

How can I contact a lecturer?



In the beginning, it can be difficult contacting a professor, lecturer or other teacher that you are unfamiliar with. To receive the required signatures for the document „Attendance of University Courses“, we want to help you with the following three suggestions and tips!

A. Via E-Mail

The quickest way is probably to contact a lecturer by email – but how do I phrase and write such an email? How do I find the right expression? What should I consider when writing to a lecturer? With these ten helpful tips and suggestions, we explain what you should consider and keep in mind when corresponding with the lecturer by email.

1. Sometimes you do not get a second chance at a first impression – an email enquiry is an official form of contact. Therefore please consider and carefully prepare the content of the email.
2. Never send an email enquiry to multiple persons at the same time (in cc/copy or to several email addresses)! Oftentimes these types of emails are not even read due to the fact that the recipient does not feel personally addressed. Write to the recipient!
3. Please avoid writing emails without a subject line. Typically, emails without a subject line sent from an unknown sender are deleted unread. The subject line is important too: it should give brief and exact information about the content.
4. Start your email with a formal opening. The typical greeting is „Dear Mr./Ms. [last name]“. In the QIS/LSF information system, further information about the course – as well as the contact data of the instructor is listed. If you are unsure about the salutation, the instructor’s gender can be found here. In most cases, the title of the instructor (Prof./Dr.) is listed as well. Please note: for professors, just use the title „Professor“ – „Dr.“ held by almost all professors does not need to be included. Following the title, only include the last name and not the first name. So: „Dear Professor [last name]“ or „Dear Dr. [last name]“ and never write „Dear Mr./Ms. Professor Dr. [first name] [last name]“. Please avoid writing „Hi“ or „Hello“. Not using any kind of salutation is disrespectful; almost as disrespectful as just to write „Dear [first name] [last name]“. Write the name of the recipient correctly.
5. Please avoid asking the recipient about his/her health at the beginning of the email. In Germany it is uncommon for strangers to ask about someone’s health. After the salutation, you can address the matter right away.
6. Phrase your matter as precise as possible and give enough information for someone to understand your matter. For example: which course are you referring to?
7. Please use a standard style and Standard English. Avoid using flippant remarks or very formal language.
8. Your closing phrase could be: „Sincerely“ / „Sincerely yours“. It is uncommon to sign your letter with „Kind regards“ if you have never spoken to the professor before.
9. Sign the email with your full name (first and last name).
10. Sometimes it is not possible for the instructor to answer his/her emails immediately and you will receive a delayed response. If you do not receive an answer within a week, it is possible and not impolite to send an email again. If you still do not receive a reply, try to contact the instructor personally (if necessary by telephone or during advisory hours, contact data is listed on QIS/LSF).



B. Visit the weekly advisory hours of the instructor

- By clicking on the course in the QIS/LSF system, important information about the course is listed. The tab „responsible instructor“ provides further information about the lecturer whose signature you need for the application. The tab “Talk time” (or in German „Sprechzeit“) lists advisory hour appointments. If it reads in German „n. Vb.“ („nach Vereinbarung“), then you can ask the lecturer for an appointment
- You can ask the lecturer by telephone or email for an appointment. If you cannot attend the appointment or are delayed, please cancel the appointment in due time – the earlier the better so the lecturer can reschedule.
- Bring the filled out application form to the appointment!
- You should arrive shortly before the scheduled appointment and wait in front of the office door – this way you can avoid delays. Wait until the agreed time and then knock on the door. After knocking, wait a moment until the lecturer calls you in, usually in German “Her-ein”. If there is no reaction after knocking, try again. If you still cannot hear anything, open the office door and ask to enter.
- You can greet the lecturer with a simple „Hello Mr./Ms. XY“. Leave the shaking of the hands up to the lecturer.
- It is best to state your name, the name of the course you wish to attend and your matter (e.g. that you wish to visit his/her course as a guest student of the Academic Welcome Program). This type of structured start helps the lecturer quickly understand what your matter is and respond to it.
- After your application is signed and stamped, you can briefly thank the lecturer and say good bye.

C. In the first week of lecture courses, visit the course you want to attend and ask the lecturer before or after class if participation is possible.

- By clicking on the course in the QIS/LSF system important information about the course is listed. The tab „day“ and „time“ tells you the weekdays and time during the semester when the course takes place (the current semester dates are here: http://www.goethe-university-frankfurt.de/44420353/deadlines_news. Example: Mo 16:00 - 18:00. This means that the course takes place every Monday. The course starts fifteen minutes after the stated time, this is academic custom in Germany, so like in the example at 4:15 p.m. (4:00 c.t. stands for „cum tempore“ (Latin) and has the meaning „with time“). The duration of the course is usually 90 minutes. Exception: the exact time is listed (e.g. 08:45 – 10:15) or with the term „s.t.“ („sine tempore“ translated „without time“).
- The tab „room“ gives you more information about where the course location. For a campus map (in German language only) please follow the link: <http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/38090278/lageplane>
- Take the filled out application form to the course!
- You can approach the lecturer before or after the course. After greeting the instructor, you can state your name and matter. If the instructor has little time, ask for an individual appointment.

(Sources: Some suggestions and tips have been adopted from the website www.daad.de)