



Virtual Internships

at RWTH Aachen University for students from the German University of Technology in Oman

DAAD Webseminars - Digital Formats in international Higher Education Projects

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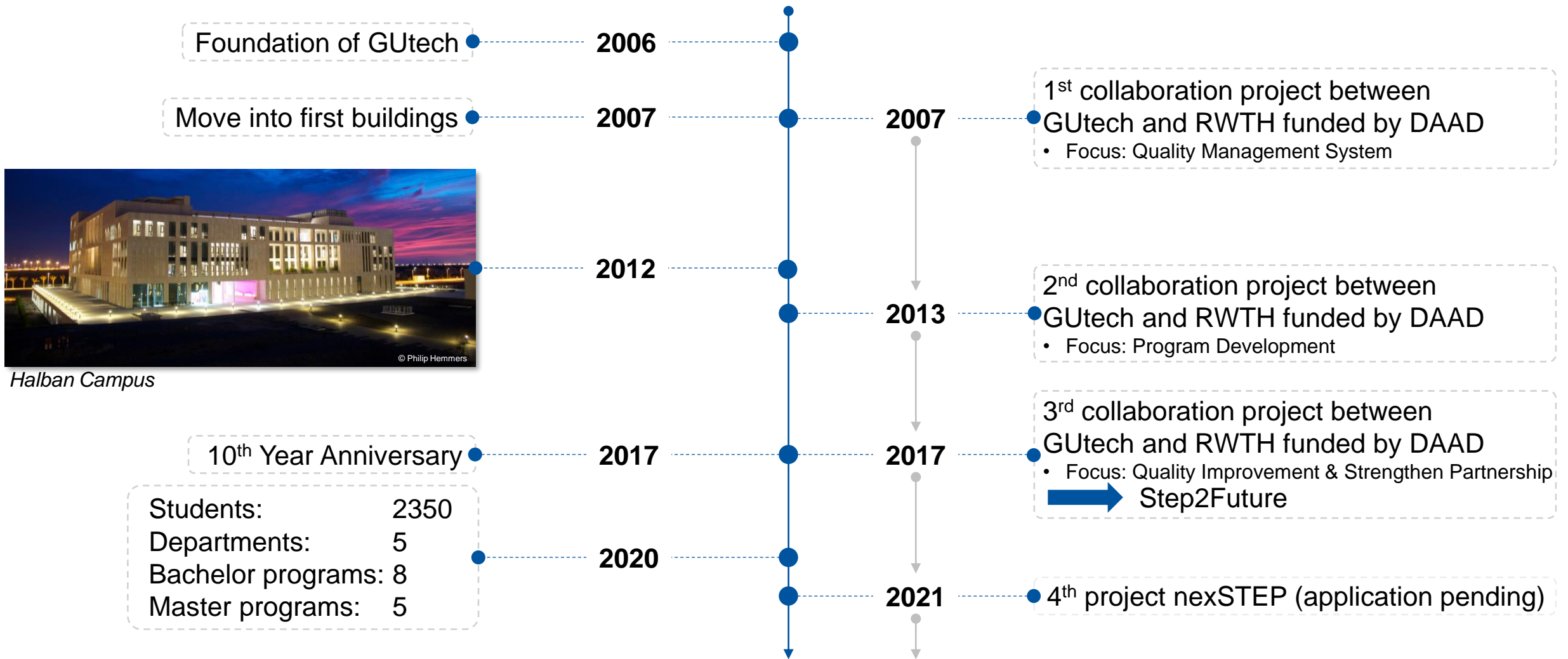
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Summary

- RWTH Aachen University (RWTH) offered students from the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech) an opportunity to do a remote “Virtual Internship”
- The Virtual Internships were organized during the semester break at GUtech
- Several faculties of RWTH participated in offering the Virtual Internships
- During the internship the students had to work remotely on a topic provided by RWTH supervisors
- In addition to the supervision of the internships a support program was organized



Development of the collaboration between GÜtech and RWTH



Motivation for Virtual Internships

COVID-19 strikes ...

- ...students had to cancel their planned summer internships
- ...students had to cancel their plans to study a semester abroad
- ...students where uncertain if they can uphold their current study progress

➤ Students may need an additional semester



➤ Additional funding is not secured



➤ Lack of practical/international experience



Virtual Internships

Due to COVID-19 GÜtech students faced a situation where they may have to prolong their studies with funding being unsecured. Virtual Internships were offered to help those students.

Preparation

- Prof. Habel of RWTH -Pro-Rector for International Affairs- discussed the idea at the Board of Governors meeting beginning of June
- Initiation of Virtual Internships in July by Prof. Habel
- International Office at RWTH was responsible for:
 - Coordination with GUtech for selection of students
 - Setting up a support program
 - Gathering supervisors at RWTH

Virtual Internships at RWTH Aachen University for students of the German University of Technology (GUtech) in Oman



Key dates:

- Online Kick-Off event on **August 5th** (11.00 am German time / 13.00 pm Muscat time) via Zoom. An invitation will follow.
- Period of time for the virtual internship: **August 9th to September, 9th 2020.**

Requirements for students of GUtech:

- Fast internet connection and ability to work from home.
- Regular online meetings with RWTH-supervisor are mandatory.
- Workload of 40 hours per week.
- Internship report/presentation, as required by each GUtech department, to be submitted to the internship coordinator (of the concerned department) after September 9th

Advantages:

- Opportunity to gain practical experience and new scientific insights.
- Certificate will be issued after completion of all requirements.
- Acquire internship credits as required by your curriculum.
- Intercultural experience and meetings with "E-Buddies" from Aachen.
- Potential for follow-up activities after the Corona pandemic.



For questions about the content of the internship, kindly contact your direct RWTH-supervisor. For questions regarding your curriculum, kindly contact your Head of Department. Contact for coordination at RWTH Aachen University: stefan.diederich@zhv.rwth-aachen.de


Flyer




Projects and supervisors were gathered and a support program developed by the International Office of RWTH in preparation for the Virtual Internships.


Virtual Internships

Realization


 Each student or pair of students received a topic from a supervisor of RWTH to work on

 Timeline:


- Start: 9th of August
- End: 9th of September
- Workload of 40h/per week

 Supervising structure:

- 2 x / Week: Meeting with supervisor via Zoom
 - Content: Project
- 1 x / Week: Meeting with buddy via Zoom
 - Content: Studying in Germany, Other Problems

 Deliverables

- Report for supervisor at RWTH
- Final Report for supervisor at GUtech in order to get credits for the internship



 Project examples:

- Sensor package development
- Web-based application
- Matlab based modelling

 ***Students worked on individual projects which were supervised by RWTH research associates from various faculties.***

Virtual Internships

Results

-  In total 11 students of GUtech participated
 - 1 Logistics
 - 1 International Business and Tourism Management
 - 6 Mechanical Engineering & Computer Science
 - 1 Applied Geoscience
 - 2 Process Engineering
-  Feedback:
 - Feedback of RWTH supervisors to evaluate the intern's performance
 - Informal feedback of interns to their supervisors

- Overall very positive feedback from the interns regarding projects and supervision
- Announcement to start of internship was on short notice
 - Not all students who would have liked to take part where able to do so
 - Students could have been better prepared better for the projects
- More precise task description makes remote work easier for students

Overall the Virtual Internships were well received by GUtech students and strengthened the relationship between the two universities.

Lessons Learned



Organization

- Start planning procedure sooner and advertise more
- Establish a selection procedure
- Define roles and responsibilities for supervisors and students and communicate them
- Establish a more elaborated support program for more intercultural exchange
- Communicate the benefits more clearly



Projects

- Be more precise in the task description for the projects
- Make software requirements a distinctive part of the task description
- Design projects in context of different educational background

Virtual Internships should be integrated in a coherent concept as part of the potential next project funded by the DAAD in order to address the lessons learned.

Thank you for your attention!

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