Q&A: Web seminar career planning

1. What is the average salary for mandatory internships?
   - Unfortunately, we cannot give a precise number. It depends on what kind of field you are doing an internship in. In technical environments for example, engineering and software development, you usually get the minimum salary of 1500€ or higher if the skills are really in demand. Thus, it is decisive in what kind of field you work in. For instance, if you are working in the marketing domain, you often get a much lower salary of maybe a few hundred euros to get started with. It really depends on the company, the field you are working in and of course also the company's size. Corporates tend to pay a higher salary than start-ups or smaller companies but that doesn't mean that this will give you the better learning experience.

2. Could we continue our studies during the semester of internship?
   - If it is a mandatory six-months internship and it is full-time that usually means that you won't get to take classes or courses while you're doing the internship. However, you may be able to maintain your student status which means that you don't need to pay a higher health insurance if you are doing a mandatory internship. Doing a voluntary internship is different because in that case if you are signing up for a full-time work, it will change the focus and you will probably lose your student status which will lead you to pause your studies. A lot of students also try to do internships in the lecture free period to have the opportunity to keep the student status and not take a break from their studies. This depends however on how long the internship is and how you can plan your classes.

3. What do you suggest for networking or creating a network in the case of PhD candidates to find a job after their doctoral title?
   - The following recommendation can be applicable for everyone, not just PhD candidates. For networking in Germany as a PhD student you could try for instance to reach out to alumni of the university. You can also talk to the professors and colleagues you are working with and ask them if they have any kind of recommendation for you. This is a case where every kind of environment, networking is a key. In the PhD environment, you often have the chance to network with people on conferences. You could also check what kind of jobs you are interested in and see if the university has any kind of alumni that are working there. For that, linkedIn is helpful because when you look up companies and look up the company page you usually see if there are any contacts of persons who studied at the same university as you did and you could reach out to them. Also, if you are aiming more for a job in the research environment, you could try to go to colleagues, conferences and do research on the latest news or papers that were published in your field of interest and reach out to the persons who successfully published stuff in this environment. You can also connect with these publishers and follow them on linkedIn. It is a bit up to you to find the right channel but even just sending a linkedIn request and trying to follow these persons may already turn out as something helpful in the future since it is not always about having a direct interaction with them, sometimes following is already efficient.

4. If mandatory internship is not a part of my study, can I still apply for it?
   - It depends on what is written in the job ad. If the job ad specifically says that you need to do a mandatory internship, then it will be very difficult for you to get this internship position. Therefore, we always recommend looking on what is specifically written in the job ad. If you are really excited about the internship position although it says it is a mandatory internship, before applying, reach out to the recruiter and maybe ask them if it would still be possible to be considered as a candidate. This is because with for instance Corporates and medium sized companies, they often have an advanced planning of their budget, and they usually will not be able to accommodate a change of budget or registration of a non-student intern. So, it's helpful to ask in advance if you apply for this kind of positions since it may save you some time when you ask beforehand.

5. Do I generally have better chances if I include a photo in the CV?
   - It depends and there are many different opinions about that. Most of the candidates' profiles in Germany come with a photo and of course that makes it a bit more personal. Since finding a job is not just about the technical skills that you bring, it may be helpful to have a photo, but it is also completely fine not to use one if you don't feel compatible with it. This is really something personal, if you have a good photo that looks professional and you feel comfortable with it, then use it. If you don't have a good photo or generally don't feel comfortable with that then don't use one. It will not be the decisive factor for your application.

6. Regarding the photo, does it have to be a professional application photo ("Bewerbungsfoto") or could it be a normal photo like the one used in the passport?
   - If you use a photo, it has to be professional. So, the one used on passports don't really work out since they are usually very static pictures with biometric measures, for example not smiling. If you use a photo, it should be a professional one but it doesn't have to mean that you have to go to a professional photographer, you could also try to take one at home with a friend and just use a neutral background. Nowadays with the advanced Smartphones, you can take quite good pictures and come up with your own photo. But if you use one it must be a professional one that is also in line with the company's culture that you are aiming for. For instance, if you are aiming for a very formal environment, it would be good to have formal wear whereas if it is a start-up, you can wear something more casual.

7. What if the German language is a requirement, can I write the CV and cover letter in English or is better to prepare it in German?
   - The rule of thumb is the following: You need to apply in the language that was used in the job ad. If the job was published in German language, it is worth it to apply in German language. If you apply in English language in that case, most of the times your application will not be successful because you don't know if the person on the other end actually speaks English or there is a reason that they advertised it in German language. This also applies even though when the ad says that fluent English is a requirement.

8. What if there is a gap on my CV caused by sickness or if I traveled for one year for instance?
   - Normally, this is not a problem but make sure to include an explanation in your cover letter if it is a longer gap of more than a few months.

9. Do I mention the projects that we have done in a previous organization or company in the work experience section, or should I put it in a separate category?
   - It's mostly up to you and depends on the projects. If it's a project that was in a collaboration with a company, you can list it under work experience, but you can also list it in education or additional projects. It depends on what the environment was like. If it was more like based on the study environment, then list it as project separately or in the education category. It is also a matter of what else you have on your CV. We recommend this especially for people who haven't done a lot of work yet and haven't had job positions in a company so far.

10. I'm studying and looking for a full-time job in chemical engineering and in a few days, there is a digital career mobility day. How can I speak professionally to these companies to get a job? Do we have a chance in such events in general?
    - Well, it's a bit challenging to answer that in short. We cannot tell you how exactly you will be getting a job in the end, but I think the main part is how to approach people at the career fare. What you can do in general would be to attend the event and then reach out to people you found interesting on linkedIn afterwards. You can send them a connection request and write that you met/saw them, listened to them, connected with them or whatever on this particular career fare, and follow them. Don't expect any answer but just connect with them because often jobs are shared in the personal network. Unfortunately, in Germany we are not that open to what's connecting you

with everyone so it's easier if you have a point of reference. This is the first thing you can do. The rest depends on the structure of the career fare. If there is a room for having direct conversations with persons, then look up companies that you are interested in, maybe check what they have to offer, go through the list of companies and pick out a few. See what these companies have to offer in general and prepare a few questions. For example, If you are looking for internships, you could check out their websites and see if they have internships to offer and if not, you could ask the person if they have anything coming up or what are good ways or prerequisites to get an internship with them. Pick out companies you find interesting and prepare questions that you can ask. That's better than just asking if they have any job offers or something. What companies like here is if you are well prepared and very precise about what you are looking for because they can then provide you with better help. So, maybe have a clear understanding of what kind of positions you are looking for, what kind of department you are interested in and what kind of work, then ask them if there is anything that they could help you with.

11. Concerning the job interview, what is expected in general as an answer to the question "what are your weaknesses?"?
    - If you get a question like this, the main aim behind it is to figure out if you are a person who has a good self-reflection skills and wether you are able to figure out what your weaknesses are and learn and develop yourself. Whenever you answer a job interview question, you have to keep in mind why the interviewer is asking this question and then you need to provide an answer. The goal here would be to figure out if you have an ability to learn and if you are aware of your weaknesses or maybe if you have managed to overcome them in the past. Thus, to answer a question like this, come up with a real weakness you had in the past and that you managed to deal with. Another good answer would always be lack of German language skills, it's not a personal weakness but it's still a good answer. The answer is up to you just think of something that fits your personality and not something random.

12. If someone has an average grade which is not very good, do you think they should still mention it in the CV or leave out?
    - It depends on where you are applying and what kind of jobs you are applying for. So, in some environments the average grade is more important than in others. For instance, consulting companies really pay a lot of attention to your final grade but for general corporates not so much or not all of them. You could leave it out but also 2.4 or 2.5 is not the worst average grade and it would also be okay to include it. If you are applying for a consulting job or any kind of a high-performance environments, leave it out. For other environments it would be okay to include but you don't have to. Normally, the final grade is not always being considered. What matters more are your general skills and previous experience. The average grade is more like a general understanding if did you pass your studies, how successful you were and maybe they will take a look at certain classes you attended because you don't have to be good at everything, just at the stuff that is relevant for them. So, don't worry about that too much, you don't have to have a minimum average grade.

13. Is it recommended to do a creative CV or better stick with the classical German form?
    - Nowadays, it is better to avoid a creative CV because it might lead to issues when scanning the data that's mentioned there and may mess up the readability of the data. There is only one exception for jobs in the marketing or design environment where it may probably be good to showcase your skills. However, for all other domains stick with a simpler CV and make sure you have some design elements.

14. Is it bad to have my CV more than 2 pages long?
    - It is recommended to stick with 2 pages because the usual time that the HR need to read the CV is sometime only 30 sec and if necessary 3-4 minutes. The only exception is for research jobs. This is the only case where a third page is allowed to list your papers, publication, or research projects.

15. What about the question in the interview about the salary, specifically for mandatory internships? Should we avoid answering the question, say an amount of money or how should we behave in this situation?
    - Normally, internship interviews will not end up in a negotiation situation. In most of the cases the companies have a fixed budget or a fixed salary framework for internships and there are hardly any cases where you will negotiate from my personal point of view. If this is the case, probably if you are applying for a start-up somewhere, I would first do online research e.g., check kununu or glassdoor and see if they have any information on internships salary. That will give you a general understanding that you can take as a basis. If you think that you need to negotiate, try to come up with a reference point online. If you cannot find anything about the company, maybe you can find information about companies in the same domain or of a similar size and figure out how much they pay for the same location because that is also a factor that influences your salary since cities have different cost of living. In However in general for internships, most of the cases you will not have that much of an opportunity to negotiate.

16. How can I improve my German language skills?
    - For this, come to us, the Info Service Center, we can give you many tips. We also have our FAQ section on our website where you can find online German courses for free, and we can also give you tips on where to have more practice.

17. What is my chance to get a job with zero years of experience?
    - Experience doesn't necessarily have to be employment, it can also be voluntary work, work in a student association or student projects. Try to think of other examples of your professional skills as mentioned above. You can also list some Classes you have attended separately to add some value to your CV and highlight that you do have the skills the company needs.
    - Regarding your chances to get a job with zero experience it really depends on your background and is difficult to answer. For example, if you have a profile as a software developer and you have skills that are really in high demand, then I think you will find a job even if you have zero experience. But if you are maybe from the business domain and you have zero experience, then it is important to still give them an understanding that you have been doing some projects and that you have some soft skills as well. Thus, try to look for projects because then it would be a bit more challenging to find a job. However, this doesn't mean that you are not going to find something, there is always a good fit somewhere and a job that is suitable to your profile, it just may take more time. In the end we all start at somewhere, it just makes it easier if you have some previous experiences. [SEP]

18. Can I apply for more positions in one company? Would you recommend like creating three different cover letters and then adapting them or how would you manage this?
    - You would need to adapt the cover letter a bit because it is a different position. In general, try to avoid applying for more than 2 or 3 positions in the same company especially if it's a very small or medium sized company because it will probably be confusing for them, and you don't want to give them the impression that you just want any kind of jobs. They always want to have this picture that you are really aiming for specific positions.

19. Should we include our hobbies in the resume like playing sports or reading? Does it have any impact on the CV? If yes in which section should we add them?
    - Nowadays, it only makes sense if it adds more value to your CV. That means if you a have a special hobby, you are good at a certain kind of sports or if it's something that makes you stand out as a candidate, even if it's not related to your work at all, list it. However, if it's something very generic like reading books or meeting with friends then it doesn't really add value to your profile. However, you can say for example instead of reading books what kind of books you like to read or you can say for cooking what kind of food you like to cook so that it's interesting. You should always think about the aim of it and what you are trying to achieve. The aim here would be to maybe spark a conversation about something that is not related to your job. Since at

the end you are talking to a human being in the job interview and a lot of the decision is also taken based on soft skills, personal values, company culture fit etc. and not only your skills, it could be good to include some hobbies to spark a conversation.