

# Joint Skills

# Enhancement Program

**Summer Semester 2022**

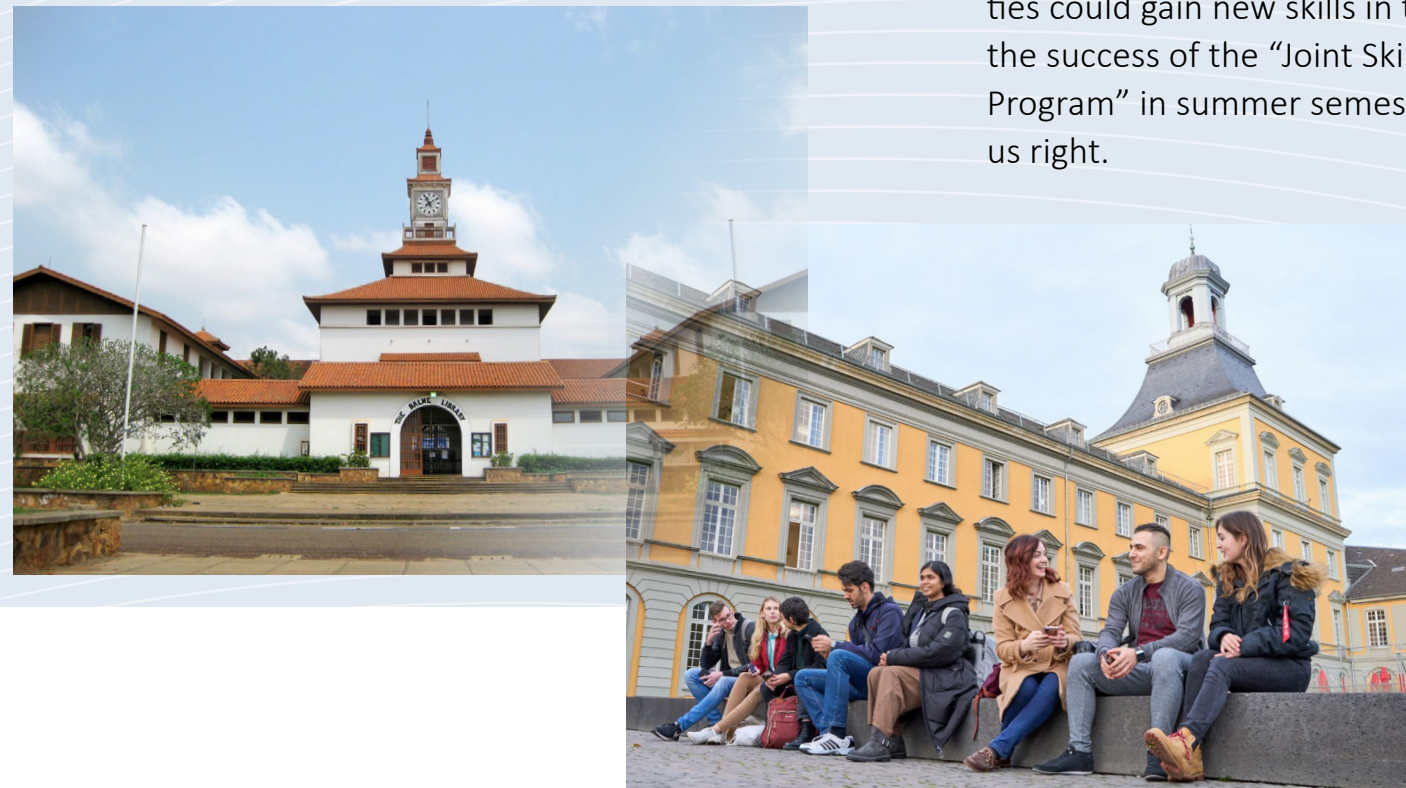
The first joint interdisciplinary and intercultural program  
for master's-level students from the two universities

# Learning without Borders – More Than Just an Idea



Our experiences over the past few years have taught us a lot: we had to adapt our lifestyles and, in some cases, impose severe restrictions on them. Traveling was off the table, and meeting up with people was done in a socially distanced fashion, if at all. A virus is virtually unstoppable... but, happily, so is people's ingenuity when it comes to adapting to this situation.

The partnership between the University of Ghana and the University of Bonn provides ample creative scope for new ideas to emerge and inspiring projects to be launched through dialogue between students and researchers. We did not want this dialogue to be kiboshed by travel restrictions. Instead, we put our heads together and came up with the idea of creating a virtual classroom in which students from both our universities could gain new skills in tandem. And the success of the "Joint Skills Enhancement Program" in summer semester 2022 proved us right.



We were greatly impressed by many things: the openness shown by the participants as they met one another for the first time; their readiness to learn, even at inconvenient times of day; their desire to explore new topics; their resilience in turning up for workshops even during their exam periods; and the way they threw themselves into discussions and debates.

Our thanks go in particular to the highly professional trainers, who were the cornerstones of the Joint Skills Enhancement Program 2022. They bought into the idea right from the start and, through their skills and dedication, succeeded in bringing together

participants from two continents in different time zones and, in some cases, with unreliable Internet connections and meld them into a harmonious group of learners.

We are delighted to present the feedback from the participants and moderators over the next few pages. Their contributions give us the confidence we need to continue this form of dialogue in the future and keep on improving it.



**Professor Edward Nketiah-Amponsah**

University of Ghana

Scientific Coordinator

**Christine Müller**

University of Bonn

Head of Section International Students  
and Study Programs



# Two Continents, One Study Hall

How can you promote student exchange when the world is busy grappling with the fallout from a pandemic? How can students gain experience abroad when the options for air travel are limited at best? How are students expected to enjoy a positive atmosphere for learning when all the good advice seems to be “keep your distance?” These are some of the questions and challenges that we want to tackle using innovative solutions, and the latest developments in digitalization are playing a key role. “Blended learning,” “online lectures,” “hybrid courses” and “COIL” (Collaborative Online International Learning) – these are all concepts that demonstrate how teachers are working hard to develop new formats.

Another key prerequisite for launching new projects is having a stable partnership already in place, such as that between the University of Ghana and the University of Bonn.

In early 2022, planning began for the “Joint Skills Enhancement Program,” skills training geared toward master’s students. Professor Edward Nketiah-Amponsah represented the University of Ghana in his role as scientific coordinator, while the program itself was coordinated by Christine Müller, Head of Section International Students and Study Programs, and Joana Bürger-John from the International Office at the University of Bonn.

The program attracted an impressive level of interest despite a short application window: a total of 123 applicants from 18 countries (37 from the University of Bonn and 86 from the University of Ghana), all competing for a mere 14 places.

## The Joint Skills Enhancement Program – the Basics in Brief

- **Target group:** master’s students, ideally in the second half of their degree program
- **Academic disciplines:** all disciplines
- **Language of instruction:** English

### The program offers:

- 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

## Selected Participants

<b>Joycelyn Kakraba Acquah</b>	Oil and Gas Law
<b>Gideon Adjei-Mawutor</b>	Philosophy
<b>Mawuli Amegah</b>	Industrial-Organisational Psychology
<b>Tom Anders</b>	Geography
<b>Aysu Avci</b>	Economics
<b>David Mauricio Gomez Acuna</b>	Agricultural Science and Resource Management in the Tropics and Subtropics
<b>Jackline Jeruiyot</b>	Seed Science and Technology
<b>Marie Sophie Carine Marx</b>	Geography; Focus on Development and Globalization
<b>Akosuah Pokuaah Obeng</b>	Economics
<b>Michael Ofori Asare</b>	Management and Administration
<b>Helena Rossi</b>	Human Nutrition
<b>Sarah Saidu</b>	Medical Laboratory Science
<b>Kimberley Sarlette</b>	Sociology
<b>Daniel Tarekegn Worede</b>	Global Health Risk Management & Hygiene Policies

## Kick-off Meeting

April 29, 2022

### Welcome and introductory remarks by

<b>Professor Dr. Eric Osei-Assibey</b>	Dean of the International Programmes Office, University of Ghana
<b>Professor Dr. Birgit Ulrike Münch</b>	Vice Rector of International Affairs, University of Bonn
<b>Dr. Katharina Fuchs-Bodde</b>	Director of the International Office, University of Bonn

### Dialogue: Working in partnership – how does it start? A personal example from practice.

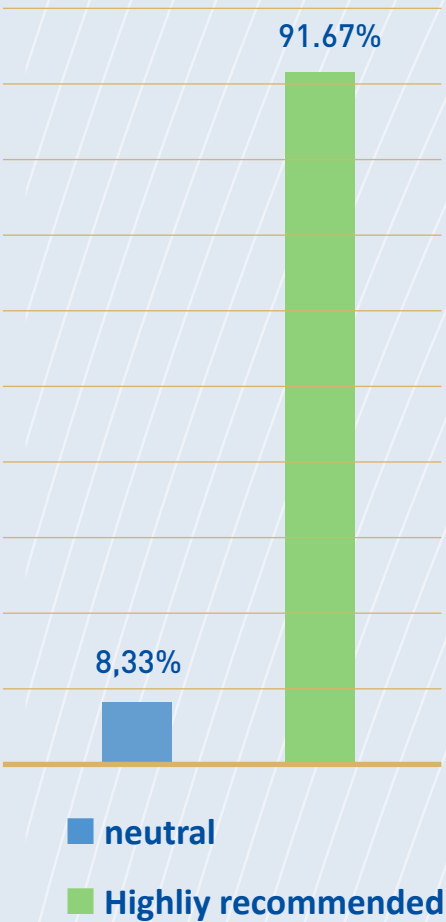
<b>Dr. Wolfram Laube</b>	Center for Development Research, University of Bonn
<b>Dr. Michael Ayamga</b>	University for Development Studies, University of Ghana





## Evaluation

To what extent would you recommend this workshop to potential applicants?



## Program Contents:

### Intercultural Awareness and Exchange

**Course instructor:** Berit Stoppa, April 29, July 28, September 1

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, May 6, 13, 27, June 17, July 6

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.

### Task and Time Management

**Course instructor:** Dr. Jan Schmidt, October 25 or 26

The course addressed the practical dimensions of handling different projects and jobs: How to plan limited time and e.g. prioritize tasks especially in a context where different fields need to be coordinated.

### Effective Communication

**Course instructor:** Prof. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene, June 24, September 23 and 30

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.

### Proposal Writing/Grantsmanship

**Course instructor:** Prof. Felix A. Asante, June 10

This workshop offered insight into how young researchers could develop workable proposals for postgraduate studies especially at the PhD level as well as for funding purposes. Participants were introduced to the key steps in writing effective and fundable proposals including, writing a compelling problem statement and preparation of a simple line-item budget.

### Argumentation in Scientific Writing

**Course instructor:** Gordon N. Fließ, July 8 and 15

The course provided participants with all the techniques they need to know in order to write precise and convincing scientific texts. The course introduced basic concepts of reasoning and logic: validity and soundness of arguments, deductive and inductive reasoning, common types of logical inferences. The participants learned useful techniques for convincing argumentation in scientific texts.

## THE LECTURERS

## JOINT SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

### Dr. Jan Schmidt



#### WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST IMPRESSIVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

To me it was most impressive to see how the students connected beyond the summer school meetings. Some even tried to meet in Kenya(!) Additionally, they communicated via WhatsApp and scheduled smaller meetings to work on tasks. The results proved that they established a good mode of collaboration. It seemed to me that there was no group member left behind but each participant from the cohort was actually integrated in the newly formed group.

#### DID YOU NOTICE ANY SPECIAL CHALLENGES THAT RESULTED FROM THE VIRTUALITY AND INTERCULTURALITY OF THE PROGRAM?

As far as interculturality is concerned, I have learned some important lessons about scheduling meetings and technical issues:

- Breakfast traditions are quite different. In Europe/Germany breakfast seems to take place earlier. Some of our Ghanaian participants are used to having breakfast later the day. This meant that they ran out of power and got hungry during the session. It seems important to me to consider this for further collaboration.
- Some apps/online devices that seem to be internationally established obviously are not. LinkedIn for example is not very popular in Ghana, just like YouTube. Using YouTube regularly in online sessions, I took it for a worldwide phenomenon. Whether due to WiFi problems or just the fact that it is not so popular – using YouTube didn’t work well.

One aspect to consider for further planning is related to having access to stable WiFi. Ghanaian participants frequently had difficulties with their WiFi connection, which meant that they had to switch off their camera or were kicked out of the meeting completely. One consequence of this might be to try new meeting formats: (a) setting up hybrid meetings in rooms provided by the universities where stable WiFi is accessible for all participants or (b) establishing more asynchronous collaboration formats that allow to work more individually. If some of the content is “outsourced” to self-learning formats, meetings can be shorter and more focused on interaction and collaboration.

Besides these experiences, I’m happy to state that the participants met on an equal footing. As a trainer I didn’t perceive a gap between the groups in any respect.

#### WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROGRAM?

Working with one cohort on two different continents was a great experience. Especially realizing that it is possible to establish relationships although the participants didn’t meet in person. I was impressed to see the commitment despite the fact that not everything worked as planned (e.g. technology/WiFi).



Akosua Pokuaah Obeng



Subject of study  
Economics  
Duration of study  
4 semester

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

I began this program with much excitement. It was an opportunity to meet new people I could learn from, and learn new things from the content of the training sessions. Over time, connecting with different people from diverse backgrounds reaffirmed the need for me to be objective and not judge people without getting to know them. I applied knowledge from the various sessions on project management, effective communications, how to structure good arguments and grantsmanship, especially during my academic proposal writing for my thesis.

Aside from the content of these training sessions, I always looked forward to meeting other participants of the program, there was a lot to learn and study from each other. This is a memory to keep, fortunately; we still keep in touch. It would have been a nice experience to meet everyone in person too. With the knowledge acquired on grantsmanship and proposal writing, I believe building upon it will fully equip me for a career in research. I am privileged to have participated in the training.

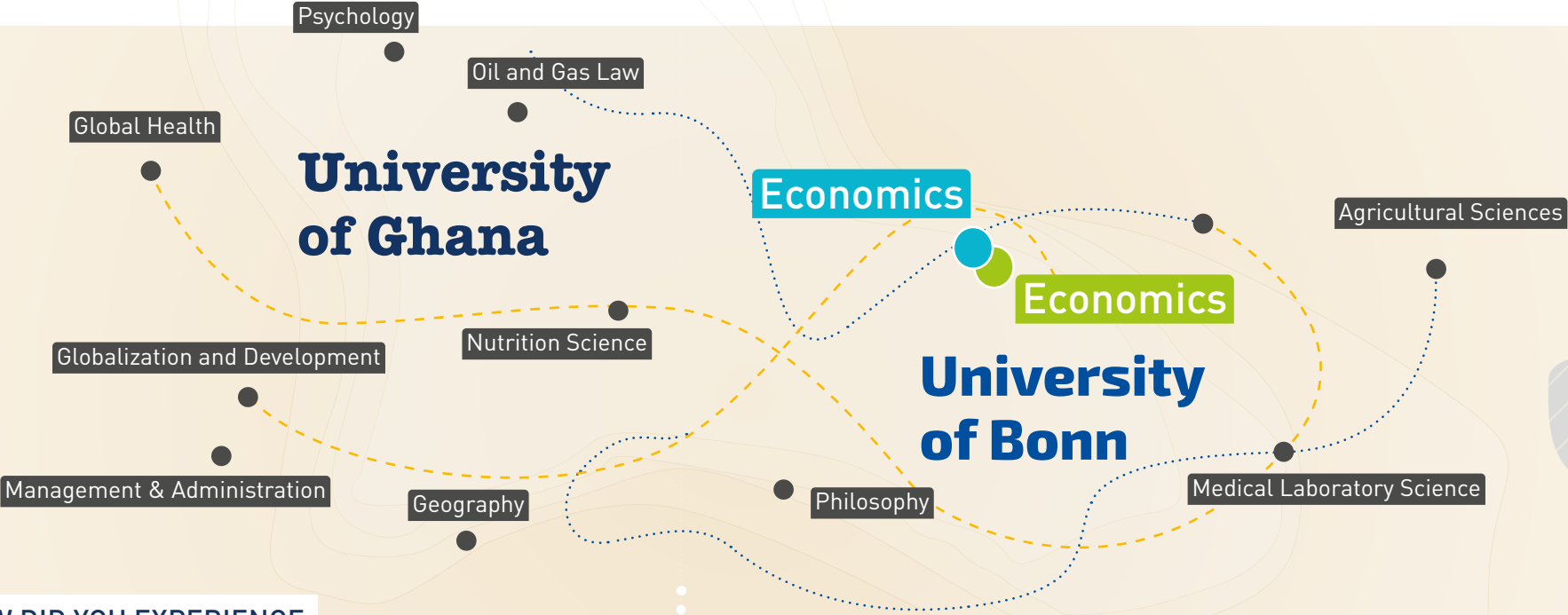
Personal Inspiration  
**The Lord protects the helpless; when I was in danger, he saved me.**  
Psalm 116:6.  
(This reminds me to keep my courage in all circumstances because God will take me through it, it has worked for me so far; career journey and all)

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

I had no unique stereotype about the other country before participating in this program. However, partaking in this program taught me a lot about other cultures. In the likes of food especially, how they use their leisure time, etc. Not only did the part on intercultural exchange enrich the program, but it also made it fun.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- Effective communication can be very rewarding, and therefore everyone should be intentional about communicating effectively with everyone.
- Future participants should be very objective and open-minded. I would gladly recommend the program to my peers.



HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

I was excited to meet with students from different majors and even countries. Due to COVID, my social environment was limited to people from my major and I wanted to meet with students from diverse backgrounds.

I liked the topics selected for this program, and the idea that what I learn in this program will become fruitful in my future academic career motivated me to keep up even though I sometimes had a busy schedule.

I especially enjoyed the opportunity to get to know other students on a personal level, from listening to their academic perspectives to learning about their favorite tunes. The program broadened my perspective and helped me adopt a multicultural academic vision.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

I wasn't holding any stereotypes, but I must admit I also did not know much about the other country.

Even though I didn't get the the chance to meet anyone from the program, the online structure of it made it possible for us to interact.

The intercultural aspect was one of the main reasons I was motivated to join and continue the program.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- The most important lesson I learnt was that thinking outside the box is a skill that can be practiced and applied to intercultural communication or the academic setting.
- I recommend this program to students who would like to exchange ideas in a multicultural and multidisciplinary setting.

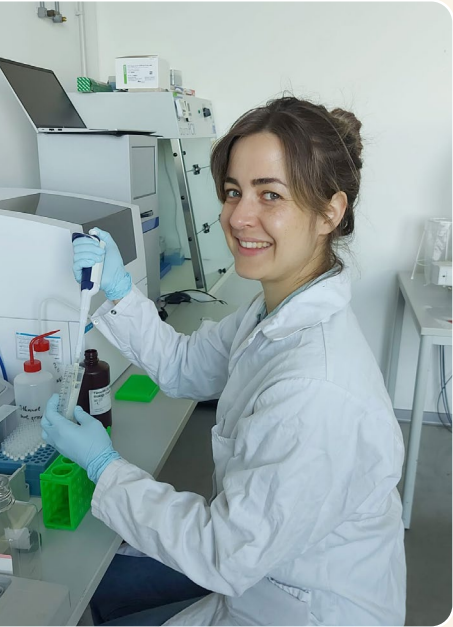
Personal Inspiration  
**Music of Miles Davis**

Aysu Avci



Subject of study  
Economics  
Number of semesters  
5 semester

Helena Rossi



Subject of study  
Nutrition Science

Duration of study  
7 semester

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

First of all, I was very happy I got chosen! I was very excited to meet Ghanaian students and especially to get trained by Ghanaian professors. That was an honor!

It wasn't difficult to stick to the program, because we students and also the teachers were always very motivated. It was a joy to attend!

The most valuable thing for me was the intercultural competence and understanding I gained through the intercultural training provided and the discussions we had among us students about how life is in Ghana in comparison to Germany and what difficulties we faced during our academic careers. It was exciting to learn about similarities and differences among us.

The program was also great for networking. I hope we will stay in touch. It would be so nice to meet in person one day!

3 words: I loved it! And I'd highly recommend to apply.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

For me, the intercultural exchange was the most valuable part. And I also think we learned a lot about each other through our lively discussions.

- My stereotype was kind of confirmed: the relationship between students and professors in Ghana seems different from what it is like in Germany. The form of address and manners were more formal than in Germany.

- The internet connection was mostly very bad on the Ghanaian side, because people were traveling or there was heavy rain.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- Highly recommend! Tip: try to get to know each other via additional Zoom calls. Share music, pictures, conversations.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

Before the program, I was excited to have intercultural dialogues with other participants in Germany to understand studentship from their perspective. The program proved to be that and much more, in my opinion.

During the program, I enjoyed the project management sessions. They provided me with tools to help me improve my project management skills. The sessions on argumentation in scientific writing and proposal writing/grantsmanship positively affected my dissertation writing. I have refined both my writing and my arguments since taking these courses.

This program can best be described as "remarkably entertaining and educative." It has boosted my confidence in communication both written and verbal. I am glad to have been a part of this experience. I recently got a part-time job as a grant writer for a start-up NGO. And it is all thanks to the great training that I received.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

I expected to meet open-minded participants and I must say that my expectations were met. We shared music, fun stories about our countries and towns and even had private Zoom sessions where we got to know each other more. I enjoyed those moments. I wish there had been physical visits as that would have enhanced the experience, especially with regard to food, language and places. These would have helped solidify the intercultural participation as embodiments that were experienced rather than testimonials that were merely heard.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- Some important things I took away from this program were ways of managing my time and communicating (in writing and verbally) and how to present my arguments in a more rigorous manner. I think the sessions on argumentation in scientific writing will help me in my future quest to pursue a PhD program.
- My advice would be to make time for going through what was taught to better assimilate everything. I would really recommend this to my peers. It was a fantastic experience.

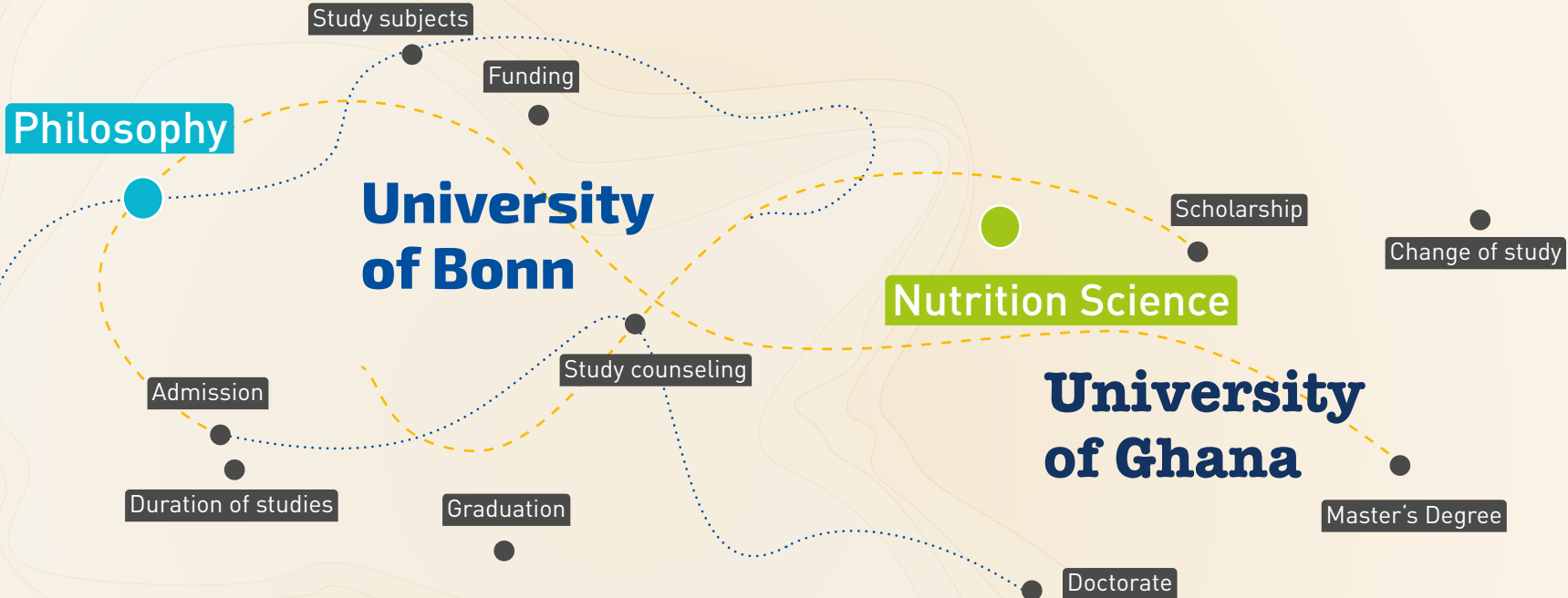


Gideon Adjei-Mawutor

Subject of study  
Philosophy

Number of semesters  
3 semester

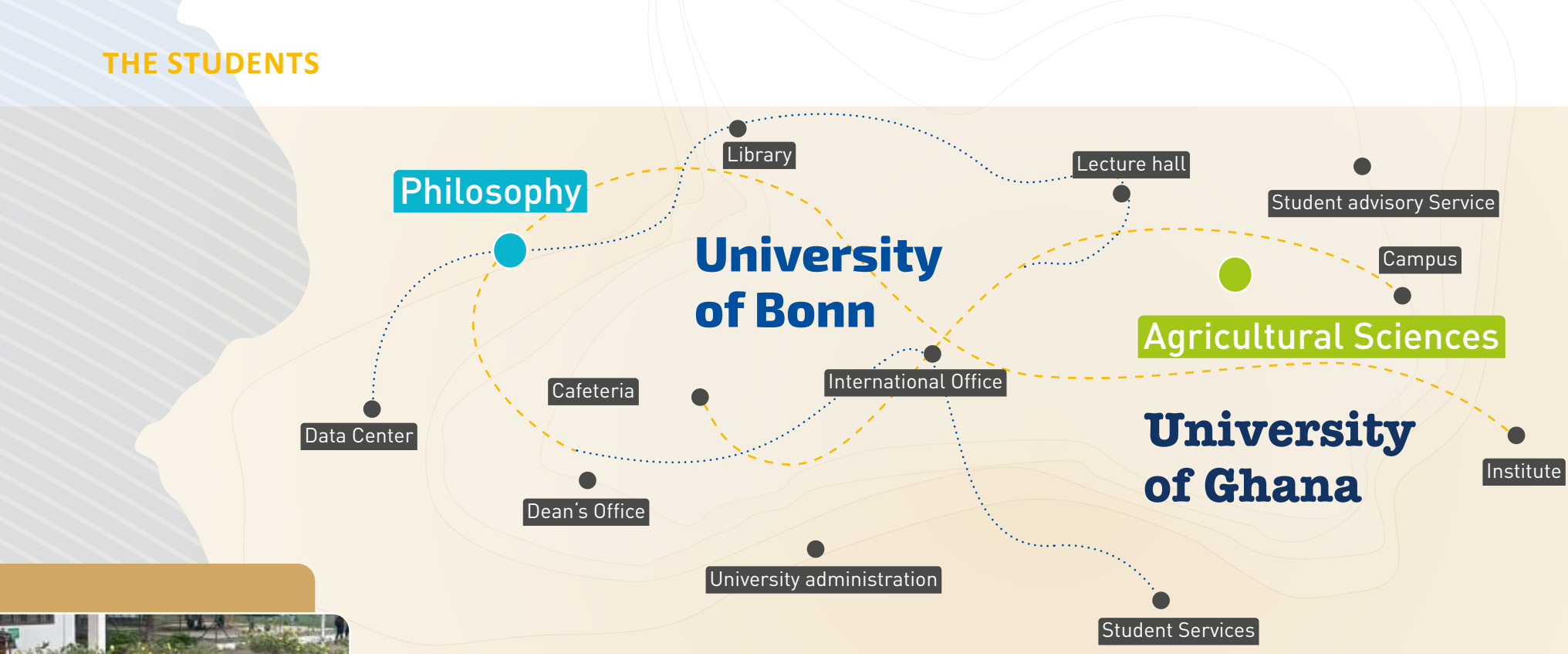
Personal Inspiration  
Everyday trying to achieve a joyful life.



Personal Inspiration  
Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards. – Søren Kierkegaard.

Book which impressed me: The Myth of Sisyphus by Albert Camus.





Jackline Jeruiyot

Subject of study  
Philosophy  
in Seed Science and Technology

Duration of study  
4 semester

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

I was thrilled to be chosen because this was my first summer school experience with students from various nations. I anticipated learning new concepts from them as well as about their way of life and how they approach daily difficulties. Through the course of the program, my fellow students and I developed a bond with our trainers that allowed us to become close. I have benefited significantly from every aspect of the training, which was in line with my expectations. It has really aided my research work.

Personal Inspiration

Better your Best

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

Since we all have the ability to develop independently, regardless of one’s upbringing, my stereotype that different people are exposed to different types of environments proved to be false. We now have a better understanding of how culture affects the various ways in which we communicate, work together, and coordinate thanks to intercultural interaction. This knowledge can be used to help us grasp what is being communicated to us and how we interact with others.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- I’ve learned about cross-cultural communication, project management, time management, and effective communication through the program. The most helpful item for me at this point in the proposal writing process has been proposal writing, grantsmanship, and scientific writing that makes a case. Additionally, I’ve built strong relationships with both my professors and my fellow students.
- I will advise my peers to apply for the program since it will be highly beneficial in both the workplace and our educational environment.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

I thought it was a great opportunity to enhance skills that will be valuable afterwards in a working or research environment. As a joint program, it was appealing in terms of the intercultural and international weight that it gave the partnership between the two universities.

I was positively surprised by the overall program level and the experienced and good speakers and trainers we had. I feel the commitment and the willingness to stick to it. Sometimes the schedule and university exams and workloads made it difficult to attend all the sessions; nevertheless we made the effort. I really liked the structure of the program; I was determined to complete and get the most out of it.

The program helped me in my scientific career. Especially the modules that focused on scientific writing were very useful, as they provided specific advice on how to approach the different kinds of academic texts we encounter throughout our master’s studies.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

I only had positive thoughts on Ghana beforehand. Fortunately, in my semester and in the master’s program, I have shared classes with Ghanaians, which has been a wonderful experience. I find their culture and joy for life really interesting.

Personal Inspiration

Many books I would say, mainly latin american novels: 100 years of Solitude, Love in Time of Cholera, Rayuela. The music by Gustavo Santaolalla is so inspiring to me.

David Mauricio Gomez Acuna



Being in the program with students from Ghana confirmed my thoughts. They are always welcoming and supportive. Their joyfulness and spontaneity is something to admire.

We were fortunate enough to have several nationalities sharing experiences, thoughts and ideas. That surely enriched the program and made the effort even more valuable. Every one of us came from a different background and was raised in a different way, which made this a very fruitful exchange.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- The passion and commitment the trainers demonstrated throughout the program is something I would like to highlight. They inspired us to replicate it and respond in the same way. Project management skills, setting goals, the thought that achieving goals requires good planning, a good use of resources and the right motivation are the things that I am taking away from the program.
- I want to emphasize that this is an opportunity you should not pass up. Every speaker, trainer and expert in the program has an incredible background, and the quality of the lessons and trainings is exceptional.

Subject of study  
Agricultural Sciences  
and Resource Management  
in the Tropics and Subtropics

Number of semesters  
4 semester



## Professor Felix Ankomah Asante



### WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST IMPRESSIVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

I was particularly excited about the diverse backgrounds and nationalities of the participants, who were eager to learn from the experiences of accomplished scholars and practitioners in a virtual setting. The positive feedback from the students on the topic I facilitated (research proposal writing and grantsmanship) inspires me to help build capacity of a young generation of scholars especially in developing countries.

### DID YOU NOTICE ANY SPECIAL CHALLENGES THAT RESULTED FROM THE VIRTUALITY AND INTERCULTURALITY OF THE PROGRAM?

The key challenge had to do with the differences in the academic calendars of the University of Bonn and the

University of Ghana. Some of the Ghanaian students could not participate consistently in the workshop because it coincided with their end of semester examinations. Perhaps, the workshop could be restricted to master's students who have completed their coursework and are writing their thesis to avert this challenge.

### WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROGRAM?

This is an excellent initiative that provided soft skills to the participants from both universities. These skills will prove useful in their job search and quest for further studies, especially for those who may want to pursue a PhD. The workshop has proven that it is possible to bring students from different cultural backgrounds and universities together to study and network in a virtual room.

## Gordon Naninga Fliess



### WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST IMPRESSIVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

One of the most impressive aspects of the program for me was the fact that it allowed me to simultaneously train students from two universities on different continents. And I really appreciated how interested everyone seemed to be in my topic.

The other aspect that impressed me was the innovative spirit to take the shift towards online communication that COVID caused and use it to create something new with a partner university—and something that the students can benefit from, too.

### DID YOU NOTICE ANY SPECIAL CHALLENGES THAT RESULTED FROM THE VIRTUALITY AND INTERCULTURALITY OF THE PROGRAM?

In my personal experience, the only real problems arose from wonky internet connections.

### WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROGRAM?

That I would like to do it again.

## Berit Stoppa



### WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST IMPRESSIVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

The group of participants showed an active and friendly group dynamic and discussions were not only fruitful but also critical sometimes, which enhanced the whole training.

### DID YOU NOTICE ANY SPECIAL CHALLENGES THAT RESULTED FROM THE VIRTUALITY AND INTERCULTURALITY OF THE PROGRAM?

Not all participants had a stable internet connection. Sometimes people were very late for a session and some dropped out on the way. It was still possible to do the training without big hiccups as the group did not seem to have a problem with these changes occurring.

### WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROGRAM?

New intercultural perspectives, insight into current topics discussed on campuses in Accra and Bonn as well as new ideas for future (online) trainings.

## Professor Margaret Ivy Amoakohene



### WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST IMPRESSIVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Most impressive was the reality of a group of students and facilitators from a number of countries and located in two continents to gather in one virtual space to learn and share ideas/experiences. This was unimaginable a few years ago but is now a reality.

### DID YOU NOTICE ANY SPECIAL CHALLENGES THAT RESULTED FROM THE VIRTUALITY AND INTERCULTURALITY OF THE PROGRAM?

As expected, there were a few challenges. These were the usual challenges associated with interculturality and virtuality. As regards interculturality, one had to choose their words, expressions and examples carefully to be

appreciated and understood by all and also to respect the sensibilities of each member of the group. The usual challenges with virtuality, such as lack of concentration and focus of participants, system/internet failures, boredom, reduced interpersonal interactions and excessive workload, were encountered.

### WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROGRAM?

Personally, I found the interculturality and virtuality very useful in general. Without moving out of our various locations, we could assemble together to teach and learn. That was remarkable!



HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

The Joint Skills Enhancement summer school program of the University of Bonn and University of Ghana was very exciting. I acquired both academic and soft skills, knowledge and networks from the participants and the invited professors. Project management, time and task management, grant writing and argumentation and scientific writing were the most interesting sessions of the program. I also liked the sessions on cultural awareness and exchange. The program helps to build a good career profile that increases the chance of being selected for jobs. In a small world networking can play a crucial role, which is exactly what this program is designed for.

Personal Inspiration

We were created purposely, so we have to live with a purpose ...

Daniel Tarekegn Worede

Subject of study

Global Health

Duration of study

4 semester

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

Culture is essential to speak to society. Understanding and respecting each culture and, when necessary, exchanging ideas on it has paramount importance for development and peace. I realized that intercultural exchange is possible through awareness and living together.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- The whole program is important for my future career, specifically project management and grant writing.
- Students who are eligible for this program should not hesitate to apply for it. It benefits your career and creates opportunities for your future through the networks you build with your fellows.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

Before the program

It was actually a mixture of nerves and excitement. The expectation was to meet and learn from experiences of people from diverse backgrounds and also acquire additional skills.

During the program

Every single course has been an added skill that I use constantly. The knowledge acquired has become somewhat embedded in me, so that I find myself applying them unconsciously in my daily life, academics and work. Each aspect of the program has changed my approach to doing things. The friendly attitudes of the trainers and knowledge they imparted also encouraged me to stay with the program. The program was well structured and thought out.

After the program

My best memories were from the lectures as well as the breakout sessions. There was this breakout session where, as an ice breaker, you had to mention music you like and what that music meant to you. Most of us from the Ghanaian side had an issue with the internet but one of our German colleagues graciously stepped up to share her screen and used an app to find each person's music for them as we explained how that music spoke to us; it spoke of leadership and collaboration. It was a great experience to meet degree-seeking students from another country/culture; they were all wonderful and thoughtful people.

Personal Inspiration

Lee Iacocca with Catherine Whitney; 'Where have all the Leaders gone'

Joycelyn K Acquah

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

I honestly think it's the movies but I've always thought people from Germany would be kind of stoic or business-like. But surprisingly, not only the students but also the trainers turned out to be just fun people to be around. The intercultural aspect did enrich the program and lightened the mood. It allowed us to get to know each other on a personal level and share our experiences, which would not have been possible to the depth that the intercultural aspect brought. So I would suggest to include this aspect in future similar programs.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

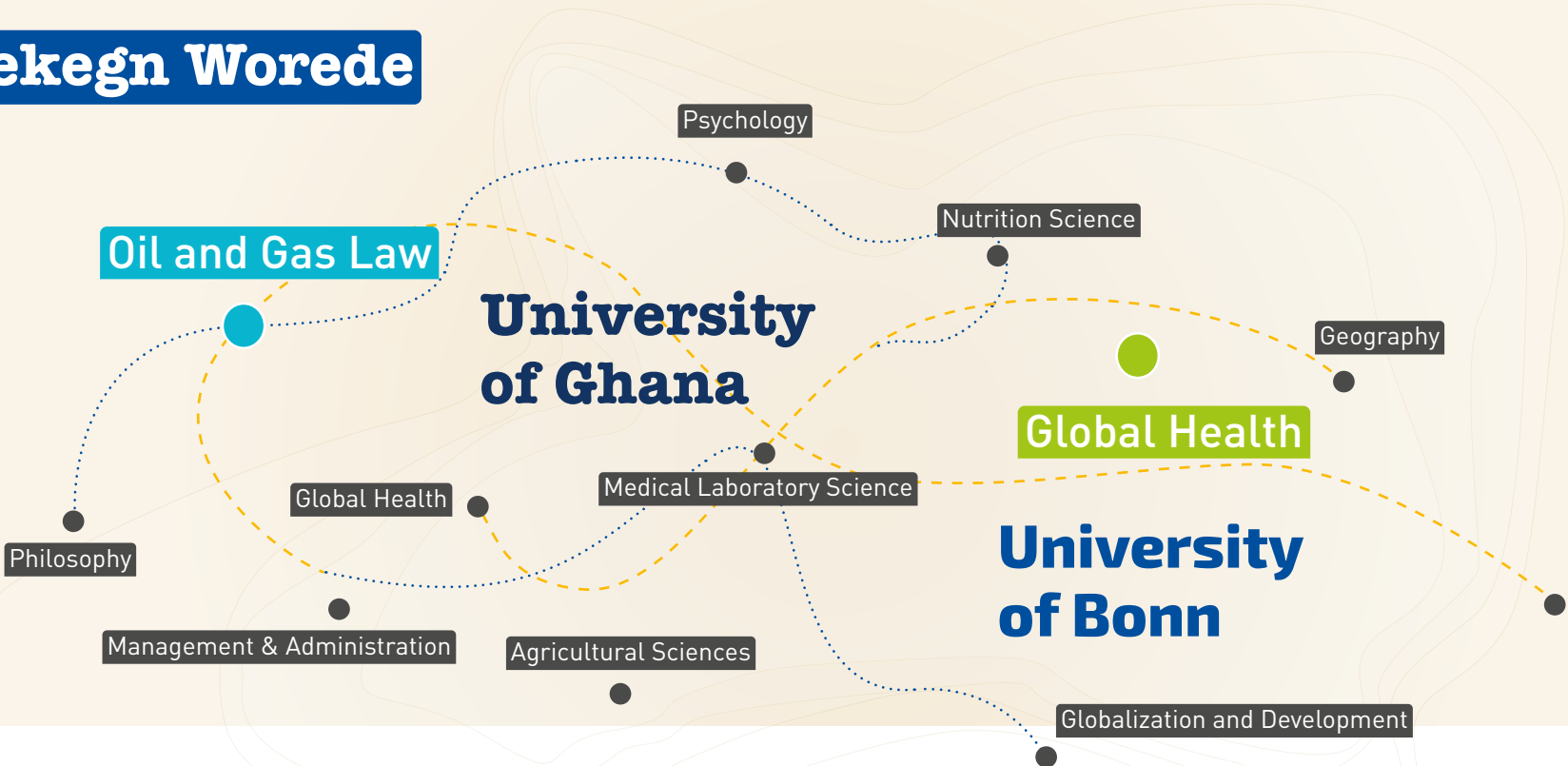
- The greatest takeaway would be how to successfully manage a project. I am doing a course in oil and gas and project management is key. Other helpful lessons included tips on how to improve my argumentative writing as a lawyer, proposal writing, communication and knowing that no matter the nationality or culture of the person, we are all the same in so many ways.
- Just go into the program with an open mind and you will find yourself on the other side surprised, and all the better for it. Also try to loosen up: you are in the program to share our diverse cultural perspectives, so don't take anything personal and have fun.

Subject of study

Oil and Gas Law

Number of semesters

4 semester





Mawuli Kweku Amegah



HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

One of my expectations and thoughts was that this course would expose me to various cultures from around the world in order to increase my awareness of these cultures while also exposing others to my own culture. The program shed light on what culture meant to us participants from around the world, and how much our cultures differed. It also helped me understand that much of human behavior is influenced by the experiences and situations we are exposed to, and that culture has a significant influence on who we are and who we become. My favorite parts of the program were the times when we were divided into groups and shared our thoughts on university, life outside of university, food, language, culture, and stereotypes. It also helped that all of the program’s participants were from different countries, giving us a global perspective.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

Stereotypes are unavoidable and it takes exposure to rid oneself of some of these thoughts and premonitions. One of the stereotypes I had about Germans, which arose from the German Bundesliga games I watched, was that they drank a lot of beer. I saw this in many football finals as well as in trophy celebrations where the German team always had a jug of beer that they sprayed on the winning coach. I have come to realize that that stereotype only applied to certain populations and it was not something that frequently occurred among the German public. I also had a perception about Nigerians that they were loud and rowdy.

However, meeting one of the participants from Nigeria completely removed that perception. The stereotypes all turned out to be false and I am glad I received this training. I always felt that intercultural exchange was possible regardless of distance because of the new technologies that allow for seamless communication. It seeks to comprehend the differences in how people from various cultures act, communicate, and perceive their surroundings. Because culture has a large influence on how people conduct business, cultural implications are critical for success in an international context.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- Networking and relationships are a core part of everyday life. I learnt most importantly that even though cultures differ distinctly around the world, most people can live in harmony and adapt to the environments within which they find themselves.
- Be open-minded, be willing and available to learn, be ready to unlearn and relearn.

Personal Inspiration

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

I was very happy when I got Joana’s email telling me I was in the program! I felt like the overall schedule of the program contained a lot of valuable topics for my future career, so I was very excited! Nevertheless, I was also a bit nervous, since I was admitted from the waiting list and thus joined the group after the first meeting and hoped to be well received by the other participants—which worked out completely.

I perceived the diversity and quality of the trainers as very positive. I looked forward to every session, because on the one hand I really liked the group dynamics and on the other hand I always had the feeling that every new topic could be helpful for my future career.

To be honest, one of the best memories was a Zoom call we had one evening with everyone where we just chatted and laughed. We all felt very familiar since we had spent many hours together every Friday of the semester. Instructive—helpful—exciting. I want to apply the knowledge from our joint program in the process of writing my master’s thesis.

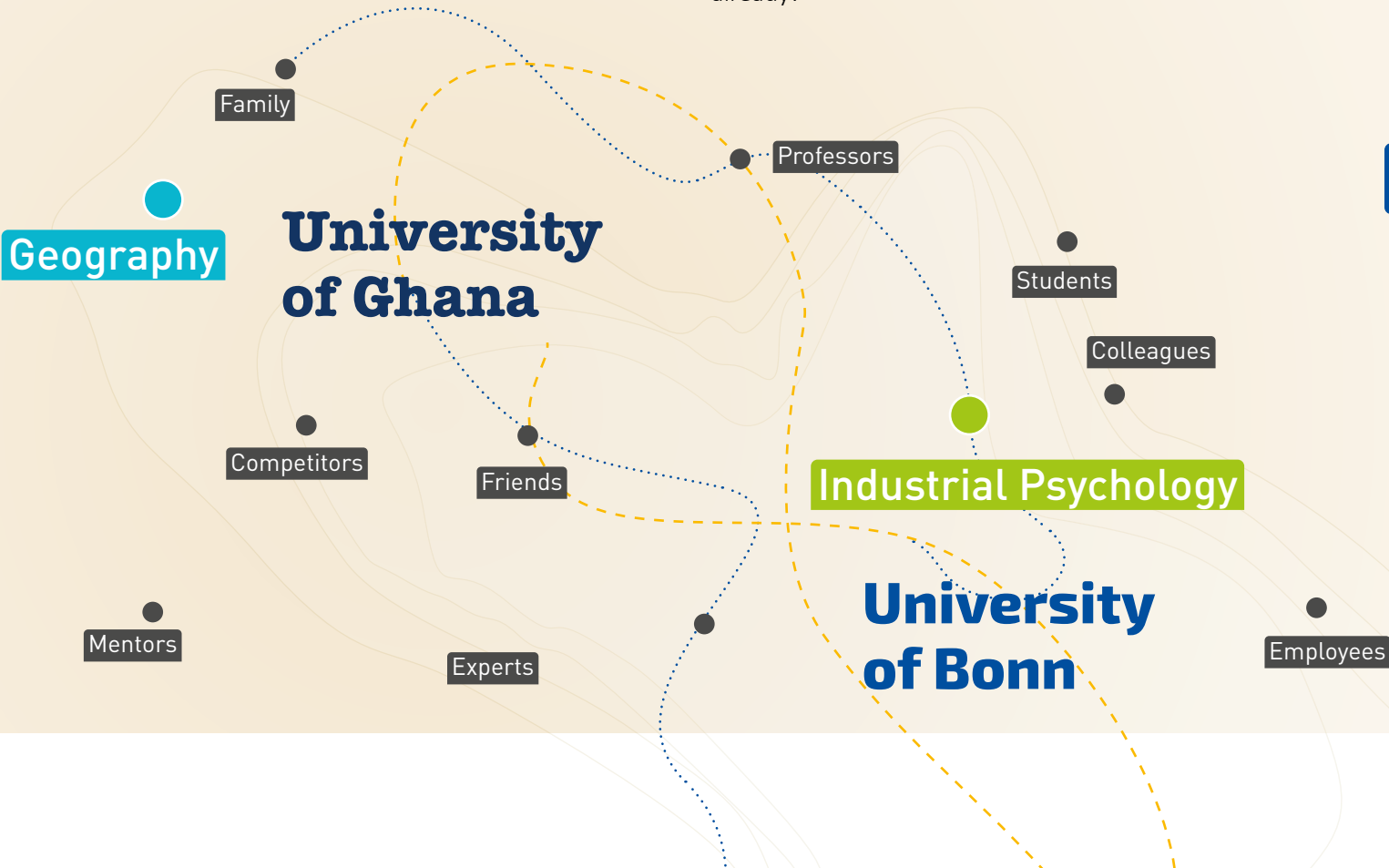
HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

Even though it’s very sad that we all couldn’t meet in person, I think we still managed to exchange and connect. Since our group was very interested in the aspect of intercultural exchange, it definitely took place.

In my opinion, the intercultural aspect definitely enriched the program. Many of us want to work in international professions, and intercultural exchange helps each of us to better understand the opinions and perspectives of others.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- You can make friends all over the world – even via Zoom!
- Making plans, using tools and reflecting on yourself and your work can help you to be more effective!
- Connect with your group members and also meet outside the courses (e.g. via Zoom or in person). Tip: time flies, so start meeting at the beginning of the semester already!



Marie Marx

Subject of study

Geography

Number of semesters

4 semester





Kimberly Sarlette

Subject of study

Sociology

Duration of study

7 semester

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

When I first heard about the Joint Skills Enhancement Program, I realized that the different thematic sessions perfectly complement my resume and soft skills. I always wanted to learn about project management and communication, as I consider them to be key skills on my future career path. In addition, the program provided the opportunity to strengthen my language skills. My degree program at the University of Bonn is often based on English literature, but the main language of instruction is German. So I rarely get the chance to practice speaking English in an academic, professional context. The fact that the program was co-organized by the University of Ghana increased my anticipation of it even more. Until now my international academic background focused on India. I have always wished to expand my intercultural knowledge and experiences, but most degree programs in which internationalization is not a key element do not offer it as part of their curriculum.

Since everyone within the program had a different academic background, the atmosphere was very open and welcoming. Right from the beginning it felt natural to speak in English. Every session, regardless of its topic, gave room to chat with each other. The sometimes poor internet connection in both countries and the English accent that I was unfamiliar with sometimes made it difficult for me to understand and talk to the other participants. But I see this as part of the learning process. In an international working environment, these problems will also arise, and I am glad that I learned to understand and deal with them beforehand.

In addition to my studies and the Joint Skills Enhancement Program, I completed an internship at the same time. I was able to apply some of my newly acquired skills, especially those from the project management session in my daily work. But I have also benefited from the program outside of my professional career. Some elements found their way into my work within my association.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

In addition to the academic learning aspect, the program facilitated intercultural exchange through discussions in small diverse groups. At the beginning we were a group of strangers. But common tasks or given topics discussed during the program helped us get to know each other.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- I like that the program provided the opportunity to get in touch with people not only from different academic fields but also from two different countries. It allowed us to build a network outside of the normal environment in which we find ourselves.
- Even though completing a master's is already time consuming, it is worth taking some extra time for this program, as it benefits your future career.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

I remember well stating my hopes in my JSE application that the program would make up for my missed opportunity to experience Bonn in person at the UN SDG Global Festival of Action due to COVID-19. I therefore looked forward to meeting and interacting with like-minded people from the University of Bonn/University of Ghana and to witness a fully virtual teaching mode from another country. This explained my excitement when I received the congratulatory email upon selection. Fun fact: I got myself a new diary to document my soon to come Friday sessions!

The JSE Program itself, although the pilot one, was well structured and well taught: from the intercultural awareness and exchanges to the time/task management sessions, grants and communications sessions to my personal favorite, project Management. I really admired the versatility of Jan Schmidt, the PM trainer, and I hope to replicate his online delivery modes someday. Coincidentally, I was taking a PM course that semester and I made an 'A' in the paper. As I await a successful graduation in March, I believe my expectations for the program were met, as everything I learnt is reflected in my finals. The JSE Program has thus enriched my scientific career ambitions. JSE was enlightening!

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

I actually had no stereotypical mentality at the start of the JSE Program due to my previous involvement in international student volunteerism and youth leadership with diverse, multi-cultural groups.

The JSE Program however further promoted my open-mindedness toward continuous learning as well as cultural and professional diversities. The intercultural exchange sessions considerably expanded my basic knowledge of cultural dimensions and intercultural communication. I specifically recall the intellectual discourse we had regarding how some native/indigenous cultures may be deemed inferior by foreigners. I got to understand perspectives of fellow students through these virtual engagements.

The training on intercultural awareness and exchange was also a good opportunity to get to know fellow German and Ghanaian students. In fact, I almost caught up with Tom and Marie from the University of Bonn in Kenya in late September.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- I am confident that the program offers an advanced-level clarification on studying competencies as well as relevant practical and professional soft skills. Considering mobility challenges that prospective exchange students face in these times, the virtual meetings and teaching sessions came quite close to a real in-person experience. The individual and group tasks, discussions, and reflections were valuable as they shaped my perspective pertaining to projects in the global scope.
- I will definitely recommend the JSE Program not only for its rich content but also for the priceless network of other ambitious students you get to meet. My only tip here is that if you plan SMART, you can optimize the value of this program without disrupting your regular academic work.



Michael Ofori Asare

Subject of study

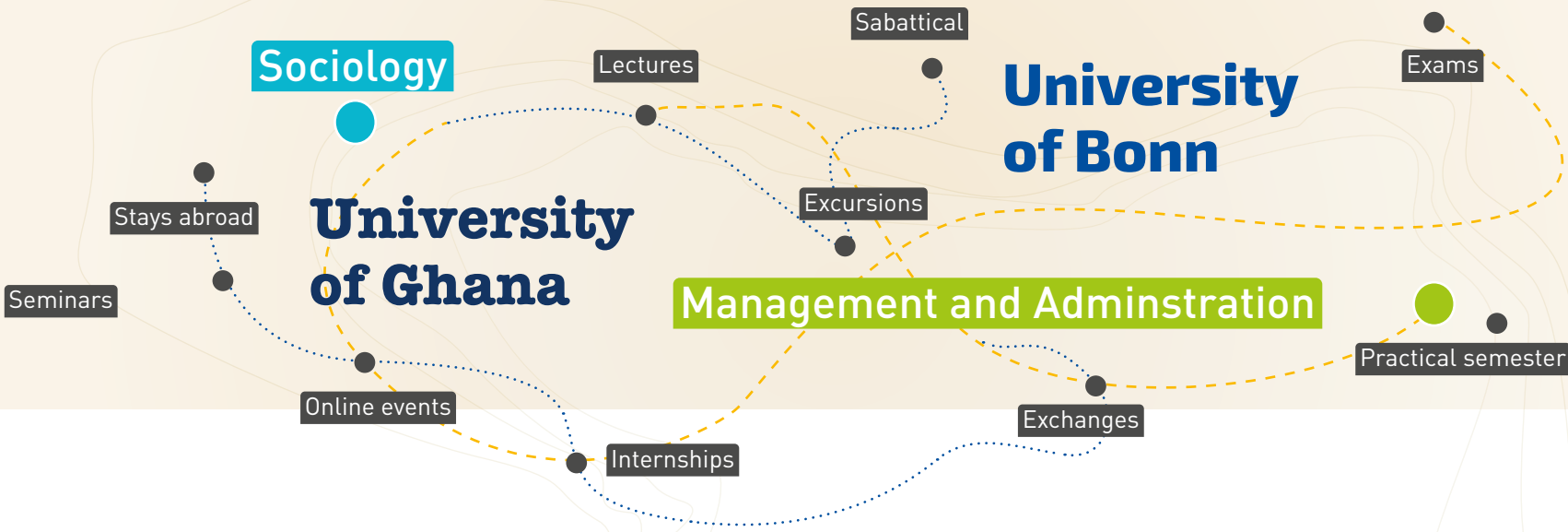
Management & Administration

Number of semesters

2 semester

Personal Inspiration

A Book I personally authored titled; "If we must Thrive" basically sums up my life lessons.







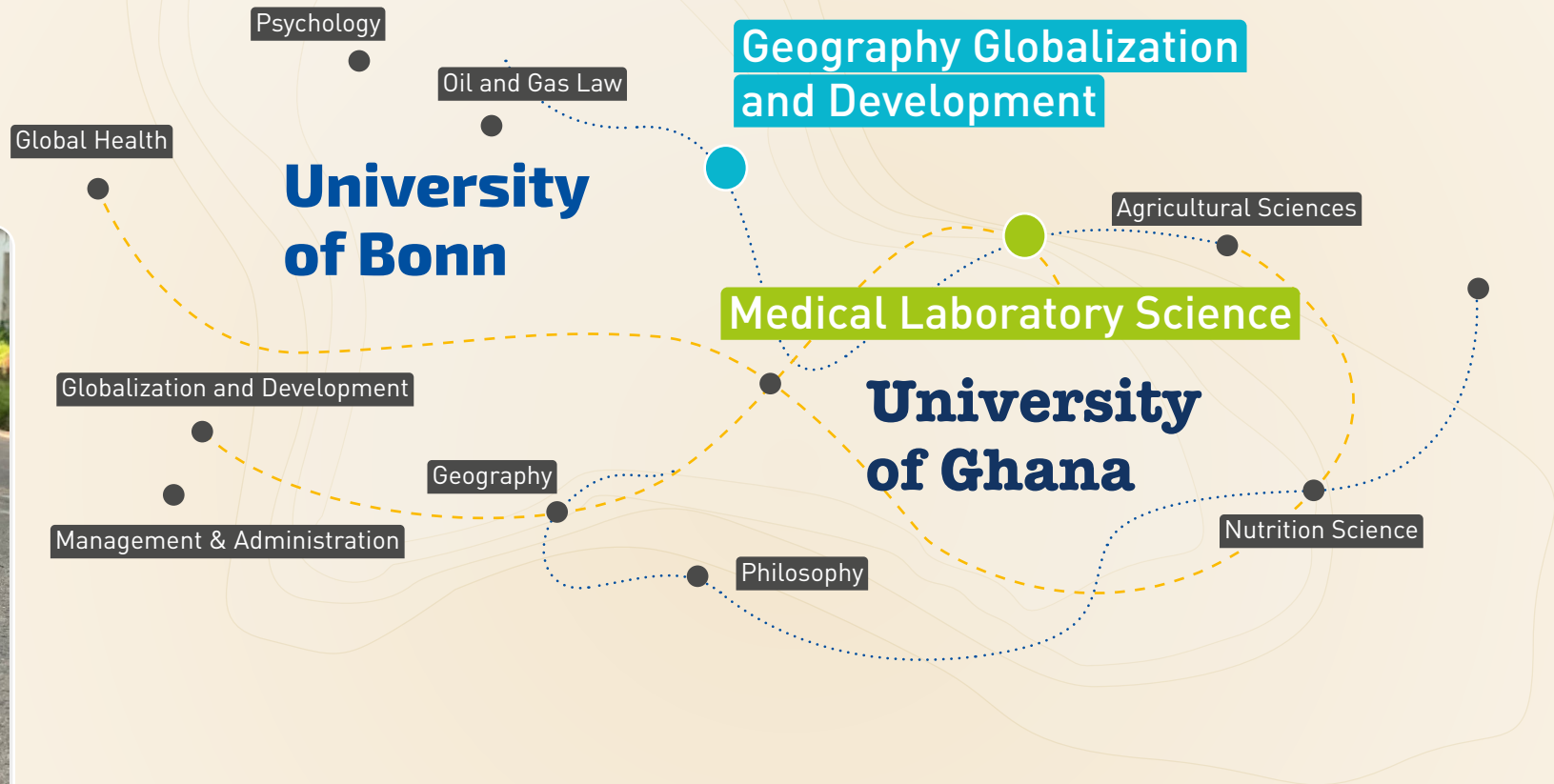
Sarah Saidu

Subject of study

Medical Laboratory Science

Duration of study

2 semester



HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

My expectation at the beginning of the program was to learn new skills, to improve my writing skills, to learn about other cultures and to network. I was very excited and open-minded.

I have been able to apply communication skills, managerial skills, writing and argumentation in scientific writing. What impressed me most is the diversity and some of the module delivery. I was always looking forward to interacting with the group members because I always learned a thing or two. Bravo to the organizers of this program for putting it into practice. The structure is good but there is room for improvement.

My best memory will be the breakout sessions. My experience in one word is “insightful.” The program has improved my research skills, it came at the right time when I was drafting my proposal.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

Germans are never late for meetings. Yes, it is true. The intercultural exchange was possible because we interacted and did some work together, although the impact would have been greater if we had met in person. Yes, it enriched the program. We are a global village where networking is key. Therefore, knowledge of other cultures will be a plus for understanding the global village we are in.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- All modules play a role in my career and life; they were all valuable to me.
- Be open-minded, share your views and have fun. I will definitely recommend the program to others.

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROGRAM?

When I saw the call for applications for the Joint Skills Enhancement Program with the University of Ghana and University of Bonn, it caught me in an instant. The prospect of having conversations, exchanging ideas and sharing learning experiences with fellow students from Ghana and Germany while proceeding in your regular studies inspired me. In retrospect, the program exceeded my expectations and additionally provided the space for new friendships.

The comprehensive training in project, time and task management, effective communication, cultural awareness and exchange, proposal writing as well as argumentation in scientific writing were well-chosen and boosted my soft skills in a way that I feel comfortable to apply this knowledge in my future career. Especially the workshop on project management was highly relevant and helpful for my field of work. What I rank even higher was the stunning openness and high acceptance in all conversations within our group of students and with the trainers. It proved that translocal and transcultural learning is a very valuable part of our studies that cannot be neglected in a modern way of teaching and learning.

Now that the program has come to an end, what do I take away from it? The knowledge, the friendships and the urgent desire to travel and finally meet in person!

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE?

One of the things I really appreciated in the Joint Skills Enhancement Program was the room for intercultural exchange throughout all sessions of the workshops. It was always put forward that getting to know each other and connecting was an important part of the program. I found that the short conversations in-between were often most valuable to see that we all have something in common in our everyday experiences at university despite our diverse and interdisciplinary backgrounds.

From issues with a bad internet connection to the need of handling improvised study situations to managing exams, work, internships, travels to home destinations or study sites during the semester, we found a lot of common ground. It made us see that borders do not define what we are or what we do, but that the things we witness on a day-to-day basis unite us.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS AND ADVICE FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

- As a take-home message from this program, I will remember that differences are valuable and can offer a new perspective on your own experiences. I will also be able to use many of the skills that were taught, especially project management, in my future career, and my social environment will probably most appreciate my training in time management.
- If you have the opportunity to participate, take it! It will enrich your understanding of a globally connected world, similarities between cultures and your own positionality, and it will provide you with valuable skills and, not to be neglected, a certificate! My tip: actively try to get in touch and stay in contact with this amazing group, even outside the workshops.



Tom Anders

Subject of study

Geography Globalization and Development

Number of semesters

7 semester

Personal Inspiration

**They say times changes everything but we change times!**

- Ziggy Marley, Rebellion Rises





**University  
of Ghana**

**[www.ipo.ug.edu.gh](http://www.ipo.ug.edu.gh)**

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