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

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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 GUtech and RWTH

- **Foundation of GUtech** 2006
- **Move into first buildings** 2007
- **1st collaboration project between GUtech and RWTH funded by DAAD**
  - Focus: Quality Management System
  - 2007
- **2nd collaboration project between GUtech and RWTH funded by DAAD**
  - Focus: Program Development
  - 2012
- **3rd collaboration project between GUtech and RWTH funded by DAAD**
  - Focus: Quality Improvement & Strengthen Partnership
  - Step2Future
  - 2017
- **10th Year Anniversary** 2017
- **Students:** 2350
- **Departments:** 5
- **Bachelor programs:** 8
- **Master programs:** 5
- **Move into first buildings** 2007
- **10th Year Anniversary** 2017
- **2012**
- **2017**
- **2020**
- **2021**
- **4th project nexSTEP (application pending)**
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 were 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 GUtech students faced a situation where they may have to prolong their studies with funding being unsecured. Virtual Internships were offered to help those students.
Virtual Internships

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

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.
Virtual Internships

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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