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SKILLS DIALOGUE

ONLINE

VET design

1. AT A GLANCE

Activity title	*Skills Dialogue*
Format	*Online*
Duration	*90 minutes*
Group size	*8–20 participants*
Challenge	*Challenge 1 – Closing the Skills Mismatch*
Setting	*Online meeting platform with breakout rooms and a shared digital board or document, such as Zoom, MS Teams, Miro, Padlet, Google Slides, or Google Docs*
Method / framework	*Design Thinking dialogue activity using empathy mapping, "How Might We" questions, and rapid idea development.*

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- One clearly described skills mismatch per breakout group
- A "How Might We" challenge question
- One small Skills Bridge Idea, improved through peer feedback (worksheet, page 7)
- A first small step each group will test in real VET practice

2. DESCRIPTION

The Online Skills Dialogue is an online activity for VET teachers, trainers, curriculum designers, career guidance staff and, where possible, employer or stakeholder representatives.

Participants focus on one concrete situation where learners may be prepared "on paper" but still not fully ready for workplace expectations – for example communication, teamwork, digital tools, responsibility, problem-solving, customer contact or professional behaviour.

In breakout rooms, participants share examples, identify what learners need, what employers expect and where the mismatch appears. They turn the problem into a How Might We question and design one small Skills Bridge Idea that can be tested in teaching, placement preparation, career guidance or cooperation with employers.

2.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify a concrete skills mismatch from real teaching, placement, employer or learner experience, and understand it from the learner, teacher and employer perspective.
- Formulate a clear "How Might We" question and design one small Skills Bridge Idea that helps learners practise workplace-related skills.
- Use peer feedback to make the idea more realistic and useful for VET practice.



- Ask participants to use real examples from their own practice.
- Keep the focus on one clear skills gap, not many problems at once.
- Encourage practical ideas that can be tested quickly.

SUGGESTED ONLINE TOOLS

Zoom · MS Teams | Miro · Padlet | Google Slides · Docs

3. PREPARATION

Before the activity, the facilitator prepares a simple online workspace for each breakout group. The workspace should include four sections:

1. Real example of skills mismatch
2. Learner needs and employer expectations
3. How Might We question
4. Skills Bridge Idea

Participants should be asked to think in advance about one situation where learners struggled to meet workplace expectations, despite completing relevant training or preparation.
The facilitator prepares short instructions, breakout room groups, a visible agenda, and peer feedback prompts.

3.1 MATERIALS NEEDED

- ☐ Online meeting platform with breakout rooms.
- ☐ Shared digital board or collaborative document.
- ☐ Timer or visible agenda.
- ☐ Prepared online workspace (one Skills Bridge Canvas per group, see page 7).
- ☐ Optional: short examples from participants' own teaching, placement, employer cooperation or career guidance practice.

SESSION FLOW AT A GLANCE (90 MIN)



BREAKOUT ROOM TIPS

Post the canvas link in the chat before opening the rooms. Ask each group to name a timekeeper and a note-taker. Visit every room once briefly, and send a 2-minute warning before the rooms close.

4. STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Step	Time	What the facilitator does
1	*10 min*	*Introduce and explain that the activity focuses on practical ways to bridge the gap between VET learning and workplace expectations.*
2	*10 min*	*Participants individually write one example of a skills mismatch they have seen in teaching, placement, employer feedback, or graduate experience.*
3	*30 min*	*In breakout rooms, participants share examples and choose one clear mismatch to work on. Groups discuss what the learner needs, what the employer expects, and what the VET provider currently does or does not provide.*
4	*10 min*	*Each group formulates one clear challenge question, for example: "How might we help learners practise professional communication before their first placement?"*
5	*20 min*	*Groups create one small practical activity, task, reflection, simulation, employer input, or feedback moment that could address the gap.*
6	*5 min*	*Groups briefly present their idea and receive quick feedback: What is useful? What should be more realistic?*
7	*5 min*	*Final next step. Each group writes one concrete step for testing or adapting the idea in a real VET context.*

5. DEBRIEF QUESTIONS



- What type of skills mismatch appeared most clearly?
- What did learners need that was not fully supported?
- What did employers expect that may not be visible in the curriculum?
- How does the proposed Skills Bridge Idea help learners practise the missing skill?
- What would make the idea easier to test in real VET practice?
- What is the first small step after this activity?

5.1 KOLB EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

Concrete experience	*Participants work with real examples of skills mismatch from their own VET practice.*
Reflective observation	*Participants reflect on the needs, expectations, and misunderstandings of learners, teachers, and employers.*
Abstract conceptualisation	*Participants identify the broader pattern behind the mismatch and turn it into a clear "How Might We" question.*
Active experimentation	*Participants design one small Skills Bridge Idea and define how it could be tested in their own VET context.*

VARIATIONS

• In person: replace breakout rooms with small tables and print the Skills Bridge Canvas in A3.
• With employers: invite one employer per breakout room as a "reality check" for the ideas.
• With learners: run a short version in which learners describe the gap from their own placement.
• Follow-up: meet again after 4–6 weeks online and share what happened when the idea was tested.

6. WORKSHEET

6.1 SKILLS BRIDGE CANVAS

Copy this canvas onto your group's digital board (Miro, Padlet, Google Slides) or print it for hybrid groups. Work through boxes ①–④ in your breakout room, then collect peer feedback in ⑤.

① A REAL EXAMPLE

Describe one situation where a learner was ready "on paper" but not ready for the workplace.

② NEEDS vs. EXPECTATIONS

Learners need…	*Employers expect…*

③ HOW MIGHT WE...

How might we help learners _____

so that _____ ?

④ OUR SKILLS BRIDGE IDEA

What is it?	*When & where will learners practise?*
Who is involved (teacher, employer, mentor)?	*How will we know it works?*

⑤ PEER FEEDBACK FROM ANOTHER GROUP

👍 I LIKE…	💡 I WISH…	🚀 WHAT IF…

Our first small step: _____ **by (date):** _____

Authors and main contributors:

Thomas Gkilias (MindmeUp), Konstantina Mataftsi (MindmeUp), Mohamed Sakr (Acceleras), Kristýna Strnadová (Know-House), Magdalena Hubená (Know-House), Marzena Beáta Oltean (VET Center Romania), Szabolcs Dolcsig (VET Center Romania), Thomas Blum (RegioVision GmbH Schwerin)

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AI

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