

# ACADEMIC STUDY SKILLS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



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## STUDY SKILLS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

*Dear student,*

as an international student intending to pursue your field of study for a semester or more, for you it is of decisive importance how one approaches methodical study in Germany. Unlike your experiences at home, fundamentally different academic study skills are often required, based on **activeness** and **independence** and on **initiative**. Learning by rote is rarely demanded – normally there is no set timetable, no tutor or professor specifically responsible for you: active work with the course material is expected – and that means independence in choosing lectures and seminars to attend, in setting your timetable, in individual time management, in the choice of a presentation topic, in selecting literature from the library, in producing a presentation or a written assignment, in preparing for exams and choosing relevant materials, in choosing an examiner for an oral exam, and lots more.

So much independence – that can be an opportunity, but can also be off-putting. The Academic and Examination Regulations lay down the content of a course which one must master for a particular degree, but the choice of lectures and seminars is more less down to you. Germans often have the same problem, although the domestic school system places emphasis on preparation for independent study, or ‘**learning to learn**’. Hence, don’t be afraid actively and independently to make **contact** with students and tutor(s), to your department, to the Akademisches Auslandsamt International Office, and, in this case, Zentrale Studienberatung (student advice), to ask questions and to discuss problems. Soon you will feel securer because you will be better prepared for the coming semester.

This brochure should give you tips and recommendations for adapting your study technique for success in Germany. Take a bit of **time to work** through the pages, not just *to read* through them: try the recommended methods directly and practically so that you can judge whether it is worth adapting your own learning and study skills in one way or the other.

Wishing you a pleasant study period in Germany,  
Beate Meinck

## 1 - STUDYING IN GERMANY

A **study year** at the university consists of two semesters (= half years): the *Winter* semester (= WS), which runs from the start of October to the end of March, and the *Summer* semester (= SS) from the beginning of April to the end of September. Lectures begin in the middle of October and mid-April and end in mid-February and mid-July.

The remaining time is **lecture-free time**: in WS from mid-February until mid-March and in SS from mid-July until the end of September, which allows for consolidation of what has been learned in the previous semester. Sometimes one can undertake work experience, but this time should definitely be used for targeted preparation for the coming semester.

In Germany a **lesson unit** always lasts for 45 minutes; most lectures and seminars are double units, i.e. lasting 90 minutes. If “s.t.” appears after the time, the lesson begins at the given time; where “c.t.” (or nothing) appears, the lesson begins quarter of an hour later. So, if a lesson is timetabled for 10.00 till 12.00, it begins at 10.15 and ends at 11.45.

**Degree course structure:** Due to the **Bologna process** a **consecutive degree course structure** will be established all over Europe, with its common Bachelor's and Master's degrees. At the University of Saarland this is provided since winter term 2008/09 for almost all study courses (except State Exams). Due to the study regulations, consecutive Bachelor's and Master's degrees are build upon each other. Master's programmes can continue and deepen the study subjects of the Bachelor's programme or can broaden the subject interdisciplinary. Non-consecutive Master's programmes do not build upon a Bachelor's programme.

The **Bachelor's programme** is the first degree which contains professional qualifications and normally is awarded after six semesters. The humanities, linguistics and cultural science complete with a “Bachelor of Arts” (B.A.), while for instance natural sciences, engineering and business sciences earn a “Bachelor of Science” (B.Sc.).

In this consecutive degree course structure it is only possible to earn a **Master's degree** (e.g. “Master of Science”(M.Sc.) or “Master of Arts” (M.A.)) if a first degree with professional qualifications has already been completed. It normally takes 2 to 4 semesters to complete a Master's degree; altogether the studies must not take longer than 10 semesters. The Master's programme focuses on a more academic treatment of the discipline dealt with in the Bachelor's programme and qualifies for **doctoral research programme (Promotion)**.

**Modularisation** is a fundamental structure characteristic of Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Modules are self-contained teaching- and study units that consist of a few courses. They are provided with Credit Points, which show the work

load, including preparation and rework time. For every Credit Point a work load of 30 hours is necessary. In one semester you normally gain 30 credit points and in a whole bachelor's programme 180 CP. Exams are taken module-related and attendant to the study. The awarding of credit points, which is the same all over Europe, is regulated by the European Transfer System (**ECTS**).

There are certain study courses in which State Examinations are necessary; despite Teaching Studies these are medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and law. Further information regarding the structure and contents of study courses available on:

► [www.uni-saarland.de/de/studium/studiengaenge](http://www.uni-saarland.de/de/studium/studiengaenge)

(Before Bachelor's and Master's degrees were established in **Germany**, a **course** was normally separated into two blocks: the **Grundstudium** (foundation course, spread over four semesters), during which one acquired *general knowledge* of the subject culminating in an **intermediate examination** as well as a possible **intermediate diploma**. These were not vocationally-recognised qualifications. During the following **Hauptstudium** (main course) one specialised in an area within the subject according to personal interest and, in humanities and social sciences, completed it with the **Magister artium**. A degree with a **diploma** was normally acquired in the natural, engineering, social and economic sciences.)

After completing a degree course, one can embark upon a **postgraduate course** or attempt 'Promotion' (to be awarded the title of Doctor).

Once **enrolled**, you have the right to attend lectures and seminars and to take exams.

The **preparation of the study timetable for the semester** begins in your home country. Saarland University lecture index is available on the internet **two months before the start of the semester** at:

► [www.uni-saarland.de/de/profil/veroeffentlichungen/vvz](http://www.uni-saarland.de/de/profil/veroeffentlichungen/vvz)

The lecture index includes topic, time and place of lectures relevant to your study. If you have questions, you can reach the tutors or the secretariat by **email** (homepage of Saarland University: ► [www.uni-saarland.de](http://www.uni-saarland.de)) from home.

In the **week before the start of the semester** you should double-check your timetable: on the "black board" of the institute, in the secretariat or in the student representation (Fachschaft) you can check in person *whether, when* and *where* the lecture will take place and whether you are allowed to take part.

There are also **consultation appointment lists** for teachers, onto which you can enter your name, in order to ask potential questions about the contents of the course *before* the beginning of the course. Most **student representations** offer orientation events especially for new students on different days. The Akademische Auslandsamt / **International Office** offers events and valuable tips especially for international students in its “Orientation Events”.

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At German universities, there are different **types of classes**, which also demand different approaches.

1. Firstly, one attends **lectures**, in which a tutor, mostly in monologue form, discusses a pre-determined topic: of the student, this requires concentrated listening and a (trainable) technique of note-taking as well as an organisation system, according to which the most important results of a lecture series can be kept. Lectures do not replace independent reading, but can lend a good overview of a specific topic and stimulate independent literature selection.

2. Secondly, one takes part in **seminars** – sometimes following an entry test:

**Proseminars** are preliminary seminars and are limited in topics. **Advanced seminars** are classes that can be attended only once the intermediate exam has been taken and diploma achieved. Because of their demanding, specific topic, they are more time consuming. A seminar is reliant on the participation of *all* students present: in consultation with the tutor, topics are tackled by small groups or individuals and then presented in front of the entire group.

Hence, your work-method is required to incorporate the *independent* selection of literature (bibliography). On the other hand, a reading technique must be developed that enables the quick and effective recognition and archiving of relevant text and text passages (“excerpting”). For the oral presentation alone, it is necessary to improve your oral fluency with an aim to acquire a clear and succinct, lively way of expressing yourself.

3. **Colloquia** are seminars for examination candidates, in which exam topics are discussed on a high level.

4. **Exercises** serve exclusively practical training, for example whilst learning a language. They are often framed in the context of a lecture topic.

5. In **tutorials** the outcome of a class is discussed with the help of tutor(s), and perhaps accompanied by further exercises, in a relaxed atmosphere. This is often a good opportunity to train subject-related oral skills and vocabulary in a small group.

6. **(Foundation) Courses** follow the shape of a lecture as well as a seminar in a compact form. In-depth exercises for groups sometimes take place: for Germanic culture students, for example, this form could include an introduction to the study of literature.

6. **Praktika** (internships), offered mostly in scientific subjects, 'praktika' offer the possibility of practical application of theoretical knowledge for research purposes.

7. **Excursions**, which can last one or more days, are offered in several subjects on a voluntary or mandatory basis. Be sure to sign-up *punctually* in the secretariat of the faculty.

8. In addition, in an '**Arbeitsgemeinschaft (AG)**', students voluntarily and independently read, study and prepare for exams without the assistance of a tutor or professor.

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In order to obtain credit points (CP) a student has to fulfil certain requirements which vary depending on course and tutor. Those credit points provide the **evidence of course achievements** and should facilitate the equivalency of course achievements when changing the study programme or University.

**Modules** are self-contained teaching- and study units that consist of a few courses. They are provided with Credit Points, which show the **work load**, including preparation and rework time. For every credit point a work load of 30 hours are presupposed. Normally 30 credit points are given every semester. The total work load must not be more than 900 hours per semester (=30 CP), including free period; not more than 1800 hours per year. In a whole bachelor's programme you normally gain 180 CP. Credits and marks need to be specified separately.

A **thesis** is the compulsory final paper of Bachelor's and Master's programmes.

**Exams** are taken module-related and attendant to the study. This arranges the comparability and accreditation of equivalent academic modules at Universities.

The **Diploma Supplement** gives detailed information on study courses. It also provides standardised information on qualifications gained in the different study programmes which will be important for the entrance into working life.

(Before the establishment of Bachelor's and Master's degrees a student had to perform to a certain standard (presentation, examination, paper) in order to gain a Leistungsnachweis (=„Schein", or certificate). There were unassessed participation certificates or assessed certificates. Those certificates were necessary as an evidence of course achievements and to register for examinations.)

The following provides you with some study-oriented advice on the topics of **libraries, literature selection and archiving, listening and note-taking, reading, excerpting, presentation, written assignments** and (written) **exam preparation and oral examination**, and finally a **systematic overview with terms and abbreviations of every day student life**.

These tips are to be understood only as suggestions which you can try out during your study and possibly use long term. It is impossible to give general rules applicable to all, as **every student brings different requirements** from his/her homeland.

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## 2 - LIBRARIES

Two **types of library** on the campus provide the centres for independent research, as well as concentration and individual study: the Universitätsbibliothek (**SULB**), encompassing all subjects, and the specific institutional library of a subject (Insittutsbibliothek, **IB**), also known as Seminarbibliothek (**SB**). Libraries spare you the cost of buying the often expensive literature recommended for seminars.

### 1. Saarländische Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek (SULB)

SULB is to be found in building B1 1. The **Lesesaal** (= a quiet place for working with texts that cannot be borrowed) and the **Katalogsaal** (= a room for targeted literature search through the use of catalogues) can be found in building B5 1, during the time of renovation, and are open during the semester and during lecture-free time Monday to Friday from 9.00 till 22.00 and Saturday from 9.00 till 15.00.

The **Lehrbuchsammlung** (= a room containing only text books) is located in building B 1 1 in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. It is open weekdays from 9.00 till 18.00 and Saturday from 9:00 till 12:30. The **lending desk** is open on weekdays between 9.00 and 18.00 and on Saturdays from 9.00 till 12.30.

For the opening times of the **Bibliotheks-Zweigstelle für Mediziner in Homburg** (medical library in Homburg), telephone +49 (0) 6841-16 26008.

► [www.uniklinikum-saarland.de/de/einrichtungen/bibliothek](http://www.uniklinikum-saarland.de/de/einrichtungen/bibliothek)

In order to be able to borrow books, you must first apply online for a **user pass**  
▶ <http://swb2.bsz-bw.de/DB=2.340/> (Menüpunkt „Neuanmeldung“) after that you can get the user pass at the library which requires to show your student card.

With the pass, you can **borrow books online**. To do so, access the online **Saarländischen Virtuellen Katalog** (catalogue of academic libraries) via:

▶ <http://swb2.bsz-bw.de/DB=2.340/> (Menüpunkt „Neuanmeldung“)

If you have found a title in SULB, you choose the book and simply click on the “Zeige Verfügbarkeit” button at the bottom of the page which shows you where the book can be borrowed. Now you are linked to the old catalog, which also contains information on whether the book is available. Here you have to choose and reserve the book. After that you have to identify yourself as an authorized user by giving your user number and your password (date of birth: ddmmyyyy). After the selecting the pickup location (always SULB-Halle) the book is available after an hour. For questions, please contact the library staff.

The **OPAC** catalogues the contents of SULB from 1977, of the Institutsbibliotheks from 1999 as well as the HTW (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft, college for technology and economy) library. All accessible media like newspapers, CD-Roms, maps etc. are also indexed. If the exact bibliographic details are not available but you are searching for literature by **topic**, you can do this through **OPAC** via different forms, which allow a search by certain fields, make the search easier. Computers for catalogue searches are available in the library. A tutorial makes the catalogue search easier:

▶ [www.sulb.uni-saarland.de/tutorial](http://www.sulb.uni-saarland.de/tutorial)

At the *Lesesaal* besides the OPAC there are other research instruments.

Via the SULB homepage

▶ [www.sulb.uni-saarland.de/de](http://www.sulb.uni-saarland.de/de)

you have access to the database information system **DBIS** (contains all bibliographic databases of the SULB ordered according to the subjects) and the Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek **EZB** (contains the access to all journals subscribed electronic by the SULB)

Please refer for detailed questions to the staff in the *Lesesaal*.

There are media that are still not catalogued, e.g. the material in the institute library from pre-1999 are at the moment not catalogued in OPAC. In searching for old editions of a text, **search in the IBs catalogue** is recommended.

The **lending time for journals** is one day (to allow copying of the article), **for monographs** (= books specialising on one academic area) 28 days, although the book can be renewed online. In order to do this, you must select 'Benutzerdienste' (user services) from the online catalogue and enter your details. There you can see the **return deadline** as well as renew books online. Be sure to take note of the deadline, as otherwise a **fine** will soon be charged. If a text has already been borrowed by someone else, it is also possible to make **reservations** through OPAC-System.

If a text is not available in Saarbrücken, there remains the possibility of **distance borrowing**, which makes all materials in Germany available to students. For this propose you buy a *Transaktionsnummer* TAN from the staff of *Lesesaal* or *Ausleihe*. A distance borrowing can be done online.

Link "*Fernleihe*" SULB homepage

► [www.sulb.uni-saarland.de/de](http://www.sulb.uni-saarland.de/de)

If an especially important text cannot be acquired by this method, there remains the option – against payment for postage, administrative costs and copying (between € 12,50 and € 50 per book, according to country) – of **reservation abroad**. You must reckon with a waiting time of a few weeks, though.

In principle, the staff at the **information desk** in the **Katalogsaal** are pleased to answer further questions. Where required, **tours** of the library are offered: at the start of the semester, **fixed tours** take place over a period of two weeks. In September and March, an appointment list is hung on the door of SULB. Questions can be addressed to the SULB telephone service on:

0681 / 302-3076

## **2. Instituts- or Seminarbibliothek (= IB oder SB) as Specialist Libraries**

Studying in a **reference library** such as the IB or the SB takes place in the library itself at desks. Normally, books can only be borrowed for *one* night or over the weekend; therefore in many cases it is advisable to **copy** relevant texts and to work through them at home.

The IB usually has a **larger and more up-to-date selection of specialist materials** than SULB. At the beginning of your study period, you should familiarise yourself with the contents of the library, the details of borrowing, and the physical layout of the IB / SB – the same goes for the catalogues and, as far as they exist, Handapparaten (= several books on one seminar topic are selected by a tutor and set aside on a shelf).

In the IB / SB, you can, as a rule, count on the **helpfulness of the staff**. Special tours are also offered here, which you should ask about.

### 3 - LITERATURE SELECTION AND ARCHIVING

If you embark upon a **literature search** for a certain topic, you can undertake it in several ways: through internet research, within the university library or the Insitutsbibliothek/Seminarbibliothek, or ideally through use of a Handapparat. Additionally, the tutor will offer personal help during **consultation times**, so long as you sign up. In most cases, the tutor will tell the student explicitly which texts are relevant and recommend certain editions of a text. Often, one must embark upon a search independently according to **key words**.

Once the literature has been selected and is available, an **organisation system** is necessary, according to which one can categorise the mass of material: in this way, one can collect sources (= exact book references, the origins of journal extracts and copies), without losing an overview.

If you have access to a **computer**, you should set up your own *PC organisation system*. Otherwise, you can also use **index cards**, available in various sizes, for example in stationery shops: in both cases, the complete literature reference (= author or producer, title/subtitle, where published, publisher, date published) is stored in one place – for example always in the bottom quarter of the window or index card. Next comes, according to the type of assignment, e.g. word-for-word or summarised quotes and definitions, theses, summaries of texts, never forgetting to include the page number. Also a standard signature to be set and applied (= set letter or number combination, e.g. in the top left corner of the document, which provides for a categorisation of the text), coloured and spatial **arrangement** of the text, recurring **abbreviations** as well as **priority allocation** according to the importance of the particular reference, save many later, unnecessary searches.

As a result, you have a **freely disposable (PC) record**, in which the source, a quote, or the contents of a text can be found. Later, such a record is very helpful e.g. during the presentation itself, during preparation for a written assignment or during production of a literature list on the topic.

**Precision** and **consistency** during archiving is very important: hereby the work necessitated by the literature selection is concentrated and optimised considerably. Because some subjects require a unique quoting system, you should ask your tutor about this when your seminars begin.

## 4 - LISTENING AND NOTE-TAKING

In order to learn a **note-taking procedure**, on linguistic and especially grammatical grounds it is necessary to accustom oneself to sentence-shortening structures: the conversion of verbs into *nouns*, of subordinate clauses into *main clauses* (conversion of conjunctive into corresponding *prepositional phrases*, from relative into *participial phrases*, from active into *passive* or its replacement form etc.). In this regard, the two volumes “**deutsch üben 5 + 6**” (practising German 5 + 6) by **Hans Földeak** (each costing around € 22) is published by Max Huber: by way of a supplementary „**Lösungsschlüssel 5 + 6**” for around € 6, one can correct the exercises alone.

In order to improve your **listening technique**, you should do a small exercise on a *daily basis*: television or, better, radio news of not more than ten minutes in duration should be played from a cassette. Set yourself a personal exercise, for example: “What is reported about Germany / Europe / a specifically selected country?” – “What information is there on social / economic / health topics?” – “Which politicians / artists / professions are mentioned?” – „Which general topics are mentioned?” – “Which foreign reports are on a similar topic?” – “Which reports concern events that discriminate against a certain section of the population?” At an advanced stage, a programme can be viewed from two different perspectives concurrently.

For marking purposes one should listen to the recorded programme in small units – i.e. with pauses. Because the news is similar from one day to the next, you can compare your standardised notes with those from a later programme and fill in missing information. It is recommended that you undertake this exercise communally with interested colleagues and discuss various topics afterwards.

You can become accustomed to a **standard form of notes** – assisting yourself through colour-coding and layout (margins, obvious indexing conventions by indenting and numbering) as well as the use of set abbreviations – by regularly applying principles that you set down at the beginning.

For a selected **university class** it is recommended that you acquire a dedicated vocabulary book, into which the vocabulary of a particular subject area can be entered. If you have a PC, you should buy a vocabulary trainer, with the help of which you can update, train and broaden your vocabulary.

**Filling in the gaps** in your notes should be done in a library or at home, because the material is still most fresh in your memory. In this way, an interim summary can be written – and finally the document or document extract can be indexed in a folder, a card register or a PC document (after an individual signature has been allocated).

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## 5 - READING

As a rule, in books that don't belong to you (as well as your own) **annotations** should be made only in *pencil*. Before they are returned to the library, these annotations should be removed. If you want to highlight an article in a book *in colour*, in order to work with it in a more targeted way, it is better to photocopy the article beforehand.

In what follows, topics within a section are **in bold type and underlined**, the key terms are in **bold type**; the study skills tips are simply underlined.

Before working on a book, a graphic, a text or a text passage, the following **basic consideration** should be made: "*what information do I need and why?*" After that, the **time investment** should be calculated according to the answer, as well as the selection of a **reading strategy**: is general, cursory, selective or detailed reading necessary?

1. In order to gain a general **overview** of the unknown text (in the foreign language), you should first **activate knowledge you already have** ("output before input"): after reading the title/subtitle, viewing a statistic or a picture, you should as matter of course regularly take a one to two minute break, in order independently to formulate (out loud or in your head) what *presumably* will be in this text in order potentially to formulate questions about the text. Often one already knows something about the contents of the text, because one has perhaps already got to know some aspects in a different context. It is important to allow the brain a moment in order to *recall* and to activate your own *subject-related vocabulary*.

2. Following this phase you can undertake an **overall reading** with a view to gaining a concrete general **overview** for the purposes of **orientation**: "where is what?". In addition, an accompanying exercise can be set, which distracts from word-for-word reading, in a form similar to this: "what is the specific topic of a section?" – "formulate two theses of the text" – "do I know of something comparable from my home country?" – "on what points do the authors agree?" – "who claims what?" Through this precursory step, one is likely to gain in advance a targeted view of what is in the text.

The next task should be to recognise the **structure of the text** in large categories, in order to achieve an *organising structure* of the text as a whole. The following study stimuli can help to achieve this: "how can the unstructured text be broken down into smaller categories?" – "what information belongs together as far as meaning is concerned?" – "give these text extracts subtitles" – "complete small summaries of the text sections using key words" or something similar.

3. **Cursory reading** (= searching a text on the basis of a general set task) is a recommended method for grasping the **main information**. Only those unknown words necessary for understanding context should be looked up in a – possibly German-German – dictionary. In no case should *all* words that appear in the text be looked-up at this stage, as some texts need only be read on the basis of a limited question and it is a waste of time to look up the vocabulary of a text in its entirety.

As a result of cursory reading, one should be in the position to present the context of the text in graphic form, to produce a tabulated presentation of the contents, to write an overall summary in nominal form (= using meaningful nouns and possibly compound words) or to reduce the text to its most important points through summarising it.

4. If the aim of the exercise is to search for **specific information/ answers**, **selective reading** is necessary. The place where this information is to be found should be marked in pencil or in colour. A glossary of the relevant text passage is necessary for effective work, as *exactly one* answer to a particular question is required: that's to say, this relevant text passage will be thoroughly worked through and the remaining text will be ignored.

5. **Reading in detail** is only to be recommended if the **whole text** must be worked through thoroughly. Here it is necessary to make a complete glossary with the help of a (*monolingual*, only if necessary *bilingual*) dictionary. It is worth procuring a vocabulary trainer for your PC.

After reading in detail and familiarising oneself with the entire vocabulary, one has skills that are indispensable for further handling of the topic: the construction of *structure and contents* (keywords marked in the margin, summaries of text passages, overall summary) as well as *grammatical or, as the case may be, stylistic peculiarities of the text*.

For the purposes of **practice**, after successful, thorough reading of the text with the desired learning effect, it is possible to **react** to the text. This occurs **in writing** (“write a letter, an invitation, an offer, a reservation, a criticism, a judgment, a protest or, if applicable, a different presentation of the facts or a differing opinion”) or **orally** as a result of the impulse to take a spontaneous or detailed justified position or interpretation, to make a personal commentary, a criticism, to have a discussion, to consider the consequences or to make a prediction for the future, etc.. Prompt yourself to make an oral statement in order to become accustomed to the new vocabulary and to further your own fluency.

With the help of other students or a voice recorder you can assess yourself or get someone to assess you. If the text at hand has been understood, the question arises whether it should be used as the basis for a presentation/written

assignment, **copied, scanned** (scanning is possible in the computer centre) or **excerpted**.

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## 6 - EXCERPTING

After an text extract, a complete short text, a chapter from a book or a book has been worked through in the way described above, it must be decided whether the complete **document** or sections of it should be **archived** ist.

With regard to a topic set for a seminar "as much as necessary and as little as possible" should be excerpted. The aim is to make the original text disposable by producing a compressed form. Taking an extract of a text (= excerpting) means leaving out unimportant content.

In doing so, one must proceed with great **accuracy**: word-for-word quotes and definitions should not be altered, paraphrased quotes should always be marked with a page number and the source reference must be included.

**The contents** of the relevant passage of the original text must remain unaltered; however, similarly to note-taking the **form** must employ sentence-shortening techniques.

Similarly to literature selection (chapter 3) it should be borne in mind that the **physical arrangement and coloured marking of the excerpted text** should be observed for each document so that colours, underlines and highlights are assigned a set function:

Hence, one should consider from the beginning on that e.g. for the subject *history* the prerequisites for an historical situation are always marked blue, the consequences always green. Or when learning a *language*: verbs with accusative always red, verbs with dative always blue, verbs that take accusative and dative, purple. The same goes for the use of bold and italic type or fonts and font-size etc. when using a PC.

When entering a new text into the "catalogue" (database or index card system) that you have produced, you should take care to ensure that the **classification number** that you assigned earlier, which indicates topicality, importance and exact contents by signature, is applied consistently to all collected excerpts.

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## 7 - PRESENTATIONS

In contrast to your homeland, in Germany **oral presentations** before a group are often made in a seminar; hence **preparatory information** is of particular interest.

In a **seminar** you are expected to pick a topic from a general subject area which you must then prepare in groups or alone, and also to undertake independent literature research. There are tutor consultation sessions, in which you can often get help, so long as you sign up: you can enter your name on a list by the office of the tutor. It certainly makes sense to prepare a rough personal timetable for the time leading up to the presentation.

Next, a few tips on oral presentation: in order **to improve your oral expression skills**, as a non-native speaker you should undertake grammatical, stylistic and oral exercises: in contrast to the goal of *abbreviating* structures described in chapter 4 ("Note-taking"), grammatically and stylistically the opposite applies to presenting: in order to preserve the **liveliness of the presentation**, you should consciously avoid constructions that make a text dry: by using *verbs, verbal constructions, fewer compositions, explanatory subordinate clauses* (for example subjunctive clauses, relative clauses), the *active* form and *synonyms* in order to paraphrase, etc., you avoid a complicated, convoluted style that makes listening more difficult for your audience. If you don't take note of these presentational skills, you risk disinterest, boredom and sinking motivation on the part of your listeners.

Set phrases, which make the structuring method of the presentation recognisable (references to what will come later or references to what has gone before, links etc.) or *formulations for summaries or opinion taking* can be prepared at home for the same reasons.

The oral presentation itself should be prepared in detail at home: you can create **trial versions** of the presentation independently of other people through use of a voice recorder and assess, or have assessed, the *sentence length, the number of pauses, intonation, accent, volume and speed* of what you have said. It is certainly worth practising delivering your presentation in front of selected study-colleagues:

In this way, the **listeners** can assess whether the *outline* of the presentation is easily recognisable, and whether the *form of the presentation* (liveliness of the presentation, eye-contact of the presenter with the audience, gestures and nervousness) is acceptable, as well as the criteria mentioned above.

With the object of **improving the clarity of the presentation**, one should make coloured marks as prompts on the detailed outline (see below, number 5). So how do you prepare the **content** of a presentation?

1. After one has received a **topic** within a seminar, the literature selection begins – the **bibliography** in the library and the internet. As already described, next comes the **reading** phase along with the **excerpting** phase.

2. The starting point for the “presentation” chapter is the **collection of several text extracts relevant to the topic**, which are to be brought together in an oral presentation. At this point, the observation that, unlike a written assignment, no central text must be produced: a presentation gains its quality from lively presentation technique and should hence never be *read* word-for-word. Exceptions are (verbatim and summarised) *quotes* and *summaries*: these documents can be used separately during the presentation as note cards.

3. In order to produce a presentation of most use to your listeners, you must, when embarking upon the preparation, first consider the **academic and linguistic competence of the addressees**: “who is my audience?” – “with what academic level and linguistic level can I reckon?”. In this way, one sets the boundaries in terms of content and linguistic level and thereby sets a **concept for the construction** of the presentation.

4. For the all-important oral presentation, a **handout**, of one to two pages in length, for the tutor and each member of the audience, must be prepared. As far as **form** is concerned, the following must be written in the top left-hand corner of the handout: *Universität des Saarlandes, subject, title of the lecture/seminar*, (topic of the seminar, name of the tutor, semester) as well as the *name of the presenter*. The *topic of the presentation* appears as a title of the handout. Then follows the content: *theses of the presentation, summary/ies, definitions, quotes* and finally a reference to a *future prediction*, a *(country) comparison* and/or critical viewpoints of other authors etc. – according to what is required. A comprehensive list of *primary and secondary literature* should appear at the end (as long as it is not too extensive).

5. For a given presentation topic, one should prepare sheets with an **overall** as well as a **detailed outline** of the topic, including the order of the “note cards”. The detailed outline serves as a plan, according to which one delivers the presentation: hence, it is important to mark at which point which quote, literature reference, question, or action is inserted. Thereby you can avoid late losing the thread – and also composure – during the presentation, even if, perhaps because of unforeseeable questions from the audience, you have to think about something else for a short time.

6. During the **oral presentation** itself, if you have worked as a group you must ensure that an even distribution of participation. One should bear in mind the range of items such as blackboards, whiteboards or overhead and slide projectors etc when planning the presentation and make use of them later on; keep to the time plan for the presentation and especially the beginning (= introduc-

tion) and conclusion should be planned in great detail at home. The presentation of the *body* results naturally from the overall and detailed outline no note form as well as the extra cards that should be used whilst bearing in mind especially the liveliness of the presentation.

7. In order to encourage a **discussion** at the end of the presentation, it is recommended that you put precisely formulated (pre-prepared) questions to the audience. Listeners are usually tired after a presentation, so it is down to you as presenter to motivate them. You could address *theses, arguments, counter-arguments* yourself, in order to make it possible to insert the topic into a *wider context*. Criticism from participants should be thought out in advance in order that you can deal with it authoritatively.

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## 8 - WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

After a presentation has been held it is normally necessary to deal with the topic in a written assignment. At this point, it should once again be emphasised that a **different approach** is necessary and the aim is *not* to write a transcript of the presentation from the presented outline and oral implementation.

It is important to work through a standard text with **tips for constructing a seminar assignment**, which informs as practically as possible about indexing, the form and construction of a contents page, the arrangement of introduction, body and conclusion and the form of a bibliography etc.

Get advice from your tutor about a book about writing an academic assignment and compare several books on this topic in a library or academic bookshop.

Every student should have **text editing skills**, as every seminar assignment must be produced on a computer. If necessary, a **training course** on text editing is recommended.

## 9 - (WRITTEN) EXAM PREPARATION AND ORAL EXAMINATIONS

To complete a seminar and to receive a **certificate (Schein)** with “successful participation” or “grading” it is sometimes necessary to pass a **Klausur** (= supervised, written examination). It is important to inform yourself in advance about the form of the examination (multiple choice, series of questions, an essay on a certain topic etc.).

Your own work form (in a group or alone, script or your own notes as the basis of your learning material), your time plan (timetable variant) and the work method to apply (“how do I systematise the learning material, in order to prepare myself as best as possible within a certain allocated time?”) etc..

Also whilst preparing for a **mündliche Prüfung** (= oral exam, a “discussion” between a member of academic staff and a student about set examination material; questions and answers are observed by observers), discussions in advance, ideally with the examiner him/herself make sense.

That’s how you find out about the *order of the examination*, possibly about *points of emphasis* or *areas of specialisation* and are able to prepare yourself psychologically for the situation.

As a rule, one should ask oneself the following question when preparing for an exam: “how does the refreshing of material – the actual learning process – take place for me personally?”.

Because **different people learn differently**, each individual should decide how he/she can best prepare himself: “Do I learn inductively, in that I first remember the *theory* and then the *explanatory examples*, or the other way round: do I need *practical examples* from the beginning in order to allow me to become accustomed to the material and extract or understand *rules* deductively?”

Do I learn best by writing (complete extracts required, to be learned by heart), through explaining (extracts required, followed by discussion of the material in a group and learning and understanding through explanation), by hearing (extracts required, followed by recording on a voice recorder and listening repeatedly) or by optical impression (arrangement of extracts in a particularly clear way, use of colours, schemes, tables, abbreviations etc.). Or do I work more effectively through a combination of these methods – or in a completely different way?“

A **time plan**, according to which the entire subject area is split up into

smaller parts and which is worked through independently, is always to be recommended. From the **perspective of learning method** it should be emphasised, *consciously* to insert breaks during the day and to ensure that work is balanced with free time. For work and free time, it is important that the times, once chosen, are consistently observed and that a fixed work place is chosen – in a library or at home.

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In the hope that you can undertake targeted and effective **study planning** whilst bearing in mind a few tips and thereby use your time meaningfully, I wish you plenty of fun and success during your study.

If you have any further suggestions for this brochure, we request that you fill in the **questionnaire** and hand it in to the Zentrum Betreuung für internationale Studierende (ZiS), building 28, room 99 (Fax: +49 (0)681 302 6618).

► [www.uni-saarland.de/zis](http://www.uni-saarland.de/zis)

If you would like **further suggestions about “learning academic study skills”**, have a look on the website of the Sprachenzentrum der Universität des Saarlandes (language centre, Uni Saarland) under “Lernlinks”:

► [www.szb.uni-saarland.de/frameset.html](http://www.szb.uni-saarland.de/frameset.html)

## 10 - KEYWORD INDEX AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>WHO?</b>	<b>WHERE?</b>
<p>der Dekan (the Dean)  der Studiendekan (student dean)  der Rektor (the rector)</p> <p>der/die Professor/in (professor) (= Prof.)  Dr. (= title of doctor, placed before the surname)</p> <p>der/die Dozent/in (tutor) (= Doz.)  der/die Privatdozent/in (assistant professor)  der Akademische Rat (academic board)  der/die Tutor/in (tutor)</p> <p>die Studierendenschaft (the students, collectively)  die Fachschaft (student body)</p> <p>die wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft (academic assistant)  (der Hiwi)  der/die wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter/in (academic employee)</p> <p>N.N. (= nomen nescio, tutor not yet known)</p>	<p>University (= U) = Hochschule (college) (= HS)  Technische Hochschule (Technical College) (= TH)  die Technische Universität (Technical University) (= TU)  die Fakultät (faculty) (= Fak)</p> <p>die Fachrichtung (subject) (= FR)  das Institut (institute)  das Seminar (seminar)</p> <p>der Hörsaal (= HS) (lecture theatre)  das Gebäude (= Geb.) (building)</p> <p>UG (= Untergeschoss, Keller) (basement)  EG (= Erdgeschoss) (ground floor)  DG (= Dachgeschoss) = OG (= Obergeschoss) (top floor)</p>
<b>WHEN?</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
<p>die Blockveranstaltung (block seminar)  gztg. (= ganztägig) (all day)  semesterbegleitend (extra-curricular, during semester)  SWS (Semesterwochenstunden) (number of hours per week during a semester)</p> <p>SS (= Sommersemester)  WS (= Wintersemester)  n.V. (= "nach Vereinbarung", according to agreement)</p> <p>s.t. (= sine tempore, actual time)  c.t. (= cum tempore, given time plus 15 minutes)</p>	<p>die Vorlesung (lecture)  das Seminar (seminar)  das Proseminar (proseminar)  das Hauptseminar (main seminar)  das Kolloquium (colloquium)</p> <p>die Übung (exercise)  das Tutorium (tutorial)  der Kurs (course)  das Praktikum (internship)</p>
<b>EXAM</b>	<b>EXAM RESULT</b>
<p>(das Vordiplom (pre-diploma)  die Diplomprüfung (diploma exam)</p> <p>die Zwischenprüfung (interim examination)  die Staatsexamensprüfung (state exam)</p> <p>die Magisterprüfung (magister exam))</p> <p>die Klausur (written examination)  die Promotion (doctorate)  die Habilitation (state doctorate)</p>	<p>Credit Points (CP)  der Schein (certificate)</p> <p>Diploma Supplement  (diploma)  das Staatsexamen (state exam)</p> <p>der Magister/die Magistra Artium (= M.A.)</p> <p>die Dissertation (= Diss., dissertation)  die Habilitation (state doctorate)</p>

11 - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BROCHURE

“ACADEMIC STUDY SKILLS for INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS“

(Please place a cross or a number in the box or write in your own words a reason for your comment)

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

1. In my home country ..... (country) I have learned about study skills

- O never
O at school for O months
O at university for O months

namely:

.....
.....
.....

USEFULNESS

2. For me, this brochure was

- O very helpful O helpful O not so helpful

Reason(s):

.....
.....
.....

3. Please mark the chapters 1 to 5 ranging from most important to least important:

- O Introduction (up to p. 3) O Libraries O Choice of literature and archiving
O Listening and note-taking O Reading O Excerpting O Presentations
O Written assignments O (Written) Examination preparation and oral exams
O Key word index and abbreviations

CRITICISM

4. For me, this brochure was

- O too extensive = too much information O too short = not enough information

5.1. For me, overall the linguistic level was

- O just right O high O too high

Reason(s):

.....

.....  
.....

5.2. Linguistically, I found the following chapter particularly difficult: .....

**TRIAL**

I needed around  hours in order to work through the brochure thoroughly.

6.1. I have tried (some of) the recommended techniques:

No

Yes, namely:

.....  
.....

6.2. I intend to try out some of the recommended techniques alone later, in particular:

.....  
.....

**SUGGESTIONS**

7. I would like to learn more about the following topics:

- Libraries
- Choice of literature and archiving (bibliography)
- Listening and notetaking
- Reading
- Excerpting
- Presentation
- Written assignments
- (Written) Exam preparation
- Oral exams
- General information about studying in Saarbrücken

or:

.....  
.....

8. What would you change or improve about the brochure?

- 1. ....
- 2. ....
- 3. ....

Comment:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Many thanks for your co-operatin; as a result, we are in the position to tailor the brochure to your current needs.  
Please bring or send the filled in questionnaire to ZiS.

Hello and a warm welcome to Saarland University,

The **Guidance Centre for International Students (ZiS)** is part of Saarland University's International Office and runs advisory and support services as well as social programmes for international students, visiting academics and doctoral students during their stay at the University.

At the moment our offices are located in various buildings on the campus (Saarbrücken):

Building A4 4 - 2nd floor, Room 2.40:	Mrs Meinck, Planning + organization / ZiS
Building A4 4 - 2nd floor, Room 2.37:	Registration for all ZiS activities
Building A4 2 - Ground floor, Room 0.11:	Mrs Romina, Orientation programme, Admissions Office

ZiS publishes **welcome folders** to help you get your bearings after arriving at Saarland University and we also organize **general information events** at the beginning of each semester.

**Once a month**, ZiS also organizes a free **guided tour of the campus** as well as an excursion. Anyone interested in participating can register Monday to Friday between 11 am and 1 pm in Building A4 4 - 2nd floor, Room 2.37.

In addition, you can also pick up copies of our special **information brochures** '*Neu an der Uni?*' ('Just Arrived?'), '*Wissenschaftliche Arbeitstechniken für internationale Studierende*' ('Study skills for international students') and '*Kurzausflüge in Saarland & Umgebung*' ('Short trips in and around Saarland') – some of which are available in other languages.

A free **kitchenware/tableware loan service** is also available to all students (deposit: 10 €) Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 am till 1 pm.

The aim of our **ZiS- Buddy programme \*you & me\*** (Building A4 4 - 2nd floor, Room 2.37) is to match up a new international student with a German student volunteer who will help the incoming student adjust to life at Saarland University – making day-to-day life on campus and leisure time more interesting and enjoyable for both. In addition, \*you & me\* organizes a range of other activities, such as a monthly *Stammtisch* (social gathering in a pub), barbecues, Christmas parties and sightseeing trips.

Twice a month, **ZiS-Film-International** organizes a movie screening in the Campus Center (Building A4 4, Room 2.42).

International students and visiting academics are welcome to help plan and run one of the **cultural and culinary focus days** (*Spezialitätentage*) that are organized in collaboration with the *Studentenwerk im Saarland e.V.* and are held every Wednesday at lunchtime in the foyer of the Saarbrücken *Mensa*. You are also invited to get involved with one of the **national cultural evenings** (*Länderabend*) that take place in the student halls of residence every month, or to join the multicultural dance group **\*Boyana\***.

## **INFORMATION + SERVICE**

**Welcome folders, Orientation Week**

**Information brochures**

**kitchenware/tableware loan service**

## **MONTHLY EVENTS**

**Guided tour on the Campus**

**Excursions**

**ZiS Film-international**

## **ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES**

**ZiS-BuddyProgramme \*you & me\***

**\*Boyana\* (multicultural dance group)**

**Cultural and culinary focus days (*Mensa*)**

**National cultural evenings**

**International *Stammtische***

## **International Office – ZiS**

**Guidance Centre for International Students**

**Campus Center - building A4 4 - 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

**room 2.40 - 2.37**

**Applications: Mon–Fri: 11 am-1 pm**

**Tel: +49 (0)681 302-4480**

**Fax: +49 (0)681 302-71102**

**► [www.uni-saarland.de/zis](http://www.uni-saarland.de/zis)**