

German Academic Culture

Handout for exchange students at Paderborn University

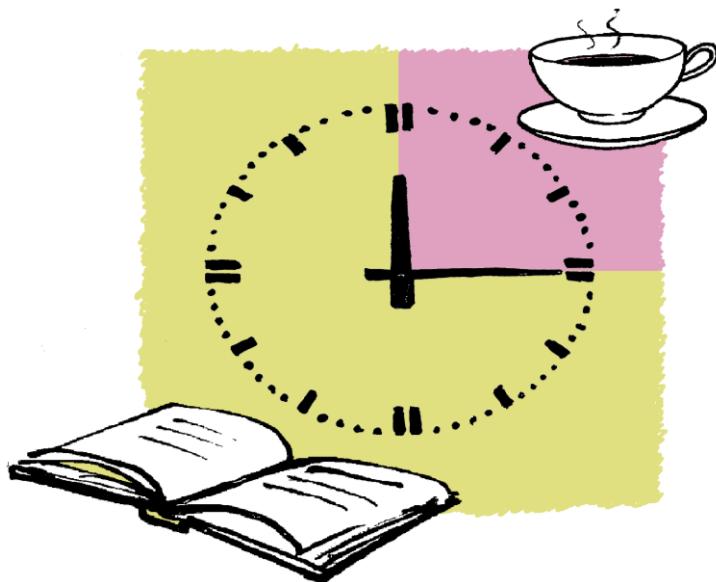
Academic Quarter (“Akademisches Viertel”)

Classes at many German universities often start fifteen minutes after the hour - the so-called “academic quarter”. This gives students and professors enough time to make one's way from one classroom to another, or to get a cup of coffee.

Classes that start fifteen minutes after the hour as opposed to classes that start exactly on the hour, can be distinguished by the “c.t.” (latin: cum tempore) or “s.t.” (latin: sin tempore) written behind the time.

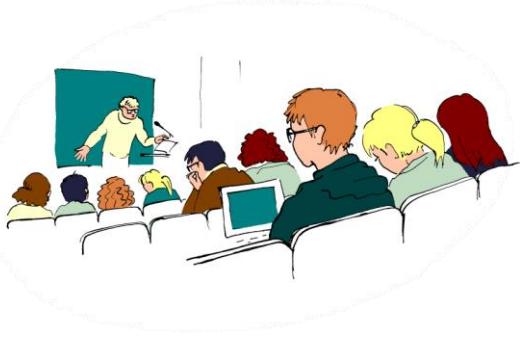
Example:

- **9 Uhr c.t.** → starting time will be 9.15 am
- **9 Uhr s.t.** → starting time will be 9.00 am

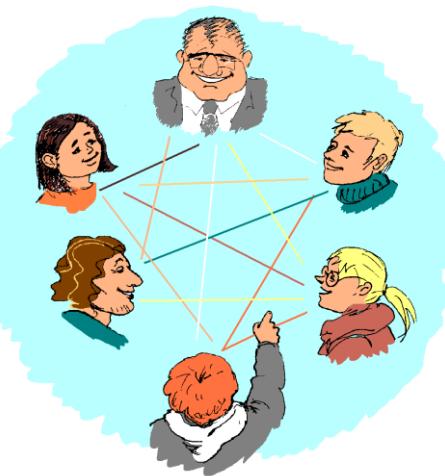


Types of classes at German Universities

There are mainly two types of classes at German Universities – lectures and seminars:

Lectures	Seminars
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Class is focused on lecturer▪ Typically an introduction to a study/scientific field▪ <u>Lecturer:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">– Presents▪ <u>Students:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">– Listen– Take notes– Ask questions when asked or where appropriate▪ <u>Necessary skills for students:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">– listening– note taking	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Discussion between students and professor▪ In-depth dealing with a topic▪ Scientific discussions▪ <u>Students:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">– Are expected to actively participate in discussions– Work in groups– Give presentations▪ <u>Lecturers</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">– Support the students in learning– Encourage discussion and group work of students▪ <u>Necessary skills for students:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">- Active participation in discussion- Contribute to group work and presentations

Group Discussions



A discussion allows students to gain a deeper understanding of a subject or topic area by

- exploring ideas with others,
- exchanging information,
- expanding and clarifying knowledge.

Participating in a group discussion helps to

- improve one's ability to think critically
- improve one's language skills
- become more confident in speaking up in public

How to participate in a discussion:

You can:

- answer questions from the teacher and other students.
- ask questions about what you didn't understand.
- give your own opinion:
 - about what the teacher says and/or what other students say
 - about texts you have read for the seminar

Group Work



Group work has many advantages:

- You learn more actively
- Work can be divided
- More ideas can be collected
- The gained knowledge can be mutually extended, controlled, and corrected
- Group work provides a supportive environment for challenging work
- You have less fear of speaking
- You have more opportunities to speak
- You will develop communication and interpersonal skills that you need in the workplace throughout your career

Key stages in group work:

Step 1: Group formation

Step 2: Planning

Step 3: Implementation of plan

Step 4: Completion of activity

Step 5: Evaluation of group performance

Things that should be clear when working in a group:

- Who is the group?
- What individual strengths do you have and how can these be used effectively?
- What ground rules do you need to set in order to work effectively?
- What is the aim of the group activity?
- How much time do you have to do it?
- Who will do what?
- How will the group members communicate throughout the process?

Source: www.mumis-projekt.de