Studying at RWTH Aachen University
Basic tools for successful studies & learning strategies

Student Advice Centre
RWTH Aachen University
Overview

- Introduction
  - Counseling organisations
  - Student Advice Centre

- Advising and services for students
  - Differences school – university
  - Study Structure
  - University Life

- Psychological counseling
  - How we work
  - Learning strategies
    - Time management
    - Concentration
    - Memory strategies
    - Motivation
Introduction: The RWTH Student Advice Centre

- Neutral and impartial advising: focus on students’ concerns and problems and on finding a good, individually tailored solution!
- Helping students help themselves
- All services are free of charge and confidential
- All services are offered to students studying public courses of study at RWTH

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Advising and services for students | Psychological counseling
Counseling Organisations: Where to go?

- International Academy Student Counseling
- Student Advice Centre
  - Target group: students
  - Advising and services for students
  - Psychological counseling
- Center for Mental Health for Students (ZPG)
- Students at RWTH International Academy
Counseling Organizations: Where to go?

- **International Academy Student Counseling**
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**Students under public law at RWTH Aachen University**
International Academy Student Counseling

Services:

- Schedule planning & Semester planning
- Counselling: Learning techniques, stress management, exam anxiety
- Information and advice concerning Hiwi-Job, additional courses, research institutions, extracurricular activities at RWTH and in Aachen

Contact information:

RWTH International Academy gGmbH
Irmhild Ventker
Campus-Boulevard 30, 3rd floor
Cluster Produktionstechnik
52074 Aachen
Telefon | Phone: +49 241 80-97743
Fax: +49 241 80-92525
i.ventker@academy.rwth-aachen.de
www.academy.rwth-aachen.de
Center for Mental Health for undergraduate and graduate students (ZPG)

Services:

• Psychological and psychosocial counseling
• Mediation in interdisciplinary outpatient, day-care, inpatient services as well as with other providers involving psychiatrists, neurologists, general practitioners (linked to Uniklinik)
• Networking with counseling centers and self-help groups

Contact information:

Zentrum für Psychische Gesundheit für Studierende und Doktoranden (ZPG)
Kullenhofstr. 52
52074 Aachen
Phone: +49 241/80 80 827
E-Mail: zpg@ukaachen.de
www.zpg.ukaachen.de
The RWTH Student Advice Centre

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Advising and services for Students
Psychological counseling

Templergraben 83/ corner of Pontstr., 52062 Aachen

www.rwth-aachen.de/studienberatung

Make an appointment:
studienberatung@rwth-aachen.de

www.rwth-aachen.de/psychologische-beratung

Make an individual appointment:
Psych.Beratung@rwth-aachen.de

Information and registration for academic trainings:
www.rwth-aachen.de/studientrainings
Student Advice Centre
Target group: students
Advising and services for students
Difference school – university

- Familiar structures are gone
- University life means personal responsibility
- Friends from school embark on a new life elsewhere
- Germany: a new world
- No more “All-Inclusive Mom Hotel”
- What will I eat tomorrow?
- How do I do laundry?
- How far can I get with my money?
- How do I make new friends?

Exciting experiences that can offer remarkable insights
## Difference school – university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed class</td>
<td>Large cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers know pupils</td>
<td>Anonymity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set schedule</td>
<td>Flexible schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance required</td>
<td>Attendance rarely required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Subject matter in school:
- Adapted and taught at an age-appropriate level
- Material worked on interactively
- “Bit by bit”

### Subject matter at university:
- Very abstract and comprehensive information
- Fast pace
- 6-8 times more material
Learning and study strategies from school do not work at university:

- Degree of difficulty increases:
  - Rework, reread, ask again
  - Do not start exam prep just 2-3 weeks before the exam

- Lectures are just an “appetizer”

- Lots of theory and fundamental knowledge at the beginning
Difference school – university

• What belongs in the past?
  • The expectation that someone will tell me what I should do

• Passive behavior: others may make sure you show up and do the work in school, but not at university

• What is now important?
  • Be proactive!
  • Be responsible!
  • Manage yourself!
Study structure example: engineering – simplified structure

- Bachelor
  - Broad fundamental orientation
- Master
  - Application and research orientation: Choose a specialization
  - Continuation of technical specialization
- Objective: research engineering (Dr. Ing.)
Study structure: academic Year

1st core semester
- October to February
  - Lectures, Tutorials, Seminars
- February to April
  - Exam Period

2nd core semester
- April to July
  - Lectures, Tutorials, Seminars
- July to October
  - Exam period
## Study structure: Mechanical Engineering

|----------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1st sem  | Mathematics I  
Physics  
Chemistry  | Introduction to Mechanical Engineering  
Mechanics I  
Machine Design I  | Communication / Organizational Development  | -  | - |
| 2nd sem  | Mathematics II  | Mechanics II  
Introduction to CAD  
Electrical Engineering  
Thermodynamics  | - | Computer Science  | - |
| 3rd sem  | Mathematics III  | Mechanics III  
Materials Science I  
Thermodynamics II  
Machine Design II&III  | Metrological Laboratory  | -  | - |
| 4th sem  | Numerical Mathematics  | Machine Design II  
Materials Science II  
Fluid Dynamics I  | Simulation Technology  | - Energy/Process Technology  
- Design Engineering  
- Plastics and Textile Engineering  
- Production Engineering  
- Automotive Engineering  
- Aeronautical Engineering  | - |
| 5th sem  | -  | Mass and Heat Transfer  | Business Engineering  | -  | - |
| 6th sem  | Projekt Work  
(6 Weeks)  | -  | Quality and Project Management  | -  | - |
| 7th sem  | Bachelor’s Thesis (10 Weeks)  
+ Project Work (6 Week#s)  | -  | -  | -  | - |
Study structure: modular studies

- **Modules**: teaching units grouped by topic or method lasting one or two semesters per academic year.
- Modules are designated as either compulsory, compulsory elective, or elective.
- Every module ends with an exam or proof of performance: e.g. written or oral exam, paper, project
- **ECTS**: effort per module
# University life, what it can look like…
## Schedule for first semester of a dream degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Montag</th>
<th>Dienstag</th>
<th>Mittwoch</th>
<th>Donnerstag</th>
<th>Freitag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture: ABC</td>
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<td>Exercise: STUDENT LIFE</td>
<td>Exercise:</td>
<td>Exercise:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: 10:15am-11:45am</td>
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<td>Time: 12:15pm-1:45pm</td>
<td>Time: 10:15am-11:45am</td>
<td>Time: 10:15am-11:45am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place: H3</td>
<td>Place: Audimax</td>
<td>Place: H2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place: H2</td>
<td>Place: TEMP I</td>
<td>Place: TEMP I</td>
<td>Place: TEMP I</td>
<td>Place: Audimax</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Exercise:** SOME TOPIC
- **Time:** 8:30am-10am
- **Place:** Aula

- **Lecture:** ABC
- **Time:** 10:15am-11:45am
- **Place:** Audimax

- **Exercise:** STUDENT LIFE
- **Time:** 12:15pm-1:45pm
- **Place:** H2

- **Lecture:** STUDENT LIFE
- **Time:** 4:15pm-5:45pm
- **Place:** Audimax
# University life, what it can look like…

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<td>ABC</td>
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## STUDENT LIFE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Lecture: NO IDEA WHAT ABOUT Lecture</th>
<th>WORK</th>
<th>PONTSTRAßE FOR LUNCH</th>
<th>Exercise: STUDY TIME</th>
<th>Study group: revise SEMESTER lecture</th>
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## SPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Lecture: STUDENT LIFE</th>
<th>Lecture: BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE</th>
<th>Lecture: STUDY TIME</th>
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## MENSA

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Advising and services for students: topics

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Advising and services for students

- Questions about beginning studies and initial orientation
- Initial frustration with studies: lack of motivation, pressure to perform, exam problems, difficulty getting oriented
- Doubts around the choice to study and getting oriented
- Financial, social, or sickness-related events influencing students’ studies and lives
- Initial thoughts about job and career planning
Advising and services for students: contact Information

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Advising and services for students

- Info Center: daily opening hours
- Open office hours: 3 times a week, no appointment needed
- Individual appointment
- Email advising
- Telephone advising: 3 days a week
Psychological counselling

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Psychological counseling
Psychological counselling

Personal counselling

Academic trainings

Psychological counselling

Copyright: ZSB

Copyright: Bruchholz
Psychological counselling – why?

Internal stress

External stress

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Psychological counselling – what topics?

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Psychological counseling

- Study strategies
- Symptoms of stress
- Procrastination
- Exam anxiety and other anxiety/fears
- Mood swings, bad moods
- Relationship problems
- Personal crises and conflicts

Copyright: Tran
Psychological counseling – what topics?

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Psychological counseling

- Study strategies
- Symptoms of stress like sleeping disorders
- Procrastination
- Exam anxiety and other anxiety/fears
- Mood swings, bad moods
- Relationship problems
- Personal crises and conflicts

Copyright: Tran
Psychological counseling – what topics?

Student Advice Centre
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Psychological counseling – what topics?

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Psychological counseling – what for?

... More balance
Psychological counseling

- Personal counseling
- Psychological counseling
- Academic trainings

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Academic trainings by the Psychological Counseling Team

Learning strategies
- Time management*
- Memory*
- Concentration

Coping strategies
- Exam anxiety
- Confident communication
- Stress management
- Managing studies with children

Academic trainings
- What is my goal?
- Procrastination

Motivation

Copyright: Bruchholz

* Trainings also in English
Learning strategies
Time management: the ALPEN strategy

A (Aufgaben) List All tasks

L (Länge schätzen) Estimate the Length

P (Pufferzeiten) Plan buffer time

E (Entscheidungen) Establish priorities

N (Nachkontrolle) Note what went well or wrong
Concentration

• Concentration is similar to the light of a torch:
  • Hardware: physiological ability
  • Surrounding: distraction
  • Focus: attention
Do not work for more than 45 minutes at a time. A short break is often sufficient for strengthening our ability to concentrate again.
Concentration: time for a break!

Interruptions are not breaks!

Breaks are not buffers!

Make sure you do something different during your breaks!

Plan how you end your breaks and get to work again!
Concentration: time for a break!

- 5-min short break: open a window for some fresh air, do a short exercise to move your body, take out the trash, drink something, do breathing exercises

- 20-min relaxation break: go for a walk, hang up laundry, juggle, eat a snack/fruit, drink something, relaxation exercises, reward yourself for your hard work

- 1-hour relaxation break: eat lunch, take a power nap, go for a walk, do a sports activity/work out, listen to music, meet friends, cook
Get a piece of paper and a pencil!
Memory: experiment – try to remember the lines
Memory: experiment

Now try to draw the lines!
Memory: experiment – this is what it looked like!
Memory: experiment – what helped you remember?
Memory: experiment – what helped you remember?
Memory: experiment – what helped you remember?

- Strategies for reproducing material:
  - Turn lines into larger **chunks**
  - “V”, “V”, “I”, “N”, “D” (5 chunks) or “WIND” (1 chunk)

- The better we can **summarize** information in our short-term memory, the more information we can process simultaneously.

- The better our **understanding**, the more prior knowledge we have, thus we have a better overview, helping us find chunks easily.

- The word “wind” serves as a **key**, which I can use to easily find the individual lines in my long-term memory.
Memory strategies

• Activate what you know already!
• Be curious about what you are learning!
• Understand what you are learning!
• Find good examples and visualize!
• Use different learning methods!
• Structure what you learn!
One memory strategy: mind-maps
Motivation: what students often say

I must?
Motivation: turn the pressure ...
... into real motivation!
Motivation strategies

- Your task should be challenging but not too easy!
- Make sure you get feedback!
- Plan rewards after your study session!
- Study in groups!
- Set your eyes on the prize - set a goal!
- Imagine what your goal will look like!
- Plan little steps on how to achieve your goal!
- Start with the first step today!
Which stone will you put in the jar today?
The RWTH Student Advice Centre: Welcome!

Student Advice Centre
Target group: students

Advising and services for Students

Psychological counseling

Templergraben 83/ corner of Pontstr., 52062 Aachen

www.rwth-aachen.de/studienberatung

Make an appointment:
studienberatung@rwth-aachen.de

www.rwth-aachen.de/psychologische-beratung

Make an individual appointment:
Psych.Beratung@rwth-aachen.de

Information and registration for academic trainings:
www.rwth-aachen.de/studientrainings