GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

Writing e-mails is part of everyday life and an essential form of communication at German universities, something that cannot be avoided. If you want to communicate successfully and effectively via e-mail, please keep the following points in mind:

1 | Does this require an E-Mail?

Before sending an E-Mail to a lecturer, make sure that the information you need isn't already available elsewhere. Lecturers receive many E-Mails every day with questions that can easily be answered by checking the university website, Moodle rooms, seminar schedules, or the FAQ section on the MaREPol homepage. Always try to find the answer yourself before reaching out to your lecturer.

2 | Choose the appropriate contact

Use the university website to find out who is responsible for your specific issue. For example, if you're contacting a professor about admission requirements, chances are you're reaching out to the wrong person, as this is usually not within the professor's area of responsibility. If you are in doubt, you can also contact the Student Advisory Service of the university or your study program. You can find the contact information for people responsible for various concerns on the MaREPol FAQ site.

3 | Only use your uni-mail address

For communication related to the university, please only use your university e-mail address. This also applies to internship applications. The usage of "unserious" e-mail addresses is not appropriate and will often automatically be sorted into spam folders.
An appropriate e-mail example: John.Smith@university.de
Non-appropriate e-mail example: DortmundFan33@gmail.com

4 | Clear and specific subject line

As mentioned earlier, lecturers receive many E-Mails every day. To help them quickly understand the relevance of your message, it's important to write a subject line that clearly summarizes the content of your E-Mail. Subject lines like "*Question*" or "*Request*" are too vague and should be more specific. Instead, use a subject line that reflects the main topic of your message, such as "*Clarification on Assignment 2 - Due Date*" or "*Request for Meeting Regarding Final Paper.*"

5   Appropriate greeting and title

Every e-mail should begin with a polite and formal greeting, such as "Dear," followed by the appropriate title (e.g., Prof., Dr., Mr., Ms.,).
Example:
"Dear Prof. Müller,"

It is important to note that not every person holds a title such as Prof. or Dr. You can usually find this information on the university website or through a quick Google search. If someone doesn't hold an academic title, use Mr. or Ms. (or Herr/Frau) followed by the person's last name.
Examples:
„Dear Ms./Frau Schmidt,
Dear Mr./Herr Schneider,"

A helpful rule of thumb: mirror the way the lecturer or contact person communicates with you. Avoid greeting on a first name basis, unless told otherwise. If you are unsure of a person's gender, use a neutral greeting by including both their first and last name:
Example:
"Dear Kim Schmidt,"

If someone has multiple titles, such as *"Prof. Dr. Baumgartner"*, always use the highest title in your greeting (Professor > Doctor > Mr./Ms.). In this case, write:
"Dear Prof. Baumgartner,"

It's also important to note that in e-mail greetings, you always use the abbreviated forms (Prof., Dr.) rather than the full words.
After the greeting, use a comma, leave a space, and begin the first sentence with a lowercase letter (unless it's a proper noun).
Example:
"Dear Prof. Hummels,
there seems to be a problem regarding …"

6   Be clear in your request

State your request clearly and concisely. Your e-mail should be structured in a way that allows the lecturer to quickly understand the purpose of your message. Make sure the most important information is visible at a glance:
1. Your name and student ID number
2. Your degree program
3. Your specific request
4. If relevant, the course or lecture that your question relates to, including the semester

7 Polite questions, not commands

Formulate polite questions, not commands
When making a request in an e-mail, avoid phrasing it as a command. Instead, express it politely as a question.

Not appropriate: "*I need you to add me to the Moodle room.*"
Appropriate: "*Could you please add me to the Moodle room? Thank you.*"

Using polite words like please and thank you makes an e-mail sound much more respectful. At a minimum, these phrases should always be included when you are requesting something from someone.

8 Ending with a proper closing

Always end your e-mail with an appropriate closing phrase. Leave a blank line before and after the closing phrase, and include your full name underneath.

Example:
"Kind regards/Best/Sincerely,
John Smith

9 Check for grammar and spelling

Always pay attention to formal aspects when writing e-mails. Before sending your e-mails, carefully proofread it and check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

10 Clear and specific subject line

Lecturers at universities are often very busy. It may take a few days for them to respond to e-mails. If you have a deadline to meet, make sure to inform your lecturer in good time. You cannot expect your request to be handled within one or two days.

11 Last but not least: Respect

Treating each other with respect should go without saying. It also makes your E-Mail communication not only more pleasant, but also more efficient.