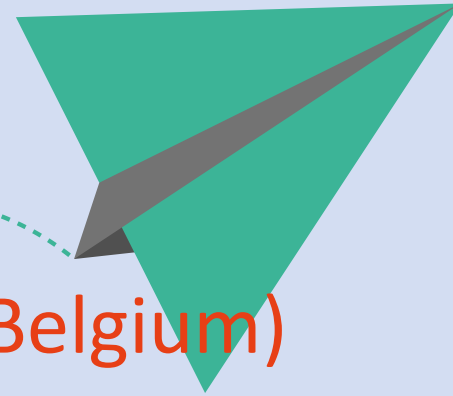# How to incorporate different forms of workplace learning in your programme?
Case Odisee University College (Flanders – Belgium)

Amber Dewil – Head of Programme Associate Degrees Marketing & Communication / Sales

13th of November 2025 – Porto CHAIN5

Overview

1

Level 5 programmes @Odisee

2

**Workplace learning**

3

Example MarCom Support

Level 5 programmes (associate degrees)
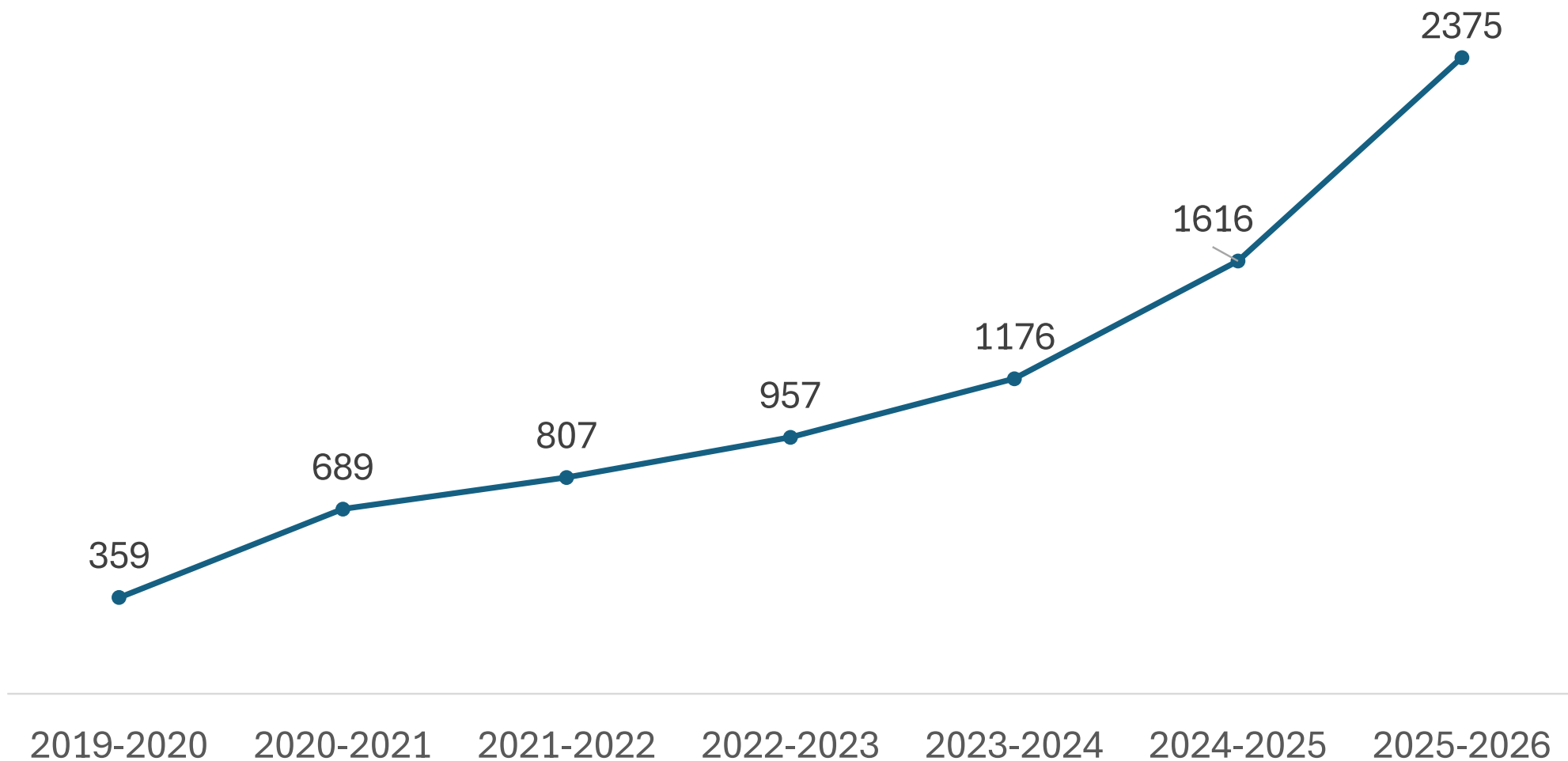
Academy Profession programme

Odisee

- 27 Bachelor (180 ECTS) & 11 Associate Degree (120 ECTS) programmes

- 13.000 students

- 5 fields of study: Business, (Bio)Technology, Healthcare, Education, Social Work

- 6 campuses: 3 in Brussels area + Gent, Aalst, Sint-Niklaas

- Part of Association KU Leuven

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https://www.odisee.be/en
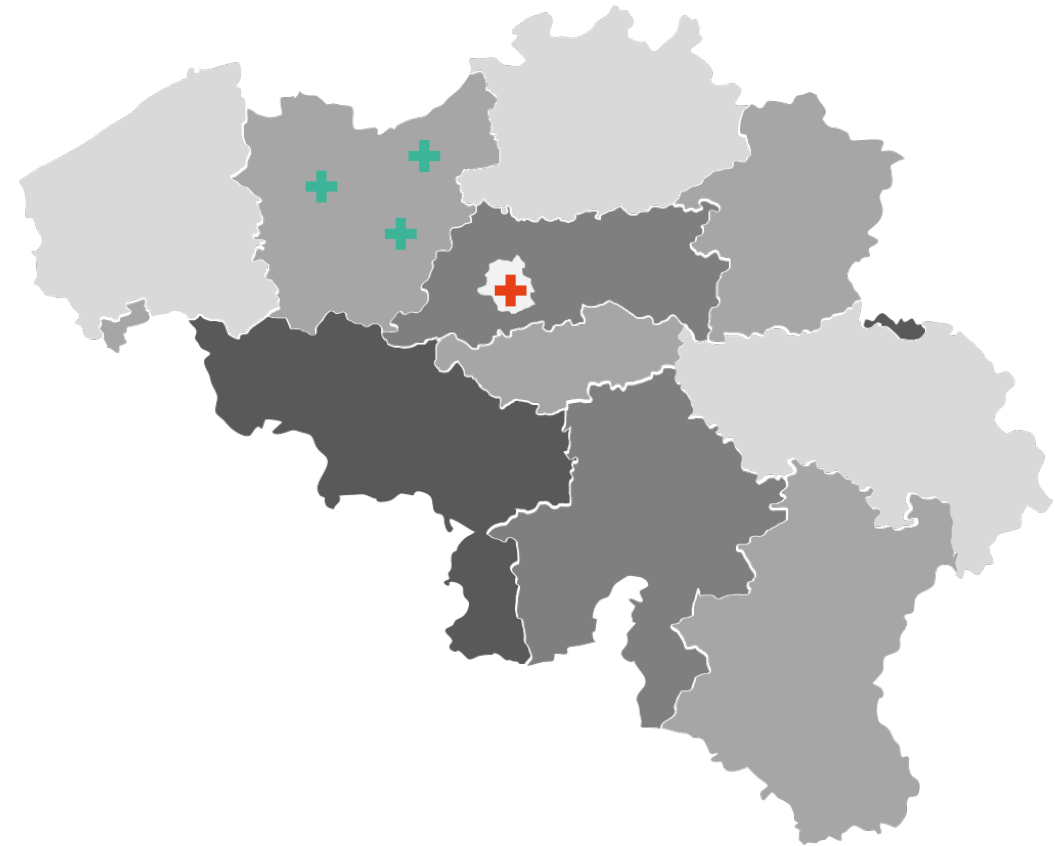
Level 5 programmes – Associate degrees

◻ Incorporated in higher education in 2019-2020

◻ Before in secondary and/or adult education

- Level 5 has clear structure now in Flanders
- Belgium has 3 official languages and education is divided accordingly

◻ 120 ECTS (2-year programme) -> 1/3 workplace learning

◻ Higher education is 'open' (very limited admission requirements -> only degree secondary education)

◻ Associate degree programmes are becoming very popular, but government financing doesn't follow fast enough

Odisee: strong growth in Associate degrees

| 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 | 2025-2026 |

359   689   807   957   1176   1616   2375

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Associate Degrees @Odisee

- 2375 students (= 19% of Odisee students)
- Strong growth compared to bachelors (+47% vs +7%)
- 11 programmes in 4 fields

Pie chart labels:
- Renewable Energy; 70
- Site Organisation; 50
- Electromech Systems; 171
- Accounting Adm; 440
- Orthopedagogical G; 96
- Social Work; 276
- Marketing & Comm; 542
- Secondary Education; 170
- Sales; 92
- Systems & Network; 211
- Programming; 257
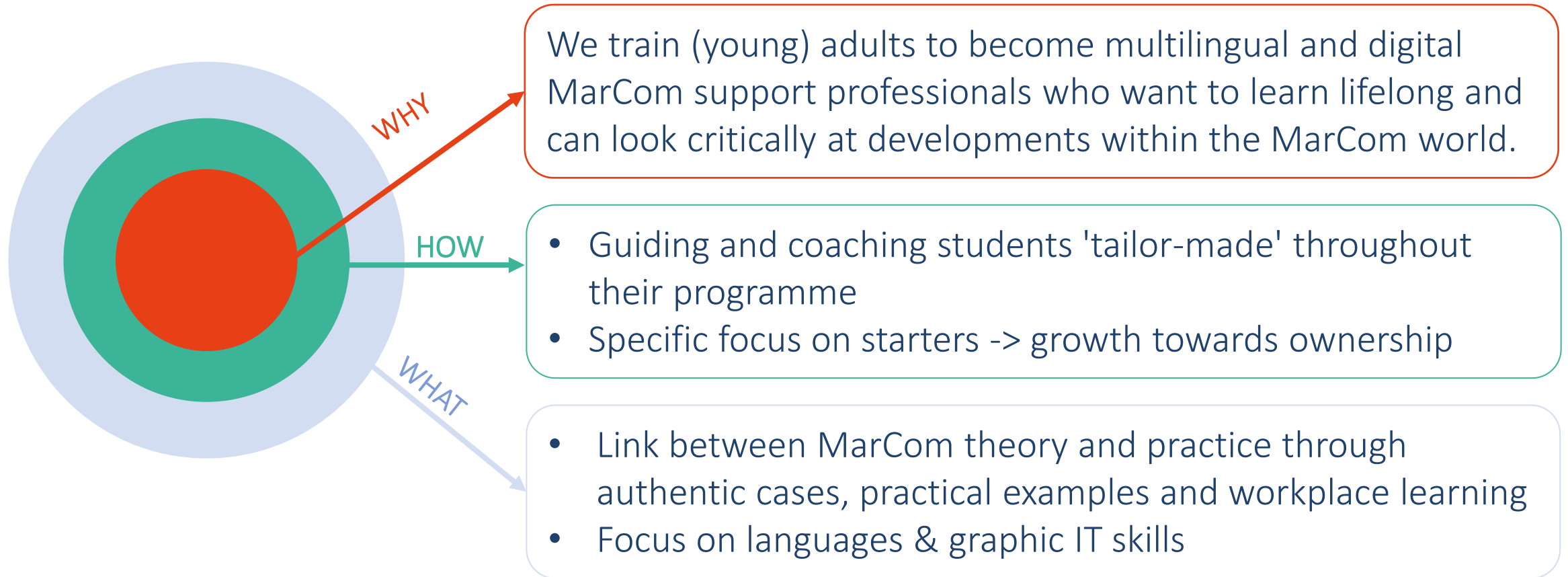
Source: studentenaantallen Odisee – consulted 14/04/2024
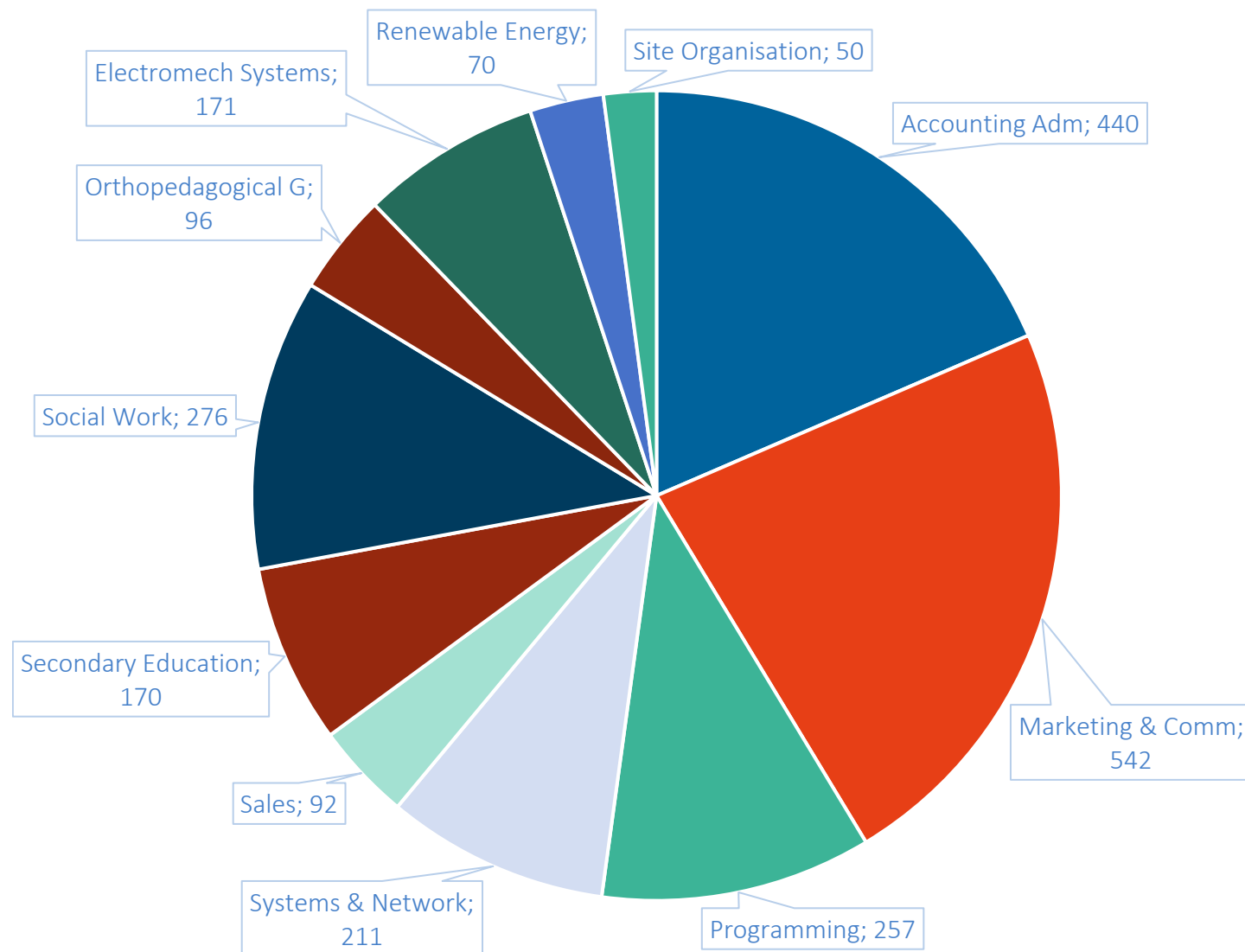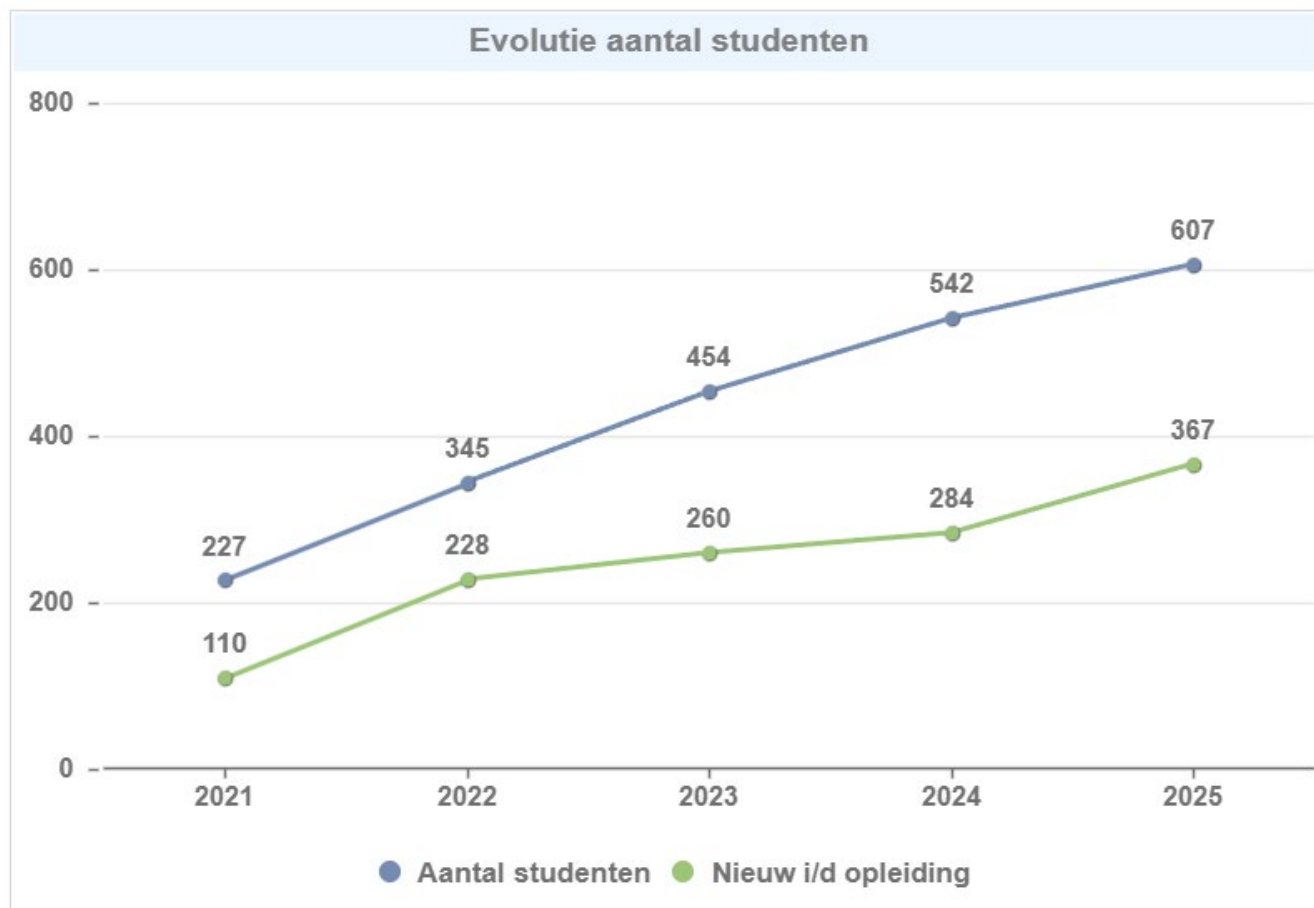
Associate Degree Marketing- and Communication Support

◘ Started completely new in 2019-2020

◘ 2 majors (marketing support – communication support)

◘ Team of 14 FTE (30 lecturers)

  ▴ (Guest)lecturers who are still in field

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Associate Degree Marketing- and communication support

WHY

We train (young) adults to become multilingual and digital MarCom support professionals who want to learn lifelong and can look critically at developments within the MarCom world.

HOW

- Guiding and coaching students 'tailor-made' throughout their programme
- Specific focus on starters -> growth towards ownership

WHAT

- Link between MarCom theory and practice through authentic cases, practical examples and workplace learning
- Focus on languages & graphic IT skills

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Associate Degree MarCom – student count

Evolutie aantal studenten

● Aantal studenten ● Nieuw i/d opleiding
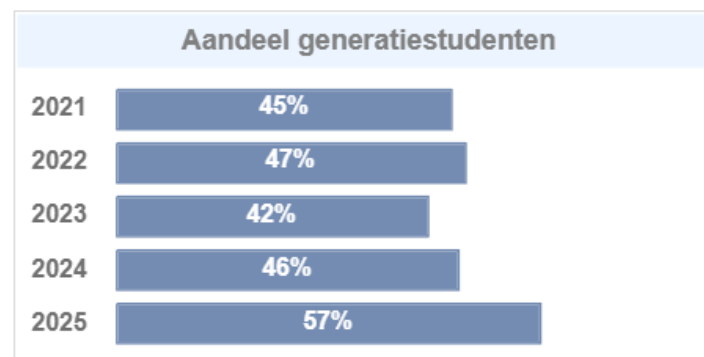
Onderwijsdashboard (consulted 7/11/25)

All students*
- 607
- +12% (comp. 24-25)
- +167% (comp. 21-22)

in February we welcome +/- 45-tal new students

New in programme
- 367
- +29% (comp 24-25)
- +234% (comp 21-22)

Aandeel generatiestudenten

Year	%
2021	45%
2022	47%
2023	42%
2024	46%
2025	57%

Teaching in Brussels

□ Metropolitan context is challenging, certainly for Associate Degree programmes

□ Most students have more than one diversity characteristic

- Scholarship (low income), Dutch not native/home language, migration background…

□ Importance of personal guidance and coaching

- Problem with large groups (steep increase in enrolments)

Workplace learning

Continuum of workplace learning

REALISTIC | learning environment | REAL

| Company visit Guest speaker | Simulation education | In-company workshop Observation | Assignment by the field | Internship | Dual learning |

Workplace exploration | Workplace integration

Continuum of workplace learning

Qualitative workplace learning = complex

- Significant growth (year after year) + funding that does not keep up
  - Personal guidance remains important but can no longer be provided qualitatively
  - Gradually, other choices are made on the workplace learning continuum
- Finding enough high-quality workplaces for students
  - Rapid increase in students = more workplaces needed
  - Building a network and developing relationships with companies and organizations takes time
- Importance of a mentor in the workplace
  - Dual learning is not an internship → new skills are taught in the workplace
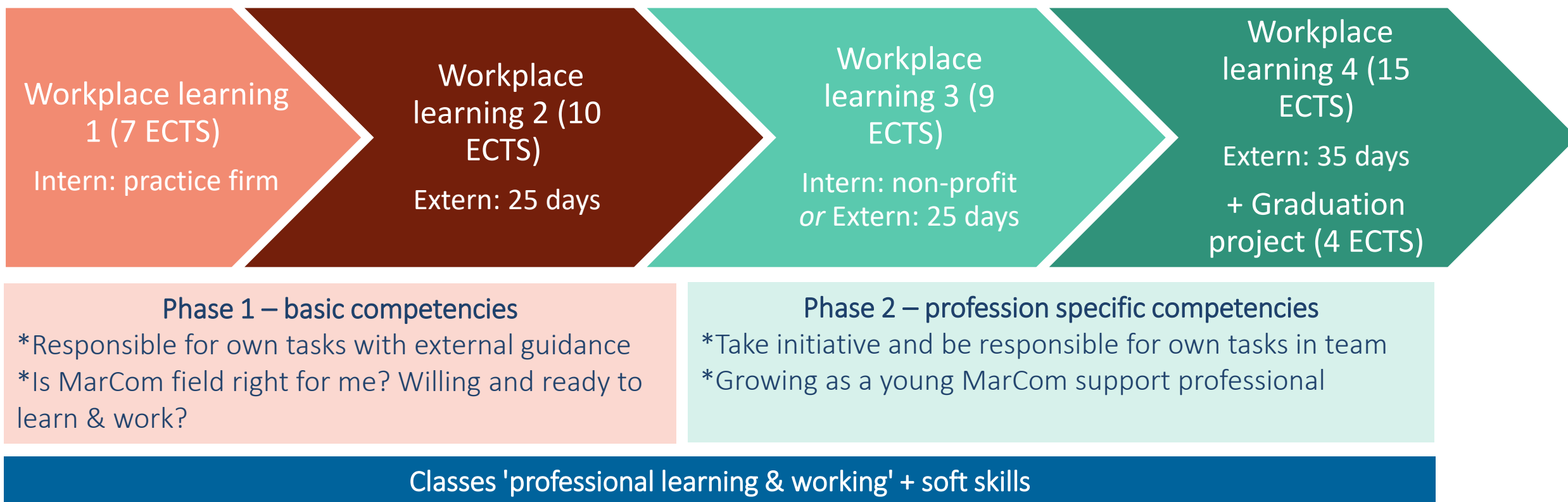 - Companies and organizations need to make time and recognize its importance

Qualitative workplace learning = complex

- Building relationships with the professional field
  - More than just workplace learning in a company/ organization
  - Can also take the form of guest lectures, projects, company visits… → workplace learning as a continuum
- Specific characteristics of associate degree students
  - Work-ready & willing to work?
    - Assessed by program through self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and instructor evaluation before student enters the labor market (in simulation and/or educational environment)
  - A diverse group!
    - From labor-market-oriented students to bachelor students who just missed completing their degree
    - Often vulnerable target group in urban context (with diversity characteristics)

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Example in MarCom Support

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Gradual structure workplace learning

Workplace learning 1 (7 ECTS)

Intern: practice firm

Workplace learning 2 (10 ECTS)

Extern: 25 days

Workplace learning 3 (9 ECTS)

Intern: non-profit *or* Extern: 25 days

Workplace learning 4 (15 ECTS)

Extern: 35 days

+ Graduation project (4 ECTS)

Phase 1 – basic competencies
*Responsible for own tasks with external guidance
*Is MarCom field right for me? Willing and ready to learn & work?

Phase 2 – profession specific competencies
*Take initiative and be responsible for own tasks in team
*Growing as a young MarCom support professional

Classes 'professional learning & working' + soft skills

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Annual Matchmaking Event

◻ Companies & students meet on campus to find a suitable internship match (workplace learning)

◻ 43 companies & 400 students are present (Brussels)

(different associate degree programmes in Odisee organise these events)

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Practice firm (internal workplace learning)

◻ Students 1st year MarCom work on commercial case to practice their skills before going on external workplace learning

◻ Are students ready & willing to work?

Practice firm (internal workplace learning)

Tasks & output

- Product observation in retail (field research), competitor analysis, SWOT

- Street survey target audience (process & interpre results)

- Campaign proposal (place, promotion, price ... + baseline & visual) in pitch for jury

- ...

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Non-profit project

◻ Students 2nd year MarCom work on non-profit cases in agency context

◻ Working towards usable output

◻ Service learning -> students take on a social engagement towards a non-profit organisation (Brussels-based)

Output - examples
- Instagram stories
- Fundraiser (campaign on Facebook, on site, communication)
- Event concept
- Event branding -> ad in print media
- Content calendar social media
- Online newsletters
- Videos & interviews
…

External workplace learning

"Mijn stage bij NMBS? Een aangename verrassing!"

- Student gets personal 'coach' (teacher in programme)
- Looking for workplace? Guidance during 'professional learning & working' classes
  - Matchmaking event for 1st year students
  - 2nd year students look more independently
- Workplace must comply with checklist
  - Small, medium-sized companies and multinationals
  - Emphasis on study relevant tasks & mentor
- Student keeps portfolio: log, reflections, evidence of work done, score competences... -> coach checks + evaluation interviews

Graduation project

Project from workplace (or entrepreneurship, students with own small business)

Questions?

Workshop: part 1

Exchange information

- What forms of workplace learning does your programme offer (look at continuum)?

- Do you offer different types? Why (not)?

- Compare between different participants

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Workshop: part 2

Integration in your programme

- How could you integrate different forms of workplace learning in your programme? Would it be added value?

- What (other) type of workplace learning would you integrate in your programme? Why?