

Vocational final examination for computer apprentices

Technical supervisor's task in the context of the Individual Practical Application (IPA)

Apprentices must complete a 10-day Individual Practical Application (IPA) within the context of the vocational final examination. In this way each candidate can be tested according to his specialty in the host company, which would not be possible with a uniform examination.

The above obligation is stated in the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, "OPET", (BBT) manual as follows:

The candidate is to complete an assignment, a project or a clearly defined project part, of practical use, at his/her regular place of work, using the usual means and methods. Basically this means that using a time frame, a sample of the apprentice's ongoing work is monitored and assessed.

The technical supervisor/expert ("Fachvorgesetzter") assesses performance and result of the test assignment and proposes a grade according to current standards. [...] At least one member of the examiner team must examine the supervisor's evaluation and the reasonableness of the proposed grade.

The candidate must present his practical application to the examiner team and answer project-related questions.

The term "expert" as stated in the above regulation stipulates that the IPA supervisor in charge of the examination must be knowledgeable and specialized in the area being tested and must also have professional experience. In addition, the former should be a few years older than the candidate.

The specific tasks of the technical supervisor are:

1. Preparing and formulating task definition (project assignment), selecting or defining evaluation criteria
2. Active cooperation with the validation expert for task and evaluation criteria
3. Discussion with the examiner at task start (1st visit)
4. Monitoring IPA implementation. Since "inter-disciplinary skills" are evaluated by six different criteria, this can only be done by performance monitoring. Professional handling and mastering of devices and tools (HW + SW) must also be examined and documented in order to evaluate professional competency. The examination committee (PK19) expects the technical supervisor to meet the candidate at least six times for a half hour. Obviously "supervision" must not be misunderstood as helping the candidate. The candidate may be helped along in extreme situations only. Any help must be noted in the candidate's journal and in the supervisor's notes.
5. Correction of report and product assessment (criteria application / preparing evaluation).
6. As technological expert and "co-examiner", attendance at presentation and technical discussion ("Fachgespräch") is mandatory. This is to be followed by a joint project evaluation together with the examiner and a grade proposal to the examination committee.

Depending on the IPA assignment and on the technical supervisor's IPA experience this assignment will probably require about 20 hours. Approximately one third of this are normal "project costs" towards the IPA product, which belongs to the host company.

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