

Austria – Fachhochschule Burgenland

Institution	Fachhochschule Burgenland – University of Applied Sciences Burgenland - Austria
Study programs	We offer a range of bachelor, master and PhD programmes. We also offer bridging programmes and further education courses. For information please refer to our homepage: www.fh-burgenland.at .
Skills in German language	German language skills are necessary for admission for most study programs.
Study fees	There are no study fees at the Fachhochschule Burgenland for the bachelor and master courses. A fee may be applicable for other courses. Please refer to the particular course on our website.
Interviewed Person	Asylum seeker from Syria

Preparation

Mohamed is 29 years old and came as a refugee to Austria 2 years and 4 months ago. He left Syria only with small hand baggage, where he put some necessary items and documents. He did not have much time to think about what to take with him as he decided to leave his home quickly.

In Syria he had studied law and left university with a bachelor degree. Besides his studies, to earn money, he worked as an optician, but does not have an official traineeship for this.

Mohamed is a communicative person who tries to integrate in Austria and does not take no for an answer. He asks questions until he receives an answer to reach his goal. I would describe him as a person who does not give up, even he has to get over some sticking points.

At the moment he works as an optician for 30 hours a week and his free time he works as a volunteer at the “Pannonische Tafel” a non-profit organization which helps people in different situations such as refugees, unemployed, poor, etc. When Mohamed came to Eisenstadt he found friends, help and people who were listening at this organization.

Awareness

When he arrived Austria he was 70% aware of his personal capacities but not sure how these capacities could be used for the integration. The first important step for him was to learn the German language.

Mohamed is convinced that he cannot use his Bachelor degree in law in Austria, as in his opinion it is totally different from a degree of law in Austria and he needs to start again with these studies. But for starting a degree in Austria there is the problem with the language. His next idea was to find a job as an optician but he does not have any diploma or certificate of this occupation. Friends advised him to go to the Austrian Job Centre, AMS (Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich <http://www.ams.at>). The AMS is a service company which connects people looking for a job and companies and also offers courses to get better qualifications for jobs. Mohamed attended a German course and additionally he was advised by the person in charge (adviser).

Starting up

The disadvantage was that Mohamed does not have a certificate of his knowledge of being an optician. His family in Syria sent him some documents he forgot to take with him and the company where he worked for nine years wrote him a certificate of employment. This certificate of employment had to be translated in German and friends told him where to go to find an official translator. The AMS found a company where Mohamed's qualification could be tested. The company proved his knowledge and skills in the course of one day to figure out if he is really able to do this job accurately. But to finalise an employment contract the company wanted to have a certificate, which he does not have. The other reason why they did not offer him a job was the lack of language skills (German). The positive affect of this testing was that he received a recommendation of the company.

With all his documents and the recommendation he started to write a CV. His friends helped him to write this in a right way and corrected his mistakes. He was lucky to find an optician in Vienna who gave him the chance to prove his knowledge again. For this company, the recommendation and the certificate of employment was important but not a degree. They asked him several things about the work and Mohamed had to demonstrate his manual skills. He was a bit uncertain as he had not worked in this job for three years. He did trust the testing even though he only had one chance. The boss treated him in a respectful way, as did the employees. All were friendly even if there were some misunderstandings because of the language. Mohamed's expectation of this testing was to get the opportunity to find a job and to do something important. At the end of the testing the company offered him to work on trial for two months.

Documentation and support

Mohamed was guided by friends and a person in charge (adviser) from the AMS. He focused on his work experience as an optician, even though he did not have any certificate in this field. His adviser told him to bring a certificate of employment from Syria and some other documents. With help from friends and family he was able to deliver all requested documents. It was not hard to get the documents but it took a lot of time to get them and also to receive information. He also told me that is necessary to keep on asking and not giving up until you get the right information and the right person. After he had the documents translated he could start to look for a job. He did not write a portfolio but a CV which was reflected by friends. For the testing he did not prepare in advance because he had nine years of experience in this field.

Assessment

Mohamed was invited to the company in Vienna to demonstrate his skills. He also took the CV and his documents with him. It was an open assessment, where he had to show his knowledge during the work. The boss asked him several important things as an optician, he had to explain a lot and to prove his proficiency. Mohamed always felt comfortable even if he was a bit nervous and had mixed feelings. The boss and also the employees were helpful and gave him exact instructions what was requested so he knew what to do. The assessment was held in English and German so some misunderstandings could be removed quickly. If he had to do such an assessment again, he would prepare in the same way.

Impact

The outcome of the assessment was that the company offered him a probationary time of two months and if they were satisfied they will give him a fix job in this company. Of course he was very happy with this outcome as this was what he wanted to do. Mohamed received an e-mail that the assessment was positive and the company would like to welcome him in their group. When he started the job he also had an oral feedback of the assessment.

Mohamed is overwhelmed that he can work in his field and that he is a part of something. He found a place where he feels well and that is important for him. He had to stop the language course as it is not financed anymore but he is still focused on improving his German. In the long term, he wants to continue his study of law but first he has to assure his position as an optician and to improve his German skills. His future is now more certain than before the job. He also feels more confident and is aware of his strengths. Without his documents and help from friends and family it would be harder for him to settle and he did not receive such results like to find a proper job.