

Dual degree courses also in the subject of IT - Universities in Saxony-Anhalt with unique concept in Germany

At the Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg and the University of Applied Sciences Anhalt, dual IT degree courses are available.

In Magdeburg, the students gain a certificate from the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) and a university degree. In Köthen, two bachelor's and two master's degree courses are available on a part-time basis. The cooperating companies benefit from excellently trained young graduates.

It's a classic win-win situation: companies can attract and retain excellently trained young graduates, while the graduates of the dual degree courses are awarded both a university degree and a certificate from the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. And the prospects for their professional future are also excellent. At Otto von Guericke University in Magdeburg, dual Bachelor's degree courses have been offered in the subject of IT since 2007: in Computer Science, Business Informatics, Engineering Informatics and Computational Visualistics. The university cooperates with 25 companies in which the students complete training at the same time as their studies, as IT specialists, for example. The model is unique in Germany, since as a general rule, the option of dual study is only available at Universities of Applied Science. And some of the degree courses on offer have rarity value: Computer Visualistics, for example. This interdisciplinary field of study focuses on the computer-aided creation and analysis of graphics and images and their embedding in complex applications, and was first created at the University of Magdeburg in 1996.

Best future prospects for the students

The degree at the university level, explains Course Director of the dual degree course at the Faculty of Computer Science, Prof. Dr. Hans-Knud Arndt, offers the students on the dual degree course the best future prospects – on the one hand. On the other hand, they benefit from the practical dimension: "In this way, they not only become familiar with the higher academic level, but also with everyday life and the structures that have developed over time. In the field of IT in particular, they get to see how the technical equipment is used and also learn how to cooperate with people who aren't from the world of academia." That means hard, honest work – which is the reality of life in the area of IT, explains Professor Arndt. The advantage offered to companies by this model, in turn, is – and this is especially the case for smaller companies – the opportunity to access new graduates. It is also possible for them to influence the contents of the dual degree course and to help to shape the training profile. "The research topic for a bachelor's dissertation, for example, might also originate in the company," explains Prof. Arndt.

Studying without a part-time job - dual study ensures a livelihood

It goes without saying that a dual degree course isn't exactly an easy option for the students. The degree course lasts for eight semesters, and rather than resting, the students spend their lecture-free periods in training at the company, while after three years, they have to sit their exams for their certificate from the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Twenty-four young people are currently on the dual degree course at the University of Magdeburg, four of whom are doing their practical training as IT specialists at the company Dornheim Medical Images GmbH in Magdeburg, a provider of software, hardware and system solutions primarily focusing on image analysis mainly for the field of medical technology. "One of the main reasons why our company is participating in the dual degree course is to secure well-trained professionals who fit in with our company and are involved in our business-related processes and topics right from the start. We get highly qualified specialists," explains the spokeswoman of Dornheim, Kathleen Lippelt. So far, all of the students have been given jobs at the company following their graduation. Kathleen Lippelt also envisages advantages for the students on the dual degree course: "The degree course has a far higher level of practical relevance and offers the students enjoyable work right from the start. The students get a very good introduction into the world of work and have a better chance of getting a job when they graduate. And the dual degree course naturally has financial benefits. The students don't have to look for a part time job and can earn their keep in the area that they like and find interesting straight away."

Unique in Germany - Anhalt University of Applied Sciences open to further partners

The Anhalt University of Applied Sciences also offers two bachelor's and two master's dual degree courses in the subject of IT at its Köthen campus. The degree course in "Specialist communication – software localisation", which covers both languages and IT, is unique in Germany. "It is naturally the case that every consumer wants to have the software in their own language, whether it is for instruction manuals, for software in the medical field or for banks," says Prof. R. Uta Seewald-Heeg, highlighting the considerable demand for graduates from this field. The second degree course on offer as a bachelor's degree is "Applied Computer Science – Digital Media and Game Development". "Information Management" and "Software Localization" are available as dual master's degree courses.

At the Department of Computer Science and Languages at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences, the word "dual" is equivalent to what is commonly referred to as a sandwich course, in which the students don't gain a vocational qualification, but in which the cooperating companies agree to offer the participating students a supervised industrial internship in their fifth semester. Prof. Uta Seewald-Heeg believes the benefits of this approach to be its strong practical orientation: "The dual students get the opportunity to apply their knowledge straight away, and the contents of the course are more relevant, because the students have gained practical experience of the background contexts in the companies at which they work. This makes it easier for them to gain an understanding of specific topics." The university cooperates with companies from Halle, Leipzig and Berlin, and the level of cooperation is intense. Many young people have shown interest in the dual degree courses, but the number of placements available in companies is limited. "We need even more partner companies" says Prof. Uta Seewald-Heeg.

Author: Anja Falgowski

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