

Call for Action

Friday 7 October 2022

Dear colleagues teaching in Development Studies Masters Programme (or close to it),

We have received the sad news that one of our students, let's call him "Poku" (anonymized), starting in the winter term 20-21 was soon diagnosed with cancer after he took up his studies. A sociologist by training, hailing from Ghana, he excelled in my course on Regional Geography, but soon disappeared. Only later on it turned out that he went through a shocking cancer diagnosis, several rounds of chemo- and radiotherapy and other ordeals, such as being isolated since he took up studies during COVID times and was not able to network well. Foreign students usually pay money into a Block account so that it is secured that they can make a living here. These can be up to 8,000 Euro or so. This money has now been depleted since the student used the money during his sickness for the past 2 years. His original plan to work here do support his upkeep has been thwarted. Now Poku faces a very difficult situation.

The Ausländeramt informed him that he needs to provide proof of financial stability so that he can continue with his studies. Otherwise, his permit to stay would cease towards the end of the year. However, they would allow him to stay for the moment based on health reasons, but once he changes his status again to become a student, he needs to demonstrate financial stability for this to become effective. This means:

He needs to have about 4000 Euro in his account. Besides this, he needs to clear his debt of about 1000 Euro.

The international office is in touch with the Ausländeramt, but they cannot do much about the "financial requirement" aspect, which is the law. The International Office also will contact local authorities so that they can pay Poku's rent and plead for lenience with the insurance, where he also has debts in dues.

Kindly help with some support that can at least cover Poku's debt and give him some money to support his immediate needs.

In the meantime, I am approaching other organizations (Rotary Club, International Club Universität Bayreuth) to get him the 4000 Euro cushion.

Once he becomes a student again he might be hired as a student assistant so to support him. He was a very good student. Please also indicate if you have such positions available over the next 6 months.

I am heartbroken to say, but should the student have to leave the country because he cannot continue with his studies for financial reasons, he would also lose access to the German health system, which equals a death threat given his condition.

This is I guess also a general reminder that we as a university need to think about emergency funds scheme for students with such needs. We waste our money on too many other things. Thank you.

The student authorized me to approach all lecturers in the programme or associated lecturers. Please note that I cannot comment further on IO-Ausländeramt affairs. IO is working on this, too.

Thank you and best,

Stefan Ouma