

# CAREER SERVICES: A BEST- PRACTICE EXAMPLE FROM GERMANY

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## Introduction

Internships and professional experience are becoming more and more important requisites for students and graduates and are almost taken for granted by many HR officials. In opposition to this, many newly created Bachelor and Master programmes make it difficult for students to integrate internships into their studies without having to add another semester and thereby “losing” valuable time. This becomes all the more relevant with private universities or universities generally that charge considerable tuition fees.

This chapter offers a best-practice example in the area of personnel services from a German private university. With private universities, the link between students’ demands and the institution’s financial stability and sustainability is much more direct. Private universities have to act much more as service providers to a paying and therefore demanding student population. This includes the provision of business contacts and internship opportunities to facilitate the transition into the labour market to live up to the expectations of students willing to pay for higher education. While public universities place emphasis on different aspects of student education, much can be learnt from private university career services. The following best-practice

example is taken from the International University of Applied Sciences Bad Honnef - Bonn (IUBH), a private university offering application-oriented study programmes.

## IUBH internships and career services

IUBH is a private university based in Germany. It maintains 4 campuses in Germany and two in Ireland, with an enrolment of 14 000 students from 85 nations. The programmes focus on business administration, international and service management. The university is particularly well known for its courses in Tourism and Aviation Management.

The internship is designed to enable students gain insights into operations and management in their industry. It gives students the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge and gain practical experience and soft skills within a relatively limited period of time. For all Bachelor study programmes, students must complete one internship of at least 22 weeks.

The IUBH career services team provides assistance in finding internships and maintains contact with top-level companies, e.g. hotels, resorts, clubs, tour operators, trade fair and congress centres, event and marketing companies, airports and airlines, carriers, transport businesses and other service providers.

As the internship is part of the academic education process at IUBH, each student participates in an Internship Information Session at the beginning of the semester before starting their internship. During and after the internship, students maintain regular contact with career services and the academic personnel of the university.

Additional trainings and personal consultations for students preparing for their internships or applying for jobs (interview trainings, application trainings, etc.) complete the range of services offered by career services. All trainings, information sessions and personal consultations are meant to support students during their self-reliant search and the application process

for internships and jobs. Career Services strongly recommends all students to make use of the vast networking possibilities at IUBH.

### **Career days**

IUBH organizes company presentations, in order to give employers and partners a chance to present their companies and get in touch with students. The annual highlight is the job fair "Career Days" on campus. Career services provides the necessary infrastructure for committed students from all over the world.

Since the founding of the university, IUBH Career Days has continuously grown. It attracts representatives from over 70 companies. Students and alumni make use of this on-campus fair as an opportunity to meet potential employers and talk to them about internship and job opportunities. The programme also includes an assessment centre and the opportunity for job interviews. Some students and graduates obtain commitments for internships or permanent job positions on the spot. Many others make valuable contacts with companies for their future careers. The fair includes a presentation on "Self-employment as a career option".

### **Career services for students**

Career services begin before enrolment. As a first test their of self-initiative, potential students can opt to do an internship before they start their studies. This can give them a sense of orientation:

- Is this the right industry for me?
- Do I feel comfortable in the role as a service provider?
- What does the daily work routine look like?

These essential questions can be answered by doing an internship while still at school or before enrolment, enabling candidates to start their studies with more confidence and motivation.

During the studies, an important aspect of exploring career opportunities is the use of the IUBH network. This requires self-initiative to take advantage

of the services offered and to attend the events and corporate presentations offered outside of the course curriculum. It can be a chance to meet representatives of an industry, ask specific questions and make contacts.

Initiative and motivation are the essential ingredients for moving successfully through the study programme and into a professional career. The ability to present oneself ("self-marketing"), to accept and implement advice Career Services offers, including interview training workshops. All of these aspects can be a decisive advantage in the job application process. Career Services can help in many ways, however, but it can never be a substitute for the student's personal commitment.

In addition, Career Services offers a unique career preparation programme. Formats include workshops, individual consultations and networking opportunities. Furthermore, intensive German language training is provided for students entering the German job market.

### **Career services for alumni**

Alumni keep their IUBH mail address and their access for the campus system CARE. Furthermore, Career Services stays in contact through Jobteaser, a web-based platform where students can find job offers, events on campus and news about IUBH.

### **Career services for companies**

Career services reaches out to companies to provide access to qualified young people for internships, entry level job positions or other job vacancies.

The career service team assists with:

- Corporate/company presentations on campus
- Get-together events with on campus catering (subject to a charge)
- Participation in the Career Days programme
- Assessment centre or selection interviews on campus

- Company profiles in IUBH job data base
- Cooperation/partnerships
- Vacancy announcements for:
  - Internships
  - Entry level job positions
  - Positions for professionals

### **Learning opportunities for HEIs in developing countries**

Career Services at IUBH employs a specific model that suits the profile and strategies of this particular university and the industry surrounding it. It can serve as an inspiration for universities in developing countries but doubtlessly needs adjustment. Since the industrial and economic setting and the demographics of the job market are different, different approaches might be necessary. However, strong links between universities and businesses in developing countries can benefit both industry as well as students and graduates. With an improved understanding of the criteria, framework and the success factors of the IUBH approach, universities will be able to develop their own model, reflecting their specific structures and socioeconomic framework.

### **References**

Susanne Dusel Head of Career Office (Personal Interview on 1 September 2017 at IUBH, School of Business and Management, Germany)