

Joint Skills Enhancement Program

Summer Semester 2024

The joint interdisciplinary and intercultural program
for master's-level students from the two universities

University of Ghana—University of Bonn



Communication in an International Team:

Listening – Sharing – Understanding

Communication patterns across a team are crucial for its success. This applies just as much to research groups in science and project groups in business as it does to sports teams. Collaborating in international and virtual teams poses a particular challenge.

We are extremely pleased to have come up with the Joint Skills Enhancement Program, as it offers participants the opportunity to gain experience working precisely in such a team environment. In 2024, fifteen master's students from the University of Ghana and the University of Bonn studied

together virtually for a period of two months. Working as a team, they acquired knowledge about principles in project management, studied communication basics and discussed their experiences in dealing with different cultures in-depth.

However, what was it that made the joint learning experience so appealing? Communicating with each other—all participants in one group or dedicated sub-teams—would certainly be at the top of the course favorites list. Those moments, when participants shared details about their

studies and career, their social background; when they talked about their exposure to different cultures so far, their wishes and goals, i.e. when they actually got to know more about the person behind the Zoom tiles. While the set-up was not always ideal due to slow or faulty internet connections that sometimes made communication slightly difficult, participants were committed and returned to the course to pick up where they had left it the week before. Participants reflected on stereotypical thinking about other cultures while emphasis was put on the qualities each person has.

The Joint Skills Enhancement Program served as the platform for studying and communicating in an international team. We hope that participants' experience working in international teams will continue to be positive. We wish them luck and success in the future!



Christine Müller

University of Bonn

Head of Section International Students and Study Programs



Professor Edward Nketiah-Amponsah

University of Ghana

Scientific Coordinator



A stable partnership offers space for joint learning

The University of Ghana and the University of Bonn have a strategic partnership in place connecting the two institutions on multiple academic levels, promoting joint research projects, academic dialogue between researchers of various disciplines and student exchanges. In 2024 the virtual study room opened for the third time for use by fifteen master's-level students from the two universities.

The program offered:

- Access to an exclusive qualification program with no enrollment fee
- Workshops conducted exclusively in English
- Academic competency and soft skill enhancement
- Experienced, highly qualified trainers
- Africa & Europe: Expanding students' learning radius from home base
- A change of perspective to cultivate intercultural competency
- Important international networking at an early academic stage

The Lecturers



**Professor Felix
Ankomah Asante**



**Professor Margaret
Ivy Gyan**



Dr. Jan Schmidt



Berit Stoppa

Program Contents

INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS AND EXCHANGE

Course instructor: Berit Stoppa

MAY 31, JUNE 14, JULY 26

The training on intercultural awareness and exchange offered basic knowledge of cultural dimensions and intercultural communication as well as opportunities to get to know fellow Ghanaian/German students and each other's academic everyday life by a mix of inputs, individual and group work, discussions, and reflection activities.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Course instructor: Dr. Jan Schmidt

JUNE 7, 21, JULY 5

The course introduced basic tools, e.g. milestones, phases, gantt diagrams and resources. The conception, planning and execution of projects were discussed – the link to practice was always created. Participants learned e.g. to set goals, to derive realistic tasks and to deal with project risks.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Course instructor: Prof. Margaret Ivy Gyan

JULY 12, 19

The course taught participants to understand the fundamental principles underpinning various aspects of communication: personal, interpersonal, group (business, organisational) and mass communication. It addressed the processes of communication and skills needed for effective communication.

NEXT ACADEMIC STEPS: PHD

Insights into Prof. Felix Ankomah Asante's personal experience in Ghana and Germany

JUNE 28

Prof. Asante shared his personal experiences from nearly three decades in academia and research, focusing on insights from Ghana and Germany. He emphasized the role and importance of mentorship in achieving success. Additionally, Prof. Asante provided valuable lessons on enhancing chances for PhD admission and funding, while also highlighting potential career opportunities.

THE STUDENTS

Kamala Bharathi Ramalingam

Immunobiology
University of Bonn



Joana Baaku

Geography and Resources
University of Ghana

“It is a new knowledge and understanding of good management of projects. I’m excited to apply it in my career.”



Emmanuel Kofi Turkson

Political Science
University of Ghana

“The program allowed me to appreciate the cultural dimensions of my colleagues within and outside Ghana.”



Portia Addison

Climate Change and Sustainability Studies
University of Ghana

“I really enjoyed the exchange and meeting new people from different cultures. Everyone was very nice and easy to talk to. We had a great and tight-knit community atmosphere.”



Vanessa Schulz

Astrophysics
Universität of Bonn

Sonia Tesfaye Abebe

Dependency and Slavery Studies
University of Bonn

“It has enhanced my skills primarily in communication, project management, choosing a career path. In addition, it has made me to be more tolerant.”



Queenly Serwaa Agyapong

Economics
University of Ghana

“The course was insightful and very detailed. Great instructors!”



Joshua Edem Atinyo

Computer Science
University of Ghana

Elvis Kafui Goku Adorkor

Business Analytics
University of Ghana



Stefan Schulz

Computer Science
University of Bonn

“I liked the atmosphere with the teachers and students, it was very open and a safe place to discuss various questions and situations.”

JOINT SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM



Nkemakonam Naomi Ukatu

Geography of Environmental
Risk and Human Security
University of Bonn



Grace Gyeng

Educational Leadership and Management
University of Ghana

“This lesson was wealth to me and I’m certain will take me a long way in engaging effectively with people around me”



Lekshmipriya Nair

Economics
University of Bonn

5 Questions to Berit Stoppa

Part of the Joint Skills Enhancement Program team from the very start in an advisory role, Berit Stoppa helped to develop and optimize the concept, drawing on her own experience working in Ghana. With her Intercultural Awareness and Exchange workshop set at the core of each round, she accompanied a group from program start to finish and was able to observe progress made.



Berit Stoppa

YOU WERE INVOLVED IN ALL THREE ROUNDS TRAINING THE GROUPS, FROM PROGRAM KICK-OFF TO THE END. DID YOU NOTICE A RECURRENT THEME, SOMETHING YOU CAME ACROSS IN ALL THREE GROUPS?

The motivation to get to know students from across the world was palpable throughout. Everyone agreed that conversations with the other students provided precious insights, irrespective of whether or not a specific topic (e.g. project management) was of particular and further interest to them. The exchange was deemed exciting and of great benefit to nearly every participant.

DID YOU NOTICE ANY CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR OR ATTITUDE AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS AFTER THE TRAINING?

The further into a session we got, the more willing to speak openly in front of the group students became in many cases, especially at the end of the program. They addressed some of the topics (e.g. a question on post-colonial aspects) on purpose toward the end, most likely because they had got to know each other better. It seemed to me that students were more inclined to make controversial statements during the third session, at least some of them.

THE FEEDBACK PARTICIPANTS SHARED WAS ALWAYS FANTASTIC. DO YOU REMEMBER SOME FEEDBACK THAT YOU DID NOT EXPECT OR THAT IMPACTED YOUR SUBSEQUENT TRAININGS?

Toward the end of the training, one student told me that the activities and tasks had helped her massively to speak and open up in front of a group. This very personal feedback is one among several that I do cherish. Every feedback is great and always most welcome!

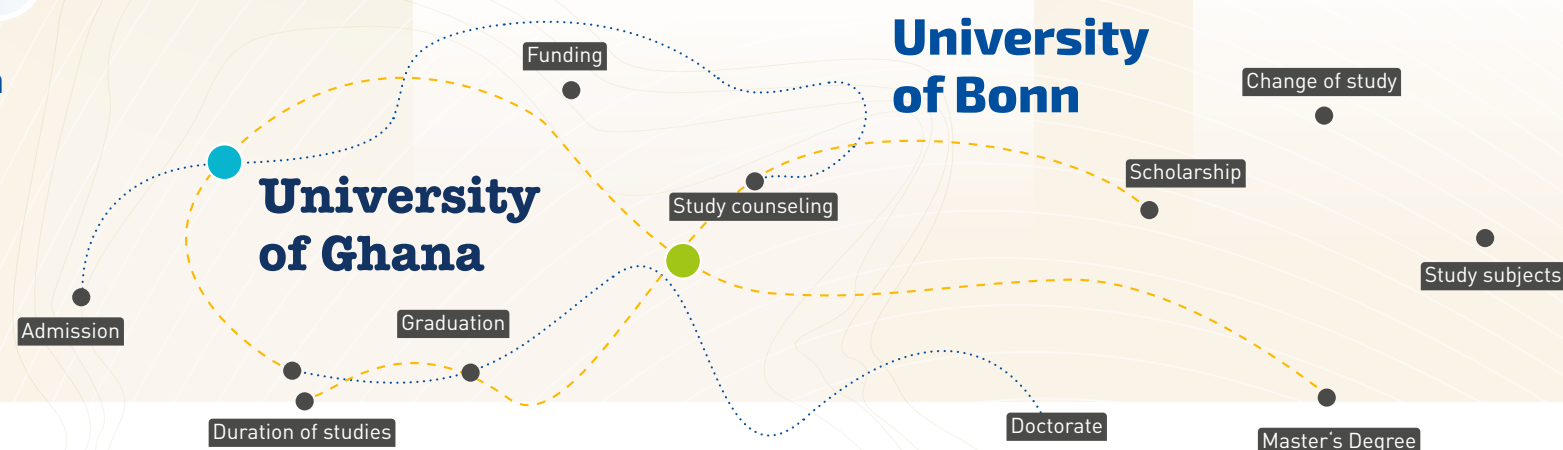
WHAT WERE YOUR THOUGHTS ON HOLDING THE TRAINING IN A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM (ZOOM)? DID THE VIRTUAL SET-UP MAKE IT EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT TO SHARE AND COMMUNICATE? AFTER ALL, THERE WAS A FAIR AMOUNT OF TECHNICAL CHALLENGES.

While trainings held online are different to those face-to-face, by now only few participants deem them challenging—mainly due to technical issues. Of course, exchange at a personal level is only possible to a very limited extent in that setting. Many of the students, however, appreciate this opportunity. Otherwise they would struggle to get to know their peers from the other university and fit in 3.5 hours in their busy schedules.

FOOD IS ALWAYS A WONDERFUL TOPIC TO TALK ABOUT, IN ANY COUNTRY. TO ROUND OFF THE TRAINING, YOU INVITED EVERYONE TO A VIRTUAL LUNCH. WHICH DISHES IMPRESSED YOU THE MOST?

They were all special in their own way: the spontaneously improvised ones such as the orange sitting on the student's desk that was quickly turned into a special dish by way of a funny anecdote. Equally, however, I fondly remember the dishes that some students had taken the time to plan and then prepare since early morning. Some people also went out to buy something, there was a bit of everything. Jollof rice, potato salad, waakye, chapati, sandwiches, onigiri—and that is only a small selection of what students presented. It was a truly great closing session every time!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE INTERVIEW!





Strategic Partners

The University of Bonn and the University of Ghana enjoy a strong and growing partnership.

The University of Ghana, one of Africa's top universities, is renowned for its academic excellence, research in public health, social sciences, and environmental studies, and its commitment to African development. The University of Bonn is a leading German research institution known for its strong focus on innovation and interdisciplinary studies. It excels in fields such as mathematics, economics, agriculture, physics, life and medical sciences. The diversity of collaborations and a strong global network characterize the University of Bonn as an international university of excellence.

In 2021, the University of Bonn and the University of Ghana have established a strong strategic partnership aimed at fostering academic collaboration, research excellence, and knowledge exchange. This partnership, formalized through Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), serves

as the foundation for long-term cooperation between the two institutions. These agreements facilitate joint research projects, student and faculty exchanges, and the development of collaborative academic programs. The collaboration between the University of Bonn and the University of Ghana focuses on addressing pressing global challenges in areas such as climate change, public health, sustainable development, ethics and social sciences. By pooling resources, expertise, and innovative approaches, both institutions aim to contribute to solutions for global issues while strengthening international academic networks.

Through their strategic partnership, the University of Bonn and the University of Ghana are deepening their collaboration, united by a shared commitment to academic excellence, capacity building, and research that makes a meaningful impact on both local and global communities.



**University
of Ghana**

www.ipo.ug.edu.gh

**University
of Bonn**

www.uni-bonn.de