

Cross-Border Secondment: A Practical Guide for Researchers

Building a bridge between academia and industry to create a link between theoretical knowledge and real-life applications in the EdTech ecosystem is crucial to transforming research insights into real-life innovation. The secondment of researchers from universities to EdTech companies helps facilitate this knowledge transfer by embedding education researchers in industry environments. In this way, EdTech companies benefit from the experience of researchers by learning about fresh ideas and technologies that can drive new or improved products, services, and processes. These collaborations enrich both the practical and theoretical sides, encourage innovation, and ensure that theoretical knowledge is put into practice and has a tangible impact.

Structured Engagement Process

A successful secondment for a researcher follows a structured three-phase process to engage with the host company and address its needs. Each phase depends on the previous one, ensuring the researcher and company stay aligned from problem exploration to solution implementation:

1. Phase 1 – Discover “What is””: This phase focuses on understanding the company's current state, challenges, and goals. The semi-structured survey and initial discussions are key tools for this phase.
2. Phase 2 – Data gathering & analysis: This phase involves more profound exploration and validation of the Phase I findings through face-to-face meetings and in-depth assessments to validate findings and clarify the company's needs.
3. Phase 3 – Decision-making: This phase focuses on translating insights into actionable decisions and plans and co-developing a clear implementation plan (with timelines and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)) to develop targeted recommendations and address identified challenges.

Actionable Steps for Researchers

To ensure a successful and impactful secondment, researchers should follow these actionable steps:

1. Prepare: Before the secondment, researchers should thoroughly research the company's background, market position, and specific needs. This includes gaining a deep understanding of their products, target users, and the pain points they face.
2. Assess: Researchers can conduct structured assessments using surveys or targeted questions to identify the company's key challenges and opportunities. During meetings, active listening is essential to validate findings and better understand the company's unique context.
3. Engage: Collaboration is at the heart of the secondment process. Researchers should work closely with the company's teams, engage in problem-solving sessions, share their expertise through mentoring or workshops, and remain open to learning about the company's operational environment and challenges.
4. Develop: Researchers can co-design practical and tailored solutions that address the company's specific needs. Defining clear KPIs to measure success and ensure that recommendations are feasible and aligned with the company's goals is essential.
5. Follow-Up: To ensure long-term impact, researchers should establish a plan for ongoing follow-up and knowledge sharing. Regular check-ins can help monitor progress, address emerging issues, and adapt solutions as needed to sustain positive outcomes over time.

Benefits of Cross-Border and Cross-Sector Collaboration

Collaboration between academic researchers and EdTech companies offers transformative benefits. By bridging theory and practice, these partnerships drive innovation, enhance competitiveness, and provide valuable insights. Together, they create a dynamic ecosystem that addresses real-world challenges, leading to impactful solutions and growth for all.

- Innovation: Applying academic research in real-world contexts fosters innovation, giving companies access to cutting-edge knowledge for novel solutions and improved processes.
- Sustainable Partnerships: Secondments create long-term academia-industry partnerships that foster trust and lead to future projects and funding opportunities.
- Competitiveness: Collaboration with researchers gives businesses an edge by offering fresh insights into adapting to market changes and enhancing innovation.
- Practical insight for researchers: Addressing industry challenges equips researchers with practical experience, inspires new research directions, and enhances their teaching skills.

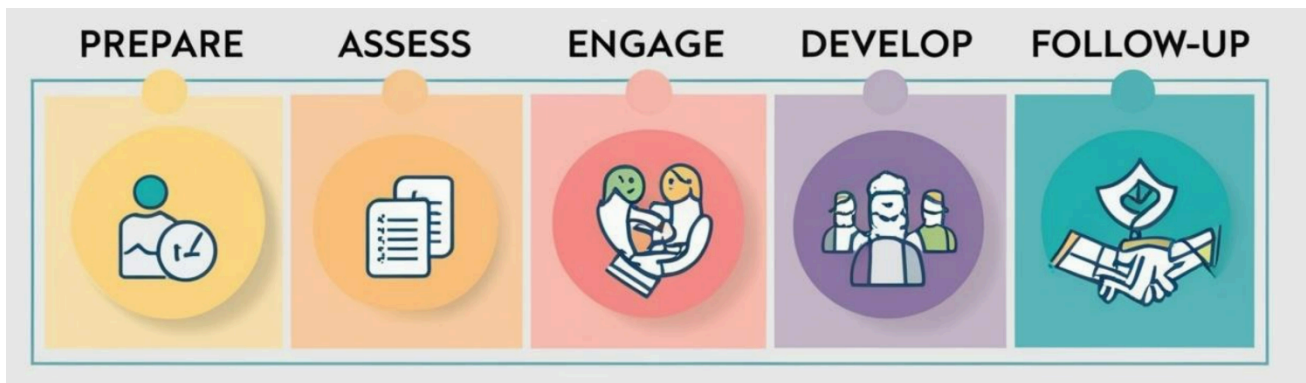
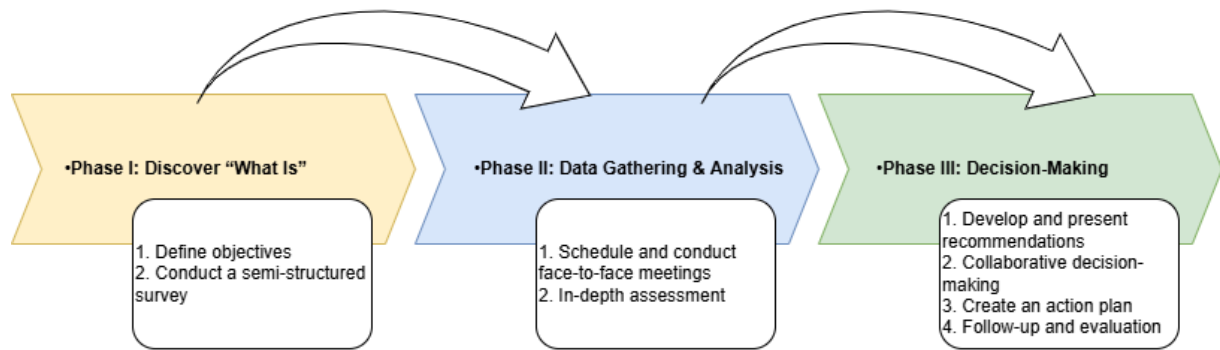


Fig. 1 Cross-Border Secondment: A Practical Guide for Researchers