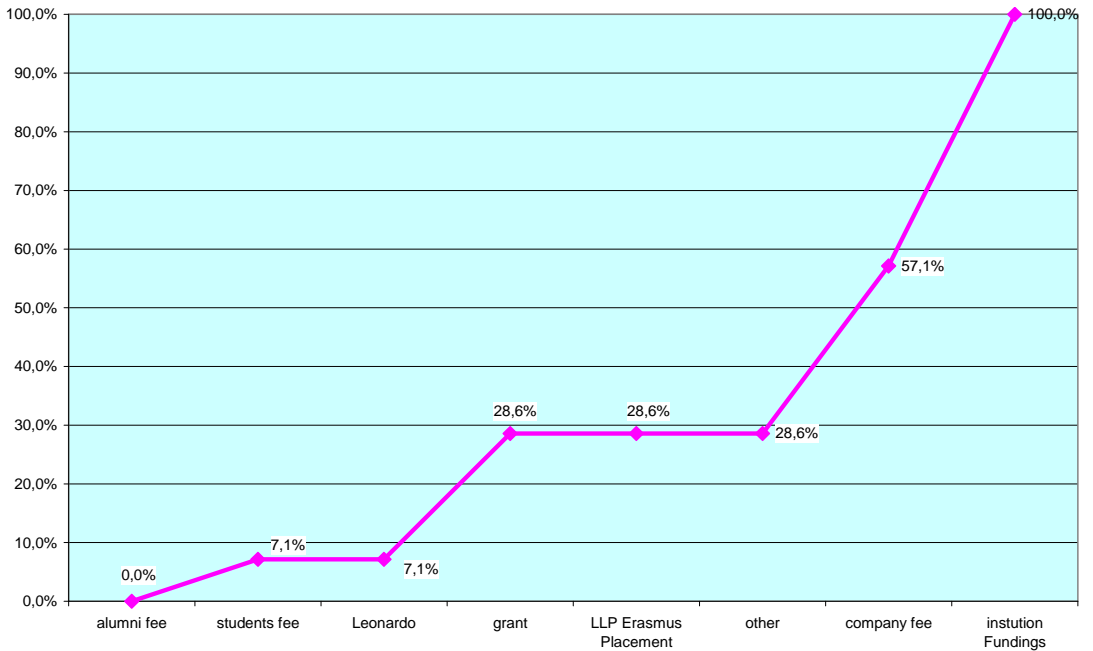
Some Career Services ask the employers to pay for several services:

- ❖ long term partnership
- ❖ career fairs
- ❖ distribution of companies' informative materials
- ❖ mailing delivery service about stages and internships offers
- ❖ mailing delivery service about job offers
- ❖ event organization service and company presentations
- ❖ opportunity to make assessment in the universities

# FUNDINGS

The University is the first and main subject which funds the Career Service activities. In addition, more than a half of the Career Services are financed by other public and private organizations.

**Chart 3. Career Services' fundings.**



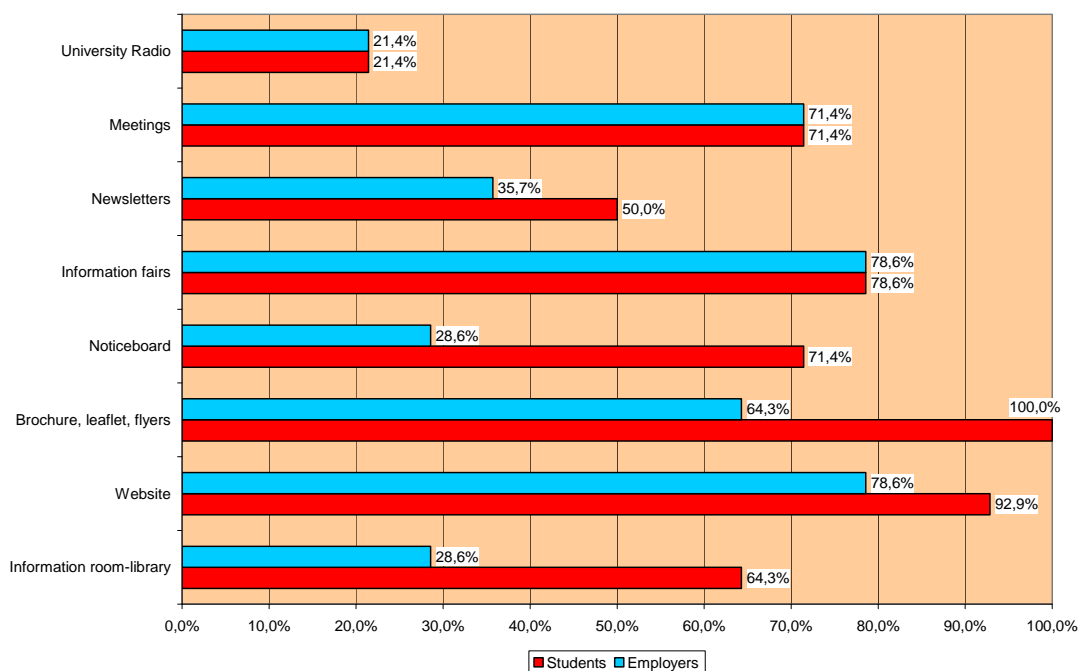
## COMMUNICATION

All the universities use paper format information to promote their activities to the students and the 64,3% of the materials is addressed to the companies and labour market.

The 93% of the services and the activities organized by the Career Service is promoted also through the website and the 78,6% of the on-line information is addressed to the companies.

The 78,6% of the meetings and events are directed to both the students and the companies.

**Chart 4. Means of communication used by Career Services.**



In addition to the tools collected in the chart, information lecture to all first-year students, mailing lists, faculties managers' contacts, learning programs for company's staff are provided.

## EVALUATION AND MONITORING

A monitoring activity or other kinds of evaluation is provided for the 78,6% of the activities promoted by the Career Service. Here are collected some procedures that summarize these activities:

quality assurance system, statistical information on all services (e.g. amounts, placement opportunities, visitors on website...). Feedback forms for students and employers after each event. Yearly review of services by a steering group.

evaluation questionnaires after each seminar for students and graduates; questionnaire to analyze use and satisfaction level about the career service's activities. Bi-yearly report on activities.

all contact with employers and students are fully monitored through feedback forms but also surveys to students and employers regularly used plus focus groups.

ISO, EFQM and control of objectives (numeric control and quality control), surveys on students, graduates and employers.

various surveys, statistics on usage, and monitor on different groups of students using services. Feedback from students who have had discussions with a Careers Adviser. Feedback at skills sessions and occupational talks. Students and employers can provide feedback at any stage via web site. Questionnaires – paper-based for a two-week period every year, online feedback surveys – annually for several weeks a year, questionnaires at occupational talks and skills sessions – ask for feedback at every session.

on line internships evaluation by companies, students and graduates; evaluation questionnaires after each event and during job interviews.

assessment of all the activities of the service for the budget, number of students received, number of workshops, number of advising to the students, questionnaires for the students (satisfaction, quality of services) and other statistics.

questionnaires for students/alumni and for companies. After the period of training, the trainee and his tutor should write a questionnaire. All the students fill in a questionnaire before the degree, concerning characteristics, qualifications and prospects.

questionnaire among students with questions about different support services, alumni research, questionnaire after seminars, workshops.

feedback from all of client-groups about services and activities both directly (after each service provided) and indirectly.

evaluation of each seminar and trainer, evaluation of Career Service's programme through a standardised questionnaire, interviews with participants of trainings, interviews with departmental coordinators and student speakers.

## THE CAREER GUIDANCE OFFICE ON LINE

contacts through Skype;

opportunities to apply for internship offers, for meeting career advisor and for taking part in events;

e-guidance;

jobs/internships opportunities, guides on job search, job opportunities, subscription to workshops;

career guidance counselling;

mailing list for internships and jobs, forum and testimonials about internships;

access to information and guidance including vacancy information, online subscription services for some resources, video clips and online presentations, online networking tool. There are two additional web sites [www.skillsportal.ox.ac.uk](http://www.skillsportal.ox.ac.uk) for postgraduate researchers, and [www.aspire.ox.ac.uk](http://www.aspire.ox.ac.uk) for skills development;

filling in and updating candidates' CV, filling in and updating labour supplies, download of application forms, observatory's articles and all materials product by the office;

job career display, graduates' CV registration, application to job supplies and to interview;

informations, CV;

current training and job listings, links and informations;

almost all services are either provided online or described on our website.

background information about career service's activities, presentation material, links to relevant career oriented websites and services;



# HOW TO SET UP A CAREER SERVICE



What follows should be seen as a **minimum pre-requisite** for setting up a careers service from scratch.

### **ESSENTIAL**

- ❖ Staff – ideally to be able to offer advice, run workshops, liaise with employers and academics, develop effective website and publicity.
- ❖ Room (better rooms). Dedicated to the careers service with space for confidential discussions.
- ❖ Dedicated telephones.
- ❖ Computers – for use by staff and by students.
- ❖ Office equipment.
- ❖ Money and funding to run service.

The key element is that there must be backing for the service from university hierarchy.

### **DESIRABLE**

- ❖ Locations for workshops
- ❖ Clerical and administrative support (this may need to be shared)
- ❖ Photocopier (possibly shared)
- ❖ IT equipment for running workshops
- ❖ Notice boards and other publicity and communication
- ❖ Student and staff support network
- ❖ Training for staff

Particular requirements will depend on particular circumstances and in reality far more than the above will be needed for an effective service to operate.



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## UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA

### CAREER SERVICE

### BEST PRACTICES

#### **1. Job and Internship Offers Management**

The most relevant feature of the activity of the personnel responsible for Job and Internship Offers Management is the so-called intermediation aspect, or rather the intersection between the requests for personnel from companies and the requests by students and graduates to take part in internships and work experiences.

In initiating more than 15,000 internships a year and handling the management of a significant number of job offers, the Career Services of the University of Padua has adopted an agile and efficient system to automate and accelerate the procedure as much as possible.

Companies, institutions and organizations (both Italian as well as foreign) that want to propose internships and job offers are provided with a reserved area in the web portal which allows them to manage those offers and the applications of students and graduates. In order to access this reserved area the company, institution or organization must register their company data, including information such as company name, registered address, number of employees, business sector and the data of the referent for the selection.

At the conclusion of data registration by the company, the Career Services office receives an email notification, verifies that the activity of the company/organization is not in conflict with the policies of the University (for example, in the case of temporary work agencies or businesses which operate in the field of personnel selection for third parties for payment) and then approve the company data and subsequently send the access codes for the reserved area via email to the referent indicated by the company/organization.

The referent is the only person who can access the reserved area. He/she has access to the following operations:

- Propose/modify internships and job offers,
- View the CVs of the candidates proposed by Career Services,
- Communicate eventual hiring.

On the basis of the necessity of the company/organization the Career Services office can generate extra passwords to send to new company referents or regenerate old passwords which have been lost or forgotten.

The insertion of internships or job offers on the part of the company is an extremely simple and guided process. A brief description of the desired profile is required (This description should be as clear as possible, as it will be published directly in the display visible to candidates) which is then followed by a more detailed description of specific skills and knowledge desired. Some fields must be completed (such as the academic training desired or the location of the internship/job). The majority of the fields are codified; that is, the choice is made from a list of pre-established options so as to minimize errors and permit for automatic links with corresponding fields from the CV.

The insertion of the offer in the display screen is not an automatic process, but rather passes through examination by the Career Services office: the successful insertion of the offer by the company within its reserved area is communicated to the office which then evaluates the pending offers and can decide to modify them or change their status from “pending” to “available”. At this point the offer becomes public and students and graduates have the possibility to apply for it.

Besides the area reserved for the companies the portal also provides a reserved area for candidates. Students and graduates from the University of Padua receive usernames and passwords upon matriculation which allow them to make use of the services that the University puts at their disposal, among which are services related to internships and job placement. By identifying themselves with the credentials provided to them by the university secretariat, candidates can access their reserved area where it is possible to apply for internships or job offers available in the system after they have uploaded their CV. Their applications are not automatically visible to the companies, but become visible only after positive evaluation of the staff of the Career Services office.

The third reserved area belongs to the office and the following operations can be carried out:

- Approval of company data with consequent sending of access credentials to the referent for selection,
- Modification of the internships and job offers and their publication and removal from display,

- Visualization of applications for each offer with the possibility of calling the candidates for an interview, accepting the candidates and proposing them to a company, or the rejection of an application (for each of these operations a notification is sent to the respective candidate, who is given constant feedback with regard to the state of their application).
- Carrying out matching between requests and offers, using the criteria requested by the internship or job offer and connecting them with the data in the CVs in order to individuate profiles from the database which are most in line with the needs of the company.

The matching operation is the most delicate and interesting. One can simply click a button which pulls up the CVs which most correspond to the requests of the company, but the selection assistant from Career Services intervenes in the moment in which the requests are interpreted, adding details (and therefore narrowing the results of the search) or eliminating less significant research criteria (thus enlarging the number of possible results).

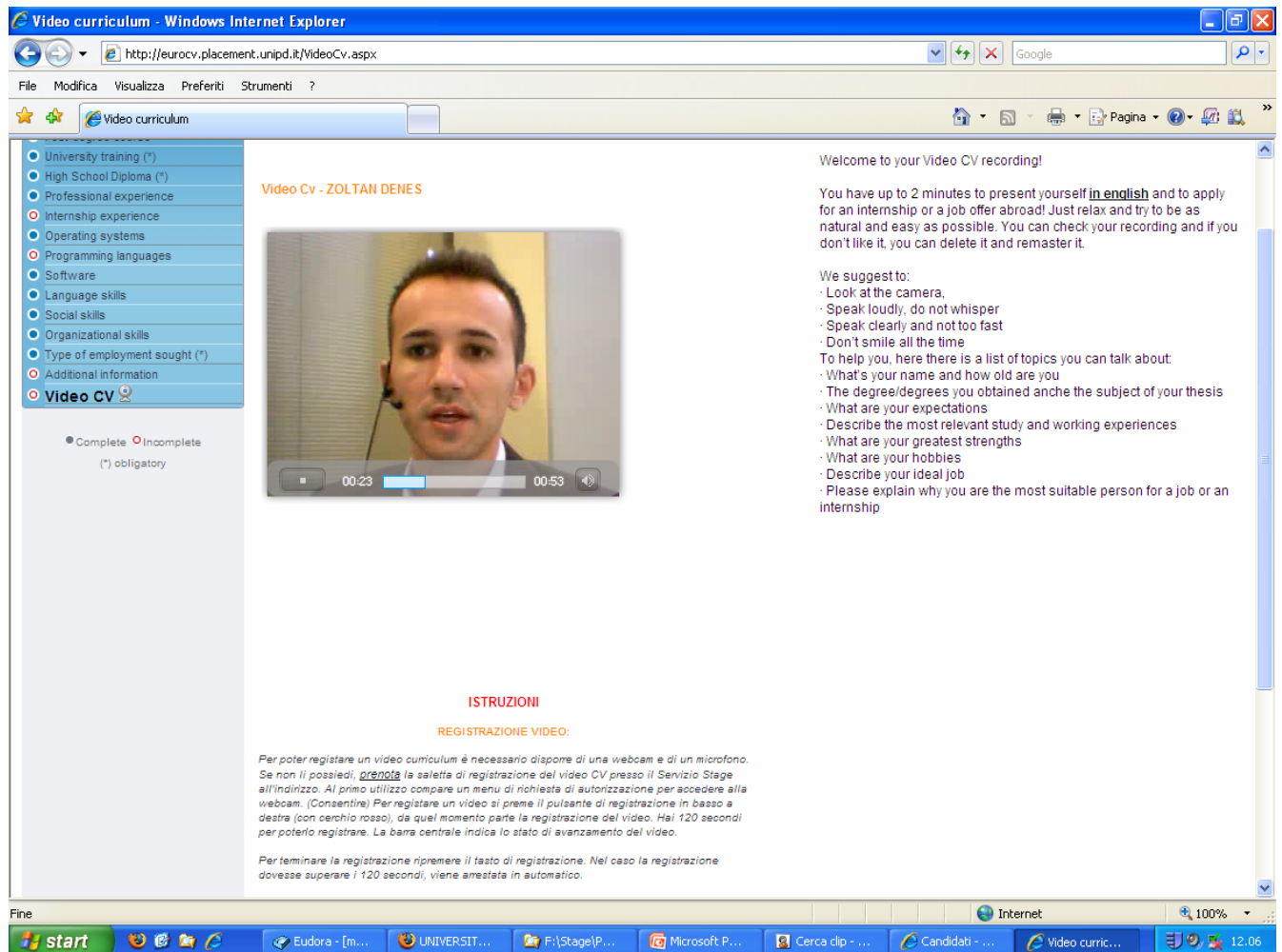
The criteria involved in matching are highly diverse and involve areas such as residence, academic background, IT skills (subdivided into operating systems, applied software and programming languages) and linguistic and relational/organizational skills. Once matching is complete, Career Services has a list of candidates at its disposal. These candidates are informed of the possibility that their CV may be sent to interested companies/organizations with respect to the offer for which the matching was made and in line with the profile requested. Only when the candidate has officially given his/her approval does Career Services send the CV to the company. In this manner the privacy of the students and graduates is respected at each step of the selection process

All of the operations carried out by Career Services staff within the portal are recorded in order to trace all operations and data back to the specific operator involved. Each operator is provided with a username and password and for each completed operation the date and name of the operator is recorded in order to maintain tracking of workflow.

Since 2009 in the section related to work abroad candidates have the possibility to record a 2-minute self-presentation video which can be linked to their electronic CV. The video can be recorded in multiple languages by the same candidate (English, French, German, Spanish), using only an Internet connection, a webcam and microphone. Technical instructions as well as suggestions on what and how to best present oneself are found on the page of the video recording. In the case where candidates do not possess the appropriate instruments they can reserve a room which is appropriately equipped by Career Services via a link on the video recording page.

Before the video is made visible, it is evaluated by Career Services for quality, both in terms of content as well as technical aspects (for example low audio/video quality) and the candidates may be contacted in order to make a new recording if necessary.

**Picture 1: video cv recording**

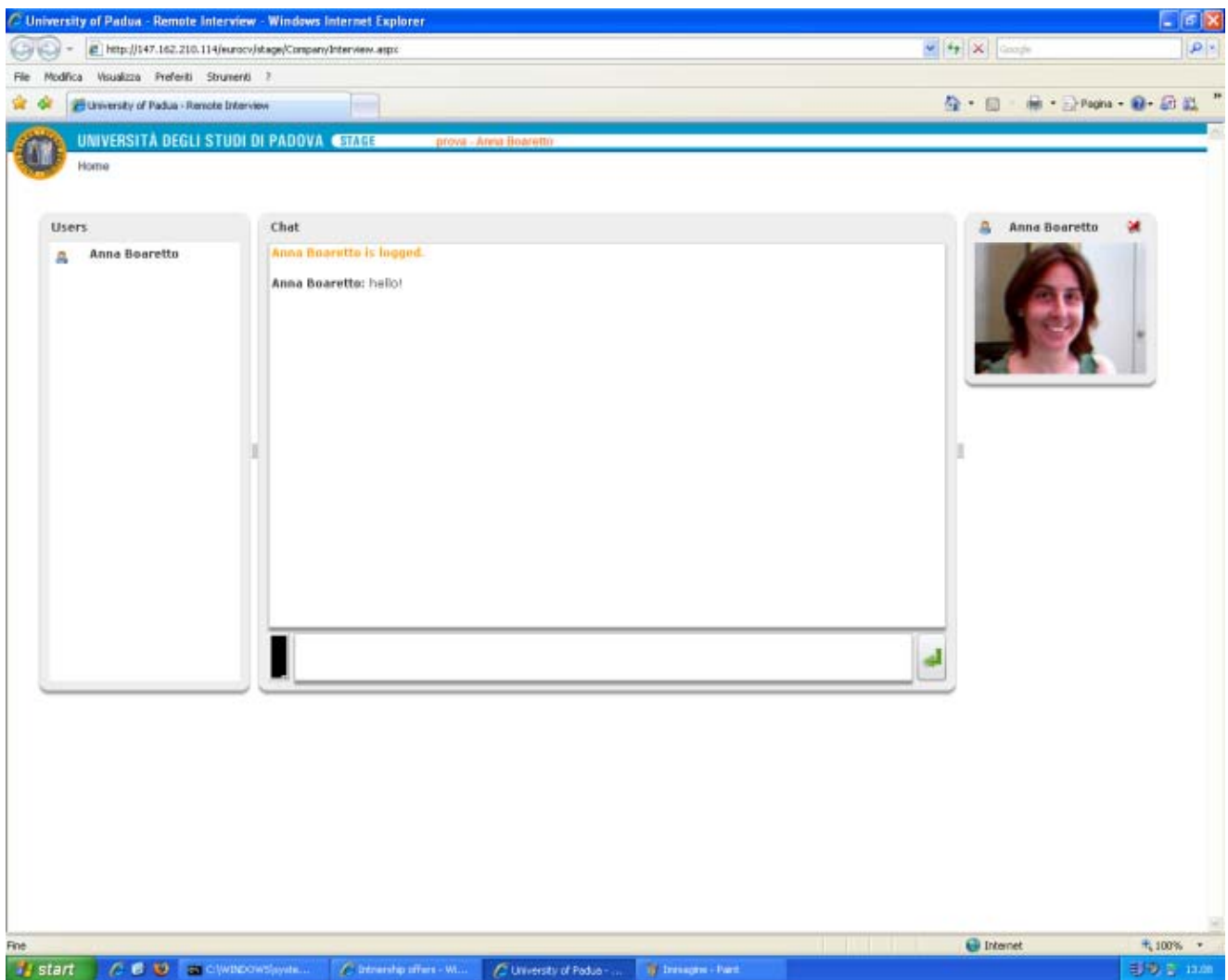


The video is closely linked to the electronic CV, and thus it becomes visible to the companies only when Career Services has obtained specific authorization on the part of the candidates to make it visible in connection with a specific internship or job offer. In this phase as well Career Services guarantees the truthfulness and privacy of the information inserted within the portal.

The video presentation gives significant dynamism to the CV, allowing selection assistants the possibility to see the candidates directly and appreciate their linguistic abilities. In a similar way, the staff finds the video to be extremely effective in evaluating foreign language abilities, and it is used broadly and with much satisfaction in selections relative to competitions such as Leonardo and Erasmus Student Placement.

Within the section dedicated to work abroad companies have another valuable opportunity; thanks to remote interviewing, they have the possibility to hold an online interview with candidates who have made the best impression. Once these candidates have been identified, companies simply indicate (through a link within the reserved area of the portal) a maximum of three available dates/times to propose an online interview to send to the pre-selected, individual candidates. Candidates are notified of the companies' interest via email and can confirm one of the proposals. Once done, the recording room where the online interview will take place is reserved. At the end of the interview a member of the staff of Career Services speaks with the company referent for evaluation and feedback of the interview.

**Picture 2: remote interview**





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**Local Job Market Observatory**

The Local Job Market Observatory of the University of Padua is a service which handles the systematic acquisition and analysis of information related to job applications and offers and reports on the professional needs in technical and managerial areas of various divisions of production in the Veneto region.

Within the area of the Observatory, PHAROS - Pursuing Home-market Accessibility and Raise of Occupational Standing – is a project of data and information collection and diffusion on the professional needs of the region gathered from interviews with owners and managers of companies and institutions in the Veneto. The interviews are based on current average-term needs of medium and high-level professions, for which young people prepare at university.

***The Job Market***

The job market is a virtual place in which requests for work from companies and institutions and the offers of potential employees coincide. For a university graduate, introducing oneself into the job market means communicating a transparent act of availability to cover a professional role. The job market with which a graduate could relate can be defined on the basis of different variables, such as the size of the territory (there are provincial, regional, national, international job markets, etc...), but also on the skills required, the economic risk the graduate is prepared to take, and other factors.

***Why local markets?***

The Local Job Market Observatory exclusively considers the local job markets; that is, minimum territorial sectors within which demand and request can be matched. This exclusivity can be



attributed to the fact that the job markets on other territorial levels are less relevant to occupation, because they concern limited numbers of units, as demonstrated by various studies. The local dimension corresponds to the territory in which people carry out the majority of their daily lives, including work; therefore, in terms of occupation, knowledge of intraregional local markets can support the choices of a large majority of graduates from the University of Padua.

### ***The reason for a University Observatory?***

The need for the University to set up its own observatory derives from dissatisfaction with the content and details of the official information available on the job market in the Veneto region. For a university which strives to understand how deeply its own graduates are able to penetrate the job market and what is needed within its own territory to design a guided and informed educational training, it is necessary to distinguish, in terms of work demand, what form of training is pertinent in higher education and, moreover, the need to anticipate trends and tendencies in order to set up educational programs over an extended period.

### ***Objectives of the Observatory of the University of Padua***

1. Obtain a wide spectrum of information on the job market useful for designing the University's educational program in such a way as to give civil society and the professional sector a consistent outline of the real possibilities of absorption, characterized a set of professional figures which are quickly inserted within the market as well as by proper interpretation of the requested skills of the job market and a clear affirmation of the "added educational value" achieved through the university.
2. Operate on a day-to-day basis in orienting students towards internship activities and graduates toward work, as well as to promote the occupations of graduates, researchers, and graduate students.

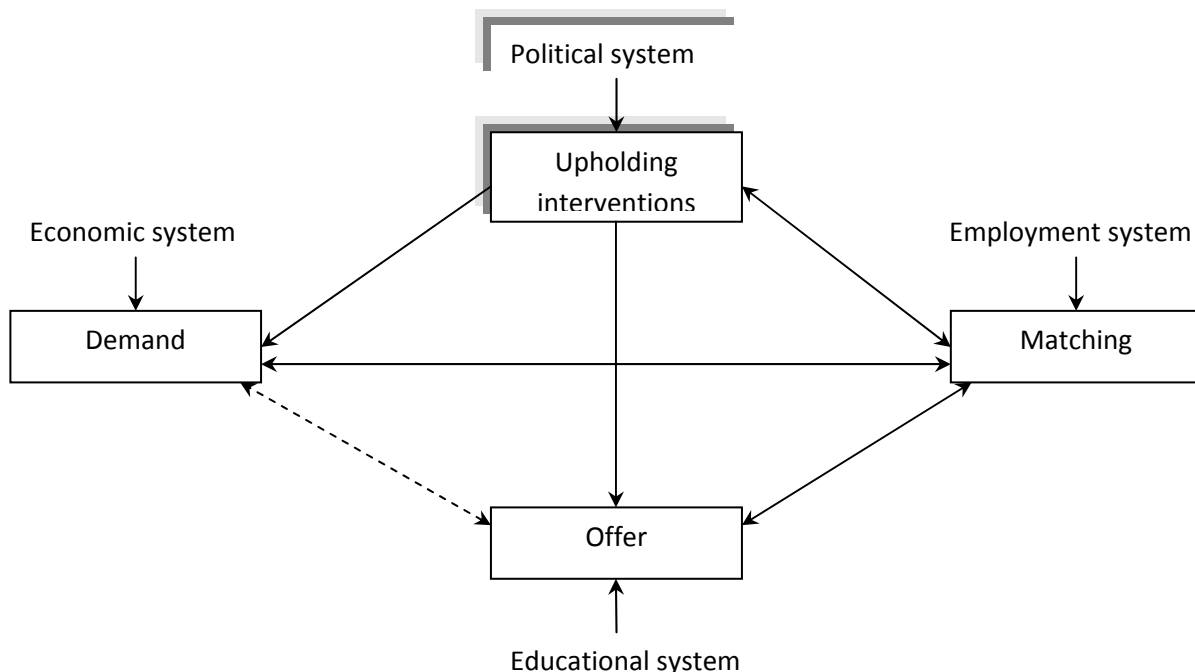
### ***DOMUS: a model for representation the local job market***

The studies carried out by the Observatory on the local job market are based on a model called DOMUS (Demand, Offer, Matching and Upholding-intervention Systems) which, in a causal manner, puts the economic and educational systems from which the offers and requests for work originate in relation with both the particular situations that occur between offers, requests as well as the putting into effect of the policies suitable to the regulation of the market.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis on local job markets carried out by the Observatory is based on an integrated system of indicators made up of a hierarchical set of statistical measurements which represent reality, the object of study. The indicators utilized are qualified into different categories which refer to themes of key relevance in order to be faithful representations of the job markets:

- Condition of the population: links between the population and the job market,
- Production system: consistency of economic-productive entities and their activities,
- Systems of placement and job/professional orientation: public institutes, private businesses, schools and universities,
- Job offers: description of the job offers from a quantitative and qualitative perspective,
- Job demand: immediate, historical, short-term and long-term requirements,
- Points of contact between labor demand and offers: analyzing cases in which demand and offer intersect, cases in which job offers are not filled and cases in which demand is unable to be satisfied,
- Interventions on the job market: in education, in the job market, information and orientation.

**Graphic 1** *display of the DOMUS model factors*



***Local job markets analyzed (updated February 2010)***

- Food-agriculture sector
- Metal working sector

- Electro-mechanical and electronic division
- Tourism
- Chemical sector
- Business administration services
- Advertisement and business communication
- Information technology sector
- Certification and consultancy companies in the Veneto and the development of systems of management, environment and security
- Insurance sector
- Social Service sector

***Other studies on the local job market by the Observatory***

- Social representations and university education: research into the course of study in statistics, mathematics, physics and chemistry at the University of Padua
- Monitoring of occupational and professional insertion of graduates of the University of Padua
- Professionalism and hiring potential of graduates of the University of Padua
- Capitalizing on the skills of graduates of the University of Padua
- Paths and professional activities of engineer graduates of the University of Padua