

— Integra: Promotion of career orientation and civil society involvement for international students

Background and objectives

International and refugee students bring diverse experiences and perspectives to lecture halls, thus enriching learning and teaching at German universities. However, they also face special challenges that limit their contact with local students and the local population, their success in their studies and their prospects of remaining in Germany. Many international and refugee students report difficulties in establishing contacts with local students and people outside the university. They have a significantly higher dropout rate and rarely stay in Germany after graduation to take up a profession here (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018, Apolinarski/Poskowski 2013).

With the DAAD-funded Integra project Promotion of career orientation and civil society involvement for international students, the Center for Key Qualifications (Zentrum für Schlüsselqualifikationen, ZfS) at the University of Freiburg supports international and refugee students by offering vocational orientation, activating career-relevant networks and acquiring key competencies for their transition to the job market.

ZfS offers all students at the University of Freiburg a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary and needs-oriented range of courses with a high practical component. Professional orientation, interdisciplinary and practice-oriented teaching formats and the acquisition of essential key competencies are central components of the ZfS teaching concept. Through a network of experts from the university, business and society, it creates direct contact with a wide range of professional fields in the region. Strength-oriented and competence-promoting teaching-learning environments offer a suitable context in small and interdisciplinary groups.

Contents and core elements

Core elements of the project are courses on strength-based career orientation and the opportunity for civil society involvement in the cross-faculty Service Learning program of the university.

In the **strength-based career orientation**, students reflect and analyze their individual strengths, qualifications, competencies, values, interests and career ideas. The knowledge and exploration of their own strengths are deepened in peer coaching groups and concretized for the transition to the job. In addition to social contacts, the necessary sharpening of one's own strength profile is thus developed. This is the basis for establishing contact with potential employers, orientation and entry into suitable professional fields.

Service Learning offers students the opportunity to become actively involved in shaping society while they are still studying at the University of Freiburg. In direct cooperation with associations, social or political institutions, students develop personal, methodological and professional competencies. In accompanying workshops and in small group counseling (supervision), students reflect on their effectiveness and try out new knowledge directly in practice. They establish contacts with fellow students and people in social and political institutions. The latter act not only a space of experience for democratic participation, but also potential employers.

Target groups

The offers are aimed at all international and refugee students who are enrolled at the University of Freiburg.

Timeline

October to December 2020

- Analysis of the target group(s) and their needs, including the target group itself as well as experts and cooperation partners within and outside the University of Freiburg, including existing and potential cooperation partners from civil society

December 2020 to March 2021

- Target group and needs-specific further development or new conception of existing offers for strength and professional orientation as well as opportunities for engagement within the framework of service learning, taking diversity/heterogeneity into account

April to July 2021

- Piloting of the offers including individual consulting and support of the participating students, peer support/coaching
- Evaluation of the pilot

August and September 2021

- Revision of the offers and integration into the existing program of the Founding Academy and Service Learning at ZfS

Contact

Dr. Markus Strauch

Strength-based career orientation for international students

Tel. +49 (0)761/203-67818

Fax +49 (0)761/203-5211

markus.strauch@wb.uni-freiburg.de

Julia Kolbinger

Service Learning for international students

Tel. +49 (0)761/203 9473

Fax +49 (0)761/203 9472

julia.kolbinger@zfs.uni-freiburg.de

References

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