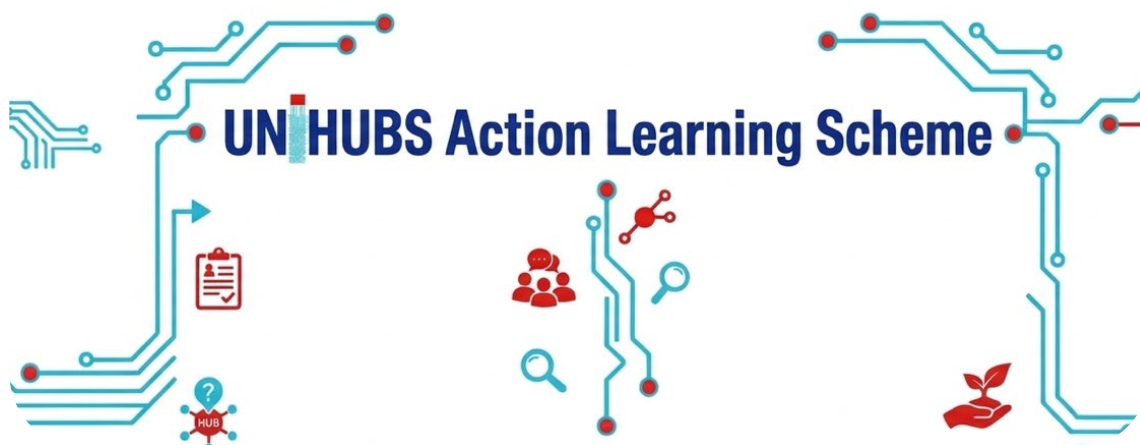


UNIHUBS


D4.3

UNIHUBS ACTION LEARNING SCHEME



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Document Control Sheet

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is an experiential, practice-oriented educational model designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and labour market needs, particularly in the digital innovation and entrepreneurial sectors. This report emphasizes the importance of experiential learning and academia-industry collaboration to enhance students' employability and align higher education with the needs of the digital innovation labour market.

The **Conceptual Framework of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme** details its structure, objectives, pedagogical foundations, and the core components that underpin its implementation. This section explains how experiential learning, problem-based learning, reflection, and ecosystem immersion are combined to create a holistic learning experience.

The **Brokerage Event Model** describes local and virtual brokerage events as key mechanisms for connecting students with innovation ecosystems, facilitating networking, and matching participants with hands-on experience opportunities.

The document further outlines the **Hands-on Experience Opportunities**, including innovation challenges, social innovation challenges, internships, and virtual mobilities. These modalities form the core of the scheme, enabling participants to engage directly with real-world problems and professional environments.

The section on **Implementation** provides practical guidance on preparation steps, recruitment strategies, stakeholder responsibilities, conflict resolution process, monitoring mechanisms, and assessment processes. It emphasizes the importance of structured coordination and the dual mentorship model in ensuring quality learning outcomes.

Finally, the document introduces **Impact Measures**, defining both quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme, as well as **Key Risks and Mitigation Strategies**, which identify potential challenges and propose solutions to ensure smooth and sustainable implementation.

1 Introduction

The UNIHUBS initiative aims to foster international cooperation between Universities and Innovation Hubs of sub-Saharan Africa (Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya) and Europe (Netherlands, Greece), and particularly to enhance African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for labour market needs and improve the employability of their students. Specifically, Work Package 4 aims to co-create a future-oriented educational program that integrates innovative teaching, e-learning tools, and international collaboration to strengthen students' digital innovation and entrepreneurial skills, thereby enhancing their employability through workshops, training modules, action-learning experiences, and a global online course.

To achieve this goal, experiential learning is crucial to provide opportunities for participants to acquire hands-on experiences by introducing them to real-life situations. The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is an opportunity for participants to be introduced to the local and European digital innovation ecosystems and gain hands-on experience through innovation challenges, social innovation challenges, internships, and virtual mobilities.

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme will be pilot tested by the 7 African HEI partners with the support of the DIH partners. It is complementary to the UNIHUBS Online Course (MOOC) that assists students in developing skills and competencies necessary for the digital innovation labour market. In this activity, the European partners will be involved in the organization of the Virtual Brokerage Event.

2 UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme – Conceptual Framework

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is a structured, experiential approach to education that combines academic knowledge with real-world practice through project-based learning, internships, and virtual mobility. It enables students from African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to actively engage with innovation hubs, startups, and industry partners, applying theoretical concepts to practical challenges within diverse digital innovation ecosystems.

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme immerses students directly in the environments where digital transformation and entrepreneurship are actively unfolding. Therefore, the proposed approach emphasizes:

- Hands-on experience in entrepreneurial and digital innovation contexts.

- Cross-cultural exposure to African and European regional dynamics.
- Problem-solving and adaptability in real-life labour market situations.
- Collaborative learning through partnerships between universities and innovation hubs.
- Employability enhancement by equipping students with practical skills, networks, and international perspectives.

2.1 Core Components



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Figure 1: Core components of UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme.

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is structured around 6 core components. These components are:

1. **Training.** Students will be oriented and equipped with foundational knowledge, digital tools, and intercultural awareness before engaging in real-world experiences through the UNIHUB MOOC and learning modules developed.

2. **Activation.** Engaging the local and European digital innovation ecosystems ensures that the Scheme can be translated into local content through the (social) innovation challenges, internships, and virtual mobilities that will be offered to participants.
3. **Brokerage Events** provide a platform to introduce the local digital innovation ecosystems, present hands-on learning opportunities, and match participants with hands-on experience opportunities.
4. **Structured hands-on experience opportunities.** Students are immersed in real-life contexts through internships, collaborative projects, or virtual exchanges, applying theoretical knowledge to practical situations.
5. **Reflection.** Students will be taken into reflection cycles (mentoring) to allow them to critically analyze their experiences, connect practice with theory, and identify lessons learned.
6. **Refinement.** Insights from the reflections are then used to refine skills, improve curricula, and strengthen collaboration between HEIs and innovation hubs, ensuring continuous improvement of both student learning and refining skills to improve employability.

Phase	Activity	Actor(s)	Output	Timeframe	Quality Assurance
Training & Activation	Orientation of students through UNIHUB MOOC and learning modules; equip with digital tools and intercultural awareness; engage ecosystem actors to embed insights into	HEIs Innovation Hubs, Ecosystem Actors, Trainers	Students complete foundational modules; innovation challenges co-designed with ecosystem input.	1 Month	Pre/post training assessments ; validation of modules by ecosystem actors; student feedback surveys.

Phase	Activity	Actor(s)	Output	Timeframe	Quality Assurance
	innovation challenges.				
Brokerage Events	Match students with suitable projects, internships, or virtual mobility opportunities	HEIs Innovation Hubs, Ecosystem Actors, European Partners	Brokerage event conducted; student–project matching list finalized.	2 Days	Event evaluation forms; satisfaction survey.
Hands-on experience opportunities	Students immersed in real-life contexts (internships, collaborative projects, virtual exchanges).	HEIs Students, Innovation Hubs, Industry Partners	Students actively engaged in projects applying theoretical knowledge to practice.	1 Month	Supervisor evaluations; project deliverables reviewed; student progress reports.
Reflection	Structured reflection cycles (journals, peer discussions, mentoring) to analyse experiences and connect practice with theory.	Students, Mentors, Faculty	Reflection journals submitted; peer discussion sessions held; mentoring reports compiled.	1 Month	Quality of reflection outputs assessed; mentor feedback; peer review scoring.
Refinement	Use insights from reflections to refine skills, curricula, and	Universities , Innovation Hubs, Curriculum Designers	Updated curricula; refined skill frameworks; improved collaboration models.	1 Month	Curriculum review committees; employability skill mapping.

Phase	Activity	Actor(s)	Output	Timeframe	Quality Assurance
	strengthen HEI–hub collaboration				

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme are:

- Provide hands-on entrepreneurial experiences by engaging students in real-life projects with various stakeholders of the digital innovation ecosystems such as innovation hubs and industry partners. This exposure is not only at the local level but also at the international level.
- Bridge academic learning with labour market needs by integrating practical experiences that align with identified skills gaps in the digital and entrepreneurial sectors.
- Strengthen collaboration between HEIs and innovation hubs to co-create opportunities for students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice.
- Develop cross-cultural competences by immersing participants in diverse contexts, fostering adaptability, global awareness, and intercultural communication skills.
- Enhance employability potential by equipping participants with practical problem-solving, teamwork, and innovation skills directly relevant to the labour market.
- Leverage digital tools for virtual mobility to ensure inclusive participation and broaden access to international learning opportunities.

These objectives drive the structure of the program in a way that it delivers more than simulated entrepreneurial learning by embedding participants directly into the ecosystems where innovation and digital transformation are happening.

2.3 Pedagogical Foundations

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is based on 4 pedagogical foundations of experiential learning, problem-based learning, reflection cycles, and ecosystem immersion. These are incorporated in the following terms:

- ◆ **Experiential Learning:** Rooted in Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory, this approach emphasizes learning through direct engagement with real-world tasks. Students construct knowledge by designing, prototyping, and evaluating solutions in internships and innovation projects. This foundation was selected for its strong alignment with hands-on, constructivist learning models and its relevance to digital innovation contexts. Participants will learn by doing—engaging directly in internships, projects, and entrepreneurial activities. Knowledge is constructed through experience, reflection, and application in real-world contexts, rather than passive classroom instruction.
- **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)** encourages students to analyse authentic challenges, collaborate with startups, and create viable solutions. It fosters critical thinking and adaptability—skills essential for navigating complex labour markets. This foundation was chosen over traditional case-based methods for its emphasis on student-led inquiry and relevance to dynamic innovation ecosystems. Learning is driven by tackling authentic challenges from African and European digital innovation ecosystems. Participants will work collaboratively with startups and innovation hubs to analyse problems, design solutions, and test ideas, developing critical thinking and adaptability aligned with labour market needs through their real-world projects.
- **Reflection Cycles** Structured reflection enables students to evaluate their experiences, reflect on lessons learned, and connect theory to practice. This foundation supports continuous improvement and personal growth. It was prioritized for its role in developing metacognitive skills and enhancing employability through self-awareness and ethical reasoning. Structured reflection is embedded at each stage of the learning process. Participants critically evaluate their experiences, identify lessons learned, and connect practice back to theory. Reflection cycles ensure continuous improvement of both skills and mindset.
- **Ecosystem Immersion** While not yet a widely codified pedagogical framework, ecosystem immersion is a project-specific extension that builds on experiential and situated learning theories. It involves students engaging directly with diverse innovation actors—DIHs, startups, and cross-cultural networks—through brokerage events and mobility programs. This approach was included for its unique capacity to foster global awareness, cross-cultural competence, and networked learning in African and European contexts. Through the brokerage events, participants are immersed in diverse innovation ecosystems players from Africa and Europe. This exposure builds cross-cultural competences, global awareness, and an understanding of how regional contexts shape digital innovation and entrepreneurship.

Together, these pedagogical pillars ensure that UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is not just about acquiring knowledge, but about transforming participants into adaptable, employable innovators who can thrive in dynamic, international labour markets.

2.4 Skills and Competencies Enhancement

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme equips participants not only with technical expertise, but also with the entrepreneurial mindset and soft skills needed to thrive in dynamic, international innovation ecosystems.

Technical Competencies

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme aims to build Technical Competencies by equipping students with the ability to effectively apply digital tools and platforms in real-world projects, demonstrate problem-solving through data analysis, coding, and innovation methods, and integrate theoretical knowledge into practical contexts such as internships, hackathons, and collaborative initiatives, while ensuring quality and consistency in project execution across diverse environments.

Learning Outcomes:

- Design digital solutions using coding, data analysis, and innovation methods.
- Analyse datasets and problems to generate evidence-based solutions.
- Evaluate project outcomes for quality, consistency, and adaptability across diverse environments.

Assessment Criteria:

- Successful completion of innovation challenges or prototypes
- Demonstrated ability to integrate theoretical knowledge into practical contexts.
- Peer and mentor evaluations of technical problem-solving skills.

Entrepreneurial & Innovation Skills

The scheme will also build upon Entrepreneurial and Innovation Competencies to enable students to identify opportunities within both local and global innovation ecosystems, develop and test entrepreneurial ideas using design thinking and lean startup methods, manage projects with creativity, adaptability, and resilience, and build cross-cultural innovation networks by collaborating with African and European hubs.

This competency area emphasizes the generation of innovative ideas and also their practical testing, the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindsets, and the strengthening of international collaboration to foster sustainable and inclusive innovation.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify opportunities in African and European innovation ecosystems.
- Create entrepreneurial ideas using design thinking and lean startup methods.
- Test and refine ideas through iterative project cycles.
- Collaborate across cultures to build innovation networks.

Assessment Criteria:

- Pitch presentations and prototypes evaluated by industry partners.
- Evidence of adaptability, resilience, and creativity in project management.
- Documentation of cross-cultural collaboration outcomes.

Soft Skills

Last, the scheme will aim to improve the student's Personal and Professional Competencies by cultivating the students' ability to communicate effectively across cultures and disciplines, collaborate in diverse teams with leadership and empathy, and engage in structured reflection to enhance self-awareness and continuous improvement. It also emphasizes adaptability, critical thinking, and ethical responsibility in professional contexts, ensuring that students develop the interpersonal and reflective skills necessary to thrive in complex, multicultural, and evolving work environments.

Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate effectively across cultures and disciplines.
- Collaborate in diverse teams with leadership and empathy.
- Reflect critically on experiences to enhance self-awareness and continuous improvement.
- Evaluate ethical dimensions of professional practice in multicultural contexts.

Assessment Criteria:

- Reflection journals and peer discussion outputs.
- Teamwork and leadership performance in collaborative projects.
- Demonstrated adaptability, critical thinking, and ethical responsibility in assessments.

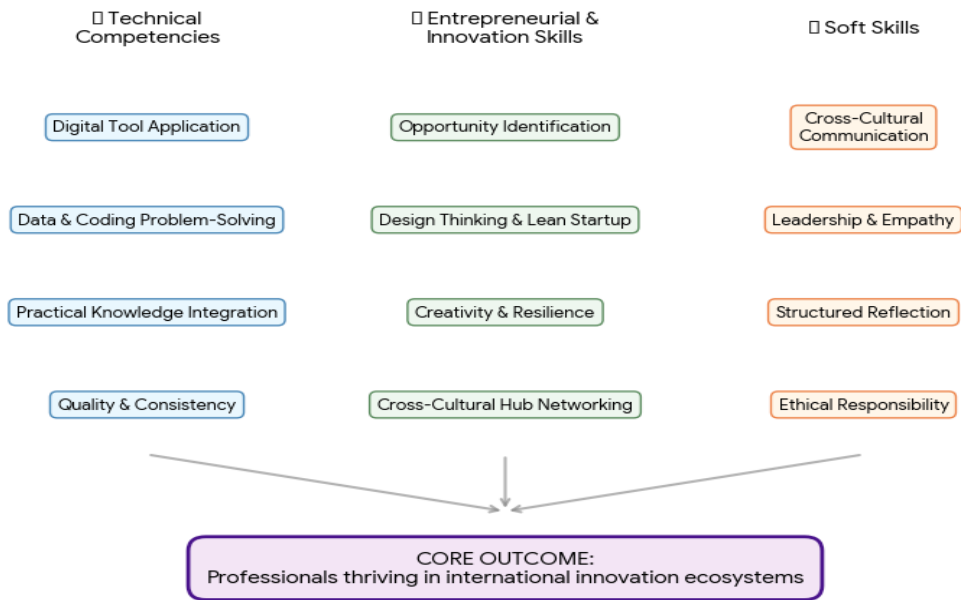
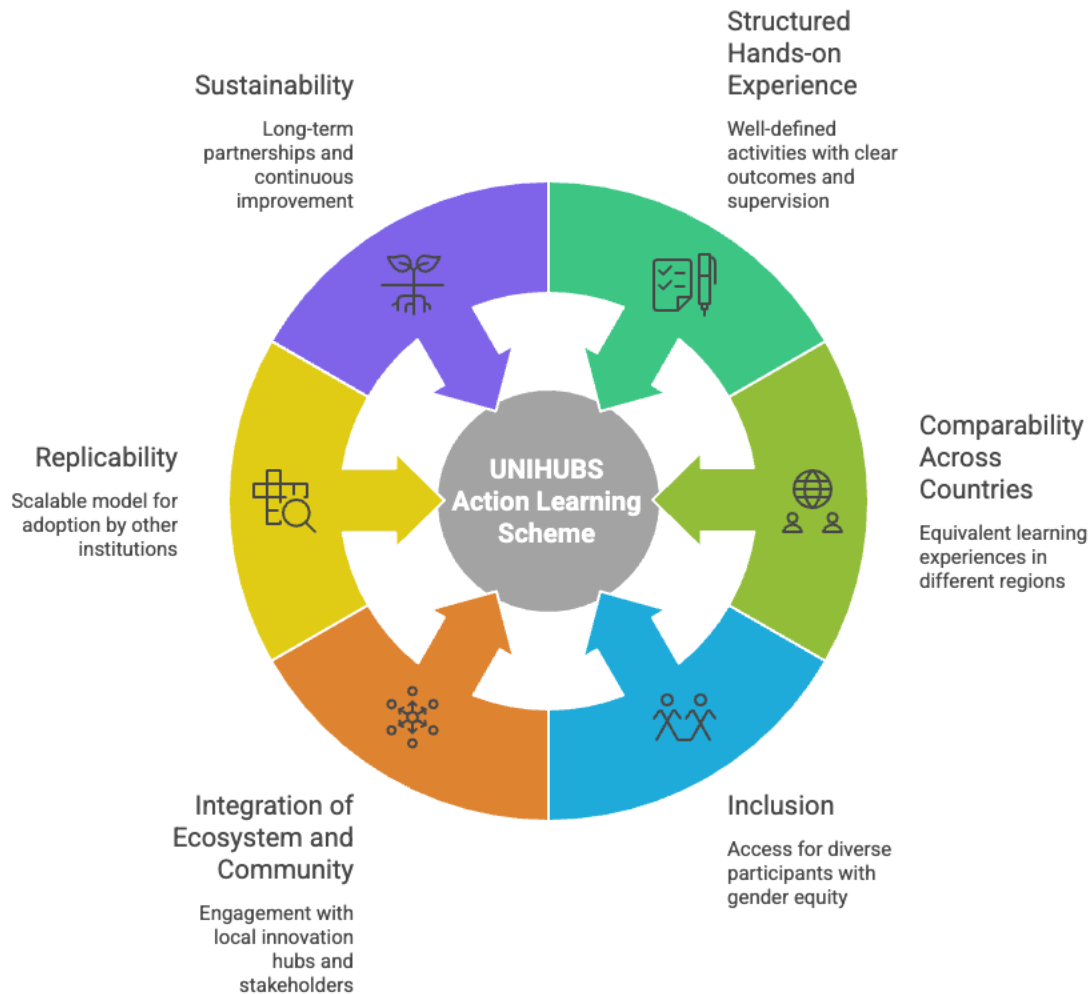


Figure 2: Skills and Competencies Enhancement via the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme.

2.5 Principles of the Scheme



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Figure 3: Principles of the UNI HUBS Action Learning Scheme.

- ◆ **Structured Hands-on Experience.** Innovation challenges, Social Innovation challenges, local internships, and virtual mobilities are well-structured modalities with defined outcomes, supervision, and assessment criteria to ensure consistency and quality across institutions.
- ◆ **Comparability Across Countries.** Learning experiences are designed to be equivalent in scope and rigor across participating African and European countries, enabling mutual recognition and shared standards.

- ◆ **Inclusion.** The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme actively promotes access for participants from diverse backgrounds, ensuring gender equity, support for disadvantaged groups, and digital accessibility for virtual mobility.
- ◆ **Integration of Ecosystem and Community.** Participants engage directly with local innovation hubs, startups, and community stakeholders, embedding learning within real-world digital ecosystems and fostering social relevance.
- ◆ **Replicability.** The model is designed to be scalable and adaptable, allowing other HEIs and regions to adopt and implement similar schemes using shared tools, templates, and best practices.
- ◆ **Sustainability.** Long-term partnerships between universities and innovation hubs are prioritized, with mechanisms for continuous improvement, resource sharing, and institutional embedding of the scheme.

3 Brokerage Event Model

The UNIHUBS Brokerage Event Model is an opportunity for participants to connect and be exposed to local and international digital innovation ecosystems. They will build connections, explore options for gaining hands-on experiences, discuss key issues related to African innovation, and enhance African European collaboration.

The UNIHUBS Brokerage Event Model includes: 7 Local Brokerage Events (1 event will be hosted by each African HEI partner) and a Virtual Brokerage Event (that will be organized by a European partner and will have participants from both continents).

3.1 Local Brokerage Event

The main objective of the Local Brokerage Event is to provide participants with the opportunity to connect to local startups, digital innovation enterprises, and local businesses. The event has a two-fold role; to activate the local digital innovation ecosystem and introduce opportunities for hands-on experience learning to university participants. The event will be hosted by each African HEI partner, with support from local DIHs.

The event is designed to:

- Connect students with local startups, digital innovation enterprises, and businesses
- Foster engagement within the local innovation ecosystem

- Promote opportunities for hands-on learning and practical experience

Therefore, the main target audience of this event will be university students, startups, digital innovation hubs, digital innovation professionals, industry representatives, academic staff, and community representatives.

Below in Table 1, an indicative event structure is presented to facilitate implementation.

Sessions	Description	Time Allocation	Resources
Welcome note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome remarks by UNIHUBS coordinator • Introduction to the objectives of the event • Icebreaker activity to encourage participant interaction 	30 min	1 Facilitator
Round table	<p>Participants will share their perspectives about the local innovation ecosystem, barriers, and the integration of entrepreneurship thinking on curriculum.</p> <p>The round table will be followed by a short Q&A session.</p>	60 min	3 participants, 1 Facilitator
Opportunities for hands-on experience	<p>Representatives of the local digital innovation ecosystem present opportunities for hands-on learning experiences.</p> <p>Each presentation will conclude with a Q&A session.</p>	90 min	6 representatives, 15 minutes each (10 min presentation, 5 min Q&A), 1 Facilitator
Closing & Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of key insights from the day • Stating preferences for the presented Hands-on Experience opportunities • Participants reflections shared via polls • Next steps 	30 min	1 Facilitator

Table 1: Indicative event structure for Local Brokerage Event.

3.2 Virtual Brokerage Event

The Virtual Brokerage Event will showcase opportunities to participants within the European digital innovation ecosystems. During this event, participants will be able to get in touch with European start-ups and DIHs, explore the European ecosystem, and be aware of the European challenges.

The objective of the Virtual Brokerage Event is to facilitate cross-continental knowledge exchange and collaboration by bringing together African and European speakers, university participants, and stakeholders in a virtual setting. Through interactive sessions, the event will try to expose participants to Europe’s digital innovation landscape while fostering connections, learning, and potential experiential learning opportunities. The event will be designed to:

- Facilitate networking between students and European start-ups/DIHs
- Increase awareness of how the European digital innovation ecosystem works
- Expose participants to current challenges faced by the ecosystem
- Encourage collaboration or future opportunities (experiential learning, virtual internships/mobilities, projects, partnerships)
- Inspire participants to engage in innovation and entrepreneurship

The main participants of the Virtual Brokerage Event will be university students from the 3 African countries, European startups, digital innovation hubs, digital innovation professionals, industry representatives, academic staff from both continents, and community representatives.

Below in Table 2, an indicative event structure is presented to facilitate implementation.

Sessions	Description	Time Allocation	Resources
Welcome note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome remarks by UNIHUBS coordinator • Introduction to the objectives of the event • Icebreaker activity to encourage participant interaction 	30 min	1 Facilitator
Round table	Participants from Africa and Europe will share perspectives on	60 min	3 participants, 1 Facilitator

Sessions	Description	Time Allocation	Resources
	<p>entrepreneurship ecosystem in both continents, embedding digitalization and entrepreneurial principles.</p> <p>The round table will be followed by a short Q&A session.</p>		
Opportunities for hands-on experience	<p>Representatives of the European digital innovation ecosystem present opportunities for hands-on learning experiences.</p> <p>Each presentation will conclude with a Q&A session.</p>	90 min	6 representatives, 15 minutes each (10 min presentation, 5 min Q&A), 1 Facilitator
Closing & Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of key insights from the day • Stating preferences for the presented Hands-on Experience opportunities • Participants reflections shared via polls • Next steps 	30 min	1 Facilitator

Table 2: Indicative structure of the Virtual Brokerage Event.

For the implementation of the events technical infrastructure is necessary, particularly for the Virtual Brokerage Event. More specifically, organizing partners will use cloud-based software platforms for video conferencing, online meetings, chat, and collaboration, like ZOOM/Teams. Additionally, tools like Mentimeter or Slido will be used for live polls and interactive activities.

4 Hands-on Experience Opportunities

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is designed to bridge academic knowledge with real-world practice by embedding participants in diverse experiential contexts. In consideration of the diversity of the participating African countries, the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme proposes 4 experiential learning modalities that can be adopted by the University partners.

These modalities ensure that participants further develop technical competencies, entrepreneurial skills, and soft skills while engaging with both local and global ecosystems. By providing experiential learning opportunities such as innovation challenges, social innovation challenges, local internships, and/or virtual mobilities, the scheme fosters inclusivity, adaptability, and sustainability in higher education.

4.1 Innovation Challenges

An innovation challenge is a structured, hands-on learning experience where participants work individually to solve real-world problems that are guided by predefined themes or industry needs. Participants are encouraged to apply creativity, critical thinking, and practical skills to develop innovative solutions, such as prototypes, business ideas, or process improvements.

The strategic focus area of these challenges innovation themes can vary and be aligned to each country and local ecosystem's needs. More specifically, they could be customer experience transformation, technology enablement, new business models, operational excellence, and sustainability & ESG.

Key stakeholders for a successful implementation are SMEs, digital innovation hubs, incubators, industry representatives, or industry organizations (e.g., chambers).

4.2 Social Innovation Challenges

Social Innovation Challenges is a structured initiative that invites participants to exploit their academic knowledge and apply it to real-world contexts. Participants will be called to propose a creative, novel solution to pressing social or environmental problems. The solutions will focus on generating social value that will improve community well-being more effectively than existing approaches.

The social focus areas are inclusive communities and equity, climate and environmental sustainability, health and well-being, education and skills, and economic opportunities. Participants will propose an innovative solution (product or service) that will address the proposed challenge.

This opportunity requires the involvement of external stakeholders who will provide real problem statements and community insights. More specifically, it will require the involvement of NGOs/non-profits, governance or public sector representatives, and/or community members.

4.3 Local internships

Local internships within the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme are structured, supervised, and outcome-driven placements in local industries, startups, or innovation hubs that connect academic learning with professional practice. They involve clear agreements between universities and host organizations, defined learning outcomes, and dual supervision from workplace mentors and academic staff.

Participants are prepared through UNIHUBS Online Course, then actively engage in real projects with regular check-ins. By anchoring them in the local ecosystems, internships foster technical expertise, entrepreneurial thinking, and professional skills while building sustainable partnerships between universities and communities. By the end of the internship, participants will have contributed to a real-world project.

Local companies (SMEs), startups, and innovation hubs need to be involved to provide participants with a workplace, real projects, and a practical environment.

4.4 Virtual mobilities

Virtual mobilities make the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme globally connected, inclusive, and digitally future-ready, allowing students to gain international exposure without physical travel. Virtual mobilities are structured online collaborations between partner institutions across regions and continents, designed to give participants international exposure without physical travel.

Participants are prepared through UNIHUBS Online Course, then actively engaged not only in real projects but also in international environments. By anchoring them in the cross-country and/or cross-continent ecosystems, virtual mobilities foster technical expertise, entrepreneurial thinking, and professional skills while building sustainable partnerships between universities and communities.

Companies, startups, and innovation hubs from all the partner countries, ensuring the cross-country and continent exposure, need to be involved to provide openings for participants.

5 Implementing the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme

This section will shed light on practical aspects that will facilitate the implementation of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme.

5.1 Preparation Steps

For a successful implementation of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme, a series of preparation steps needs to be considered:

- **Sourcing Participants.** The organizing UNIHUBS partners will need to recruit students to participate in the UNIHUBS Online Course and choose one of the Hands-on Experience Opportunities. Participants will have an additional month to complete the Hands-on Experience Opportunities that will be offered.
- **Sourcing Challenge owners/Host organizations.** An important component of the proposed Scheme is the local and European digital innovation ecosystem. The organizers need to recruit challenge owners and host organizations that will define a challenge or offer an internship opportunity. The same participants will be present at the Local Brokerage Events, where they will present their challenge or their internship opportunities.
- **List Hands-on Experience Opportunities.** Following the recruitment, the organizing partner will list the hands-on experience opportunities. Innovation and Social Innovation challenges can be assigned to multiple participants. However, the same does not apply to internships and virtual mobilities. In these cases, the organizer and the host organization will need to decide on a case-by-case basis. The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme templates will be used to define the challenges and internships' expected outcomes (ANNEXES – Templates).
- **Matching Students with Hands-on Experience Opportunities.** The Local Brokerage Events are not only an opportunity for participants to be exposed to the local innovation ecosystem, but also to gain more insights about the challenges and internships. During the event, student participants will use a pre-prepared form to state their preferences. In total, 5 Hands-on Experience Opportunities will be collected by organizing HEI.

5.2 Responsibilities

The following table presents the responsibilities and the 3 main stakeholders of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme.

Students

- Actively engaging in one of the hands-on experience opportunities (challenge, internship, or virtual mobility)
- Applying academic knowledge to real-world problems

- Collaborating effectively with peers, mentors, and host organizations
- Participating in brokerage events and selecting preferred opportunities
- Maintaining regular communication with both mentors (academic and workplace)
- Engaging in reflection activities and documenting learning progress
- Submitting agreed deliverables
- Demonstrating professionalism, accountability, and adaptability
- Completing the UNIHUBS online course as a prerequisite

Challenge owners/ Host organizations

- Defining clear challenges, project scopes, or internship opportunities
- Providing real-world problem statements and relevant context
- Participating in brokerage events to present opportunities
- Assigning a workplace mentor to guide participants
- Supporting participants with practical insights, tools, and resources
- Facilitating integration into the organization's working environment
- Conducting regular check-ins and providing constructive feedback
- Collaborating with academic supervisors to align learning objectives
- Evaluating participant deliverables and contributing to the final assessment
- Ensuring meaningful engagement and maintaining commitment throughout the program

Organizing HEI (UNIHUBS partner)

- Recruiting student participants through open calls
- Recruiting challenge owners and host organizations from local and international ecosystems
- Organizing and facilitating Local Brokerage Events
- Supporting the organization of the Virtual Brokerage Event (with European partners)
- Listing and structuring hands-on experience opportunities

- Matching participants with appropriate opportunities based on preferences
- Providing academic supervisors for mentorship and oversight
- Ensuring alignment between academic learning outcomes and practical experiences
- Monitoring progress through structured mentorship and regular check-ins
- Ensuring quality assurance through standardized templates and evaluation criteria
- Managing communication between all stakeholders
- Collecting and analyzing feedback (surveys, reports, reflections)
- Ensuring inclusivity, gender balance, and equal participation opportunities
- Supporting assessment and certification processes

5.3 Recruitment strategy

An Open Call for participation in UNIHUBS Online Course will be announced and disseminated to a wide audience through various channels and platforms of each UNIHUBS partner. To be eligible to join the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme, participants need to attend the UNIHUBS Online Course and complete it.

In line with the UNIHUBS principles for gender equality and equal representation, the recruitment process provides equal opportunities to female and male participants. In case the organizing partner notices that female participants are misrepresented, adjust outreach strategies will be applied to address this imbalance.

5.4 Conflict Resolution Process

Conflicts may arise due to miscommunication, unmet expectations, or cultural misunderstandings. A clear resolution pathway ensures issues are addressed constructively:

- **Step 1: Initial Reporting.** The student reports the issue to their workplace mentor or academic supervisor, depending on the nature of the concern.
- **Step 2: Escalation.** If unresolved, the issue is escalated to a joint meeting involving the student, host organization representative, and university supervisor.
- **Step 3: Mediation & Resolution.** The parties collaboratively identify the root cause, agree on corrective actions, and document the resolution.

- **Step 4: Follow-Up.** Supervisors monitor the situation post-resolution to ensure the issue does not recur and that the student remains supported.
- **Step 5: Documentation.** All conflicts and resolutions are recorded for institutional learning and future improvement of placement protocols.

This process promotes fairness, transparency, and a supportive learning environment.

5.5 Monitoring

A Dual Mentorships Structure will be applied to oversee the successful implementation of the Action Learning Scheme. A foundational principle is the presence of two mentors: one from the host organization (workplace mentor/organization that proposes the challenge) and one from the academic institution (faculty supervisor). This dual model ensures that students receive both practical guidance and academic oversight. More specifically,

- The challenge owner/workplace mentor provides business insights, introduces students to business culture, business processes, and helps them navigate real-world tasks.
- The academic supervisor ensures that the placement aligns with learning outcomes, facilitates reflection, and helps students connect theory to practice.

Mentorship would be anchored in clearly defined learning objectives. Before the placement begins, workplace mentors and academic supervisors will collaboratively set goals that reflect both academic expectations and workplace relevance. These goals guide the student's activities, shape feedback sessions, and serve as benchmarks for evaluation. This principle ensures that mentorship is not passive but actively drives student development.

The provided mentorship aims to encourage consistent and structured communication. Bi-weekly check-ins allow mentors to monitor progress, address challenges, and adjust expectations. Feedback should be constructive, timely, and linked to specific tasks or behaviors. This principle ensures that students stay engaged and that any issues are addressed early. The regular communication would encourage reflection that will help students internalize lessons, recognize growth areas, and build self-awareness - key traits for employability and leadership.

Mentors are expected to empower students, not micromanage them. This means gradually increasing responsibility, encouraging initiative, and allowing space for independent problem-solving. Students should feel trusted and supported as they

navigate real-world tasks. These principles foster confidence and prepare students for professional environments.

Therefore, mentorship will be well-documented to ensure transparency and accountability. This includes maintaining the following logs:

1. **Mentorship Log.** This log will be completed by the Challenge Owner/Workplace Mentor and Academic Supervisor after their separate meetings with the individual. For implementation purposes, one document will be shared between the two participants.
2. **Participants Reflection.** This log will document the achieved tasks before each meeting and will reflect the overall experience of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme.

5.6 Deliverable assessment

Following the submission of the agreed deliverable via email to both mentors, each mentor will review the deliverable and decide if the participant is eligible to complete the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme and issue the certificate.

The assessment will examine parameters like:

- **Relevance and problem understanding.** Demonstrates a clear and accurate understanding of the problem or opportunity being addressed. Shows strong alignment with the defined challenge or theme and its real-world context.
- **Quality of the idea or contribution.** Presents a well-developed idea that reflects creativity and originality. The contribution adds meaningful value, whether in a business or social context, and is practical and useful.
- **Impact and value.** Highlights the potential impact of the idea on business or society. Considers scalability, long-term value, and relevance to the intended users or beneficiaries.

The result of this assessment will be the completion or non-completion of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme. Mentors can request revisions. In this case, the participant will revise the final deliverable and resubmit it for assessment. The same process will be followed.

6 Impact Measures

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme implementation.

The expected measurable outcomes of UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme are:

#	Measurable Objective	Target (in total)	Target (per partner)
1	Number of experiential-learning projects (virtual mobilities, internships etc) co- created by HEIs educator, students and DIHs' representatives	>50	At least 8
2	Local brokerage events in targeted countries hosted by HEIs	7	1 event
3	Number of academic staff involved in the local brokerage events	>70	At least 10
4	Number of DIHs' representatives involved in the local brokerage events	>70	At least 10
5	Number of students involved in the local brokerage events	>210 (female participants >25%)	At least 30
6	Virtual brokerage event (international brokerage event)	1	NA
7	Number of academic staff involved in the international virtual brokerage event	>40	At least 6
8	Number of digital innovation professionals involved in the virtual brokerage event	>40	At least 6

Additionally, qualitative indicators will be measured with the use of surveys to collect data about the experience of the events and the hands-on experience opportunities. The surveys will focus on the following parameters:

- For the **Brokerage Events**, the surveys will investigate parameters like organization, value, implementation, and team dynamics of the event
- For the **Hands-on Experience Opportunities**, the surveys will investigate parameters like value, communication, implementation, organization, and skills developed.

The results of the qualitative surveys will be analyzed by the lead partner and will be integrated into future implementation.

7 Sustainability and Institutional Integration

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is designed to endure beyond the UNIHUBS project lifecycle by embedding its practices into institutional structures, providing a clear replicable guide, ensuring financial viability through supporting virtual interactions over physical ones, and fostering long-term partnerships. This guarantees that the initiative will continue without external project funding.

A. Continuation Strategy

The UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is designed to remain viable beyond the UNIHUBS project by embedding its practices into institutional structures, ensuring financial stability, and fostering long-term collaboration. Through mechanisms of ownership, integration, and partnership, the scheme will continue as a core element of student development and employability, sustaining impact well into the future. Below, we propose some mechanisms that could contribute to Scheme's continuation:

Institutional Ownership

- The Brokerage Event Model could be institutionalized as annual career and innovation fairs coordinated by HEI internship/international offices.
- Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) adopt the UNIHUBS model as a standard service offering, providing continuous student–industry matchmaking.
- The programme could be integrated into student services portfolios, ensuring ongoing delivery as part of career development pathways.

Financial Sustainability Options

- Co-funding with industry partners who benefit from student innovation projects.
- Startups contribute to hosting fees for interns, offsetting operational costs.
- Students receive academic credits instead of financial compensation, reducing financial dependency while strengthening academic recognition.

Embedding into Structures:

- Internship and career offices manage placements as part of their core mandate.
- Innovation hubs formalize student engagement through standardized collaboration agreements.

B. Integration into HEI Curricula

Experiential learning will be embedded into formal academic programmes, ensuring it is not treated as an extracurricular activity. Below, we outline several mechanisms that HEIs may consider when exploring the integration of the Scheme into their curricula:

- **Credit Recognition:** Activities aligned with systems similar to the EU's ECTS, granting credits for internships, projects, and virtual exchanges.
- **Course Integration:** Entrepreneurship and innovation courses incorporate deliverables such as reports, presentations, diaries, and work logs.
- **Formal Assessment Criteria:** Balanced evaluation structure (e.g., 40% mentor evaluation, 40% academic supervisor, 20% final report) ensures academic rigor and accountability.

C. Replication

The scheme is designed for replication across countries, institutions, and future cohorts through a structured toolkit.

- **Templates and Guidelines:** Standardized internship agreements, reflection journals, and assessment rubrics.
- **Event Formats and Methodologies:** Brokerage event blueprints, and innovation challenge structures.
- **Implementation Requirements:** Clear parameters (e.g., minimum number of events, duration of placements, expected outputs).
- **Adaptability Guidelines:** Frameworks for tailoring activities to local ecosystem needs, sector-specific challenges, and flexible duration options.

D. Long-Term HEI–DIH Partnerships

Temporary placements evolve into sustained collaboration ecosystems, strengthening institutional ties and innovation capacity. Thus, we propose the following types of partnerships:

- **Joint Innovation Projects:** Co-developed solutions addressing regional and global challenges.
- **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs):** Formal agreements ensuring continuous internship flows between HEIs and DIHs.

- **Co-Designed Courses:** Jointly developed curricula integrating industry insights and innovation hub expertise.
- **Research Collaboration:** Startups and innovation hubs serve as case studies for applied research, enriching both academic and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Through institutional ownership, financial sustainability mechanisms, curricular integration, replication strategies, and long-term partnerships, the UNIHUBS Action Learning Scheme is positioned to thrive independently of project funding. It will remain a cornerstone of employability, innovation, and international collaboration across African and European higher education ecosystems.

8 Key Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The implementation of an Action Learning Scheme involves several risks that must be carefully assessed, with mitigation strategies developed in advance. The most significant risks identified relate to placement withdrawals and participant dropouts, varying levels of engagement from both participants and local ecosystem stakeholders, and collaboration challenges, particularly as most activities will be conducted online. In addition, other potential risks should be taken into account, including cultural misunderstandings, conflicts between students and host organizations, equity gaps, and issues related to quality assurance.

Risk	Description	Likelihood/ Impact	Proposed Risk Mitigation Measures
Withdrawals/ Dropouts	Students may withdraw due to personal, financial, or academic pressures	High/ High	Pre-assignment orientation to set clear expectations Flexible formats (hybrid/virtual) to accommodate personal circumstances Early warning system through regular check-ins to identify disengagement Backup pool of students to fill vacancies if needed
Student participants or Host Non-Engagement	Lack of commitment from either students or host organizations reduces placement quality	High/ High	Clear agreements outlining responsibilities and deliverables Dual mentorship (academic + workplace) to maintain accountability

Risk	Description	Likelihood/ Impact	Proposed Risk Mitigation Measures
			Regular monitoring and feedback loops to sustain engagement Recognition or incentives for hosts to encourage active participation
Virtual Collaboration Challenges	Technical issues, time-zone differences, or weak digital skills hinder effective collaboration	Medium/ Medium	Provide training in digital tools and virtual teamwork before assignment Use reliable platforms with technical support Schedule meetings flexibly to accommodate time zones Assign facilitators to mediate and coordinate virtual teams
Cultural Misunderstandings	Students and host organizations may struggle with diverse workplace norms	Medium/ Low	Cultural sensitivity principles and mentor guidance
Conflict between students and host	Misaligned expectations or communication breakdowns	Medium/ Medium	Clear escalation and mediation process involving HEIs
Equity Gaps	Disadvantaged students may face barriers to participation	High/ Low	UNIHUBS online course have been designed to address connectivity issues Inclusive recruitment Flexible formats
Quality Assurance	Placements may vary in rigor and relevance	Medium/ Medium	Standardized evaluation rubrics and host feedback integration

9 ANNEXES – Templates

Innovation Challenge Brief

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/hkfta0oilrel9xpsss0dy/UNI HUBS_Innovation-Challenge-Brief-Template.docx?rlkey=bcz9kn6eje3kf1lkbyfeky7i2&st=vr3ed4dn&dl=0

Social Innovation Challenge Brief

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/4cl76reb97zewj8sgvsk0/UNI HUBS_Social-Innovation-Challenge-Brief-Template.docx?rlkey=low8xsyaaa4z89vlqc56yfm dq&st=sg90yulh&dl=0

Internship Template

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/v36tpkkcoroh2pbiwm5mb/UNI HUBS_Internship-Template.docx?rlkey=agnygu8rdlzzgyhcrn2b0loyz&st=7hrj6z8k&dl=0

Virtual Mobility Template

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/6tjpettnss24rs1ovvis/UNI HUBS_Virtual-Mobility-Template.docx?rlkey=2qyzvfernf7ntod95qwshk014&st=mppmvmc9&dl=0

Mentorship Log Template

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/umxjmne9hs2hgahrolp7z/UNI HUBS_Mentorship-Log-Template.docx?rlkey=n6j93dsw8kwdjxjgnb2z6mpw3&st=pt4o4g6c&dl=0

Participants Reflection Template

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9r4wmv998milx8c0i185a/UNI HUBS_Participants-Reflection-Template.docx?rlkey=eyeco95bxdism7hcjusy9ot3t&st=mngptjnz&dl=0