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Country of Origin: Pakistani

Completed SIA: 2017

Current Position: Project Specialist, BASF Germany

I started the SIA program in October 2013 with a focus on International Agribusiness and Development Economics and I finished my degree in October 2017. Obviously, it took me double the time to earn my degree than the two years that are anticipated in the program regulations. The reason for this delay is simple. I had to work to finance my studies. Though stressful at the time and often frustrating, particularly the fact that my part-time job required me to speak German would payoff later.

Coming from Pakistan I am accustomed to struggle but as I finished my degree and got a job at BASF, a well-known internationally operating company, for the first time I had the feeling of stability and relief. The day I got the interview call was a true milestone in my life. Currently, I am working in a startup group which focuses on the development of potential future businesses. I am a project manager and my task is to identify business potential in various sectors including agriculture and agricultural engineering. That means preparing feasibility reports, defining projects and supervise their successful execution.

How did I get there? From my experience even though working in an international group, a certain level of German language is definitely helpful. It allows you to quickly integrate in your group and you can communicate with you colleagues without causing unpleasant and awkward moments. If people are hesitant to come to you because you only speak English, it will decrease your chances of growth in the company. German is a difficult language, I know! Here are some tips that worked very well for me: When I worked part time during my studies, I had to leave the comfort zone of Pakistani or international (English-speaking) friends and I was forced to speak German. I also tried to make as many German friends as possible and I started to watch German TV. Finally, I invested in some language courses to get grammar and pronunciation right (at least to a certain degree).

I got my job after doing a five months internship and I think, this is probably the smoothest way to find permanent employment. I would recommend starting as early as possible to look for internships maybe already after the 2nd semester. To some extent I was lucky as I just started applying after I graduated. However, the pressure then is much higher and the 18 months of the job-search visa can go by quickly. Some tips for the internship or job application and the interviews: Prepare your CV (especially for international students) for cooperate standards. Your home country might have other customs in terms of how to format and what to write in a CV. If you are unsure ask German students or use the career service of the university. When you get an interview, try to speak in German. Even if you have to switch to English later, it will increase your selection chances and makes a good impression. Finding a master thesis in a company is also a way to get to know a company and to position yourself for later employment.